

PART  
**ONE**

PHONETICS IN BRITAIN  
AND CONTINENTAL EUROPE

# UNIT 1

ALEXANDER JOHN ELLIS (1814–1890)

## Introduction

亚历山大·约翰·埃利斯是英国语音学早期代表人物，生于米德塞克斯的富裕乡绅家庭，早年受教于伊顿公学，在剑桥大学三一学院就读期间主修数学和古典文学，对音乐乐理亦有一定研究。他对包括人声、乐声在内的声音具有浓厚兴趣，翻译出版了德国生理学家兼物理学家赫尔曼·冯·亥姆霍兹（Hermann von Helmholtz, 1821—1894）的《音的感知》（*Lehre von den Tonempfindunge*, 1862）一书，为《不列颠百科全书》第9版撰写了关于语音学的若干词条，还专门为音乐界人士编写了《写给歌手的发音指南》（*Pronunciation for Singers*, 1877）。

埃利斯是位具有维多利亚情怀的学者，是英语拼写改革运动的推动者和实践者。他认为，英语发音与拼写之间的巨大落差严重制约了识字的普及，若要使英国的教育跟上新时代的步伐，从而实现社会的良性发展，就必然需要一套新的正字法体系，实现语音和字符之间的一一对应，让识字、读书变得简单。为此，他于1845年印发了一份30页的小册子，题为《关于语音印刷与语音书写的请愿书》（*A Plea for Phonotypy and Phonography*）。他在这本小册子里详尽地列出了他从英语中观察到的43个音及其所对应的多达200种拼写方式，并由此大声疾呼：这一情况“实在是个可悲的事实”，“对于我国所有期待大众启蒙与学识进步的人来说，都是最大的遗憾”（p. 16）。三年后，这本小册子被充实成了180页的《语音拼写请愿书》（*A Plea for Phonetic Spelling*），他在书中公布了一套由40个字母组成的“英语语音字母表”（English Phonetic Alphabet），希望自己设计的这套新字母能够取代现行的语音-字符不对应的“异质正字法”（heteric orthography）。在同年出版的《语音学基础》（*The Essentials of Phonetics*）一书中，他身体力行，完全按照这套新正字法印刷了该书。虽然埃利斯最终未能让英语的书写体系出现激进变革，但是他的细致描写和缜密论证对英国的语音学研究

传统影响深远。他设计的部分字符，如 *ʃ*、*ʒ* