

LECTURE,

BEFORE THE TERRITORIAL TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION,

BY

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DELIVERED IN THE

Council House, Salt Lake City,
FRIDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 3RD, 1873.*Mr. President and Ladies and Gentlemen of the Teachers' Association:*

One of the objects of this association, so far as I understand, is to determine what ought to be taught in the common schools of our Territory.

It is admitted by all civilized nations, that the first thing, in a school education, to be acquired by a pupil, is a knowledge of letters.

The second is, how to combine letters into syllables, and syllables into words; how to properly accent syllables in a word: this process is called spelling.

The third thing is, how to articulate clearly, and pronounce with proper emphasis, tones and inflections of voice, written or printed words, arranged in sentences; how to regulate or modify the voice in accordance with the laws of punctuation; how to modify the loudness or intensity of the voice, according to the magnitude or condition of the audience, the nature of the building, or other circumstances. A practical knowledge of these things is the art of reading.

When a pupil has learned to read, he holds a key to the immense treasury of human knowledge which has been accumulating for many long ages.

But the difficulties to be encountered, in learning to read, according to the present system of orthography, are almost innumerable, involving an immense amount of patience, and a reckless waste of time and means. For the common English alphabet is so extremely imperfect, that it has effectually put it beyond the power of any human being to remember how to spell the one-tenth part of the words of our language. No human memory, however powerful, is adequate to the hopeless task.

Our dictionaries, it is true, inform us how to spell a hundred thousand words; but, in the great majority of these, the student is left wholly in the dark in regard to any law, dictating how they shall be spelled. There is little or no resemblance between the sound of the syllables and the sounds of the elementary letters, entering into their composition. The same letter has frequently from two to half a dozen different sounds. The same combination of letters is often pronounced in three or four different ways. The same sound, occurring in different syllables and words, is not unfrequently represented first, by one letter, then by another, and so on, until system and law are completely annihilated, and inextricable confusion supremely reigns. Where no law exists system is ignored; an arbitrary custom becomes the standard; memory is overtaxed; years of youthful vigor are wasted in vainly striving to grasp an impossibility. After many years of severe mental labor, a few, among the many, outrun their fellows, surfeit their memories with a knowledge how to spell a few thousand words, while the overwhelming balance, yet unspelled, towers up like mountains, bidding defiance to the most giant intellects to scale its giddy heights. Such is modern orthography; such the absurdities perpetuated in learned institutions under the name of education.

Shall we, in this enlightened Territory, follow in the same old beaten track of error? Shall we rivet the chains of mental slavery upon our children? Shall we perpetuate, without check or limit, an orthography so utterly unadapted to the high state of civilization to which we so ardently aspire? Shall we take no initial steps to gradually arrest, and finally remove, this wide-spread curse from our common schools? Shall we suffer this association to be adjourned without inquiring what can be done to remedy, in some measure, this long standing evil, foisted upon us through the apathy and sanction of past ages?

An alphabet, containing about forty characters, would be amply sufficient, to clearly and distinctly spell, in accordance with an invariable law, every word in the English language. This law is simple, natural, easily understood, difficult

to be erased from the memory, exhibiting with unerring precision, how every syllable, every word, whose pronunciation is known, must be spelled, and this too, without the aid of dictionaries.

Any child, from four to six years of age, of ordinary ability, and diligent application, will easily learn such an alphabet in ten days; and in ten days more, he will thoroughly learn the law of spelling, so as to be able, with a little practise, to spell correctly every word in our language. Thus, in less than one month, a child can easily accomplish more than any human being could attain, by the common orthography, in a thousand years.

The years wasted in acquiring an elementary branch so glaringly imperfect could be occupied on other useful branches of education. Reading, with the aid of a perfect alphabet, would become many-fold more simple, and progression in an art so all-important, would be rapidly accelerated. Thus years of toilsome labor might be happily dispensed with, future generations be rescued from the galling yoke of mental slavery, so wearisome to the youthful mind, and so detrimental to its proper development.

This is emphatically a day of progression. Mind is struggling with almost superhuman effort to free itself from the darkness of past ages. King-craft, priest-craft, and every other craft, opposed to true progress, are trembling under the consciousness of a speedy dissolution. The rusty iron-bound shackles of powerful monarchies must be burst asunder. Before a superior light from the eternal heavens, religious systems, invented by human agency, or revealed by powers from beneath, must be exploded and vanish away. The very foundations of popular education need remodeling. For education, founded merely upon something without system, without law, something to be committed to memory, without the aid of laws to assist the memory, is unworthy of its name. And though handed down from remote ages of antiquity, and cherished by learned institutions, it is to be received with distrust, if not entirely discarded; and as soon as circumstances will admit, it should be wholly removed from our educational system.

Vague speculations, wild hypotheses, romance, fiction, and every other kindred curse, handed down from the fathers, ought no longer to be considered a part of education. The memories of youthful students ought no longer to be overburdened with isolated facts in a science, when laws comprehending such facts are accessible. Facts may be useful in illustrating laws; but laws show why the facts exist. He, therefore, is truly educated in a science, who has understandingly acquired a knowledge of the laws on which the individual facts depend.

A reformation, in the right direction, has already commenced. A new alphabet has been devised by Pitman and others, founded upon the laws of sound. Its capabilities are fully adequate to the grand object he had in view, namely, a perfect system of orthography. By happily retaining the letters of the old alphabet, and adding thereto the requisite number of new characters, he has made it comparatively easy for good readers in the old method to understand, without much effort, how to read in the new. The advantages of this cannot be over-estimated. For if all the books in the English language were suddenly transformed into the phonotype of Pitman, the millions of readers of the old orthography would scarcely perceive the happy change. A few hours' effort, at most, would enable them to read with the same fluency as before.

It is not contended that Pitman's system, in all respects, is perfect. The form of the characters may, perhaps, need remodeling, so as to have, as far as possible, a resemblance between the written and printed character, without altogether destroying the gradual or easy transition from the old system of reading to the new.

The Deseret alphabet has its advantages over Pitman's in the principle that one set of characters can easily be used in both the written and printed form. With the addition of four or five more characters, the orthography would be greatly improved. To read in the Deseret character requires study, the reader receiving no benefit, as in Pitman's, from the old alphabet. The forms and sounds of thirty-eight entirely

new letters must be learned and impressed on the memory. While in reading, according to Pitman, the forms and sounds of twenty-six letters are generally already known, and the sounds of the few remaining new letters are, in most cases, easily determined by the position they occupy among the old.

The length of the Deseret characters is uniform; there are no letters projecting above or below their fellows; this renders each word an exact parallelogram. A sentence consists of a succession of parallelograms, varying, in their outlines, only in length. This uniformity is beautiful, indeed, in the abstract; if we glance at a line or a page, without reading, we greatly admire the unvarying geometrical form pervading the whole. But this very uniformity is destructive of simplicity in reading; for the expert reader does not stop to spell each syllable in a word before he pronounces it. He becomes so familiar with the exterior outlines and shapes of words, that he discerns in a moment the pronunciation, without taxing his mind with their orthography. It is the external shape of a word, then, which enables a good reader to instantly grasp it, and proceed on to the next, without delay. It is the *pees*, and the *cues*, the *leas*, and the *dees*, the *els*, and the *efs*, &c., which project above and below the shorter letters, and produce a pleasing variety of shapes, and jagged outlines, sufficiently prominent, to instantly catch the eye of the reader, that render the words in a sentence so quickly distinguished from each other. The Deseret alphabet, therefore, is not adapted to quick reading, without an over-exertion of mind, far greater than is required in reading by other alphabets, not so uniform in construction.

In the invention of a new alphabet, the great danger to be avoided is too few letters. Every simple sound should have its characteristic sign or letter. Every shade of variation, however small, in simple sounds, requires a distinct letter. Every diphthongal sound should also be represented by a letter. If errors there must be, it is far better to have too many letters than too few. With too few letters, the simplicity of the law of spelling is violated; with too many letters, the law is not affected, but the compound sound or syllable is merely represented by a single character, instead of being spelled. The latter error is comparatively harmless, in contrast with the great and pernicious evils resulting from the former.

If eight or ten, or even more, surplus characters, not really needed, were judiciously introduced into a phonetic alphabet, there would be no law of sound, in the least, violated. The advantages gained would be a very great reduction in the size of our written and printed words; and hence, much more could be condensed within the same space, without impairing or weakening the simplicity of the orthographical construction. It is certainly much easier to commit to memory a few surplus characters, than to be under the continual necessity of using two or more letters, in spelling or writing certain sounds but slightly compound in their nature.

One of the greatest objections, urged against the re-construction of our orthography, is, that all school readers, grammars, geographies, maps, arithmetics, histories, works on mathematics, chemistry, philosophy, botany, civil law, mechanics, and every other branch of useful science and literature in our language,—are written and printed only in the common orthography, and that the student who acquires the phonetic orthography only, is effectually excluded from every other branch of education; cut off from all libraries of useful knowledge; debarred by his ignorance from all news-papers and other instructive periodicals; prevented from all written correspondence with relatives, or any one else, abroad. As a missionary, he could not publish a pamphlet, or an article for a news-paper, or even an advertisement for a meeting. And in short, that he would stand as an ignorant, untutored barbarian, as a comparative idiot, in the midst of an intelligent, educated generation.

Certainly these objections are well founded, and would necessarily prove fatal to all reconstructed alphabets, unless the student should also make himself thoroughly acquainted with the old system as well as the new. He should learn all that he now learns, and in ad-

dition should learn the phonetic method also.

But, it may be asked, what use is the knowledge of phonetics without books? The answer is, no use at all. There must be a well selected series of educational books, re-published in the phonotype form. There must be a sufficient number of copies of each book, to amply supply the schools of our Territory. If we have twenty thousand school children, then we require an equal number of copies of each volume in the series. If ten volumes were sufficient to impart a good common school education, then this Territory would now require two-hundred thousand copies, in the phonotype print, to successfully begin the grand undertaking. Children thus educated would consider their knowledge of but little value, unless they could extend their researches after useful information, far beyond their educational series. A library of a thousand volumes, for reading and for general reference, would be considered extremely meagre and limited, yet it might answer for a beginning, but would impart but an extremely small moiety of the vast fund of knowledge contained in the great libraries abroad.

A sufficient quantity of copies of each of the thousand volumes might probably be published in the phonotype form, and suitably bound, for about five millions of dollars. This would satisfy, in some measure, the present wants of our people. Anything much short of this would greatly weaken the interest of both parents and children. They would consider it unwise, to engage in a reformation, so limited in its access to the vast store-house of knowledge, printed in the old orthography.

A successful revolution, in the very foundations of science and education, can only be accomplished by a heavy expenditure of capital, combined with the united effort of a great people, such as now exist in this Territory.

For the want of union, there is no other Territory, or State, that can accomplish this great and desirable change. Let the people of our mountain home, be once convinced of the practicability and usefulness of this grand undertaking; let them see that there is a more expeditious and simple way of obtaining knowledge; let them understand that a few volumes of educational works need printing in the phonotype form; let them be assured that these will be gradually succeeded by a few scores of other volumes, together with phonotype newspapers and other interesting periodicals; let them be persuaded that their most pressing wants in literature and science, will be supplied in the new type, and they will unitedly open their hearts and patronize this most useful enterprise. The hundred thousand dollars, now annually expended for books in the old type, would be turned in the channel of the new. The capital, thus arising, could be expended in additional publications; and probably a half century would not elapse, before all the useful books in the English language could be transformed into phonotype volumes. Thus the old orthography would become obsolete, and the new be perpetuated for the benefit of all future generations.

But a few years more, and our population will number a half-million; the demand for books will be increased many fold. Shall we supply this demand, by importations from abroad? Or shall we manufacture the paper, make our own phonotype, and perform all the mechanical work here?

Millions of Lamanites are to be civilized, converted and taught the English language, and be educated therein. What years of severe mental labor will be avoided, by teaching them through the aid of a phonetic alphabet. The same is true, in relation to all people of a foreign tongue, who may wish to identify themselves with this people, and study our language. Phonetics, not only teach foreigners how to read, but they also teach them the exact pronunciation of every word. Shall we, by our apathy and indifference, withhold from foreigners and from our rising generations, a blessing of such immense value?

Every inhabitant of our Territory should consider himself a member of a Phonetic Society—should consider himself bound by the most sacred duties to his children, to patronize by his influence, and by his wealth, a system of education, so all-important in its

future bearings upon mankind.

The teachers in this association should carefully consider this subject; should devise the most feasible plans, to successfully introduce this desired reformation in all the schools of our Territory; they should agitate this subject both privately and publicly, until the incessant demands of the people for phonotype educational works, shall inspire confidence in capitalists to furnish the same.

When other Territories and States see that we are in earnest upon this subject, and that we are in a fair way to render practicable, that which they, as well as we, have so long and so anxiously desired, they will undoubtedly follow our example; if so, the desired revolution can be accomplished in a much shorter time, and the transformation of our libraries from the old to the new system, be greatly expedited.

Whether we engage in this honorable enterprise or not, one thing is certain, the work will be done. Our educational system must be revolutionized—must be re-constructed upon a new and more perfect basis, adapted to a new age—a new era—far in advance of the old. The great temple of science must be erected upon the solid foundations of everlasting truth; its towering spires must mount upward, reaching higher and still higher, until crowned with the glory and presence of Him, who is Eternal.

ADDRESS

BY
O. H. Riggs,Before the Territorial Teachers' Association, Salt Lake City,
Friday, Oct. 3, 1873.

In surveying the external world, we discover that every creature and every physical object have received definite constitutions. Intelligence, wisdom, benevolence and power characterize the works of creation, and the human mind ascends by a chain of correct and rigid induction to a great first cause, in which these qualities must reside. Man obviously stands pre-eminent among sublunary objects, and is distinguished, by remarkable endowments, above all other terrestrial beings. Nevertheless, no creature presents such anomalous appearances as man. Viewed in one aspect he almost resembles a demon; in another he still bears the impress of the image of God. The most opposite instincts or impulses exist in his mind. He is actuated by evil instincts, and if he permits the moral sentiments to obey, he is almost a fiend. On the contrary, when the moral impulses predominate, the benignity, serenity, and splendor of a highly elevated nature beam from his countenance and radiate from his eye. He is then lovely, noble, and gigantically great. But how shall these conflicting tendencies be reconciled? We answer, that he should first understand the laws which govern his physical, intellectual, and moral constitution, and then conform to those laws to the best of his ability.

The magnificence of the form and symmetry of man, and his superior excellence over all other created beings, cause him to step forth and give the injunction, "Study me! for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The human body consists of bones, muscles, nerves, and blood vessels, besides organs of nutrition, of reproduction, of respiration, of feeling and of thought. These parts are all composed of physical elements, and to a certain extent are subject to the physical laws of creation. The bones increase in size and strength by use, while they are weakened by inaction. Exercise favors the deposition of both animal and earthy matter, by increasing the circulation and nutrition in this texture. It is also a law of the muscular system that whenever a muscle is called into frequent use its fibres increase in thickness and become capable of acting with greater force.

Physiologists and philosophers of the present day regard the brain as the organ of the mind. It is the centre of the nervous system, it is the seat of thought, of feeling, and of consciousness, and the centre towards which all impressions made by the nerves distributed through the body are conveyed, and from which the commands of the will are transmitted to put the parts in motion. We find that the bones,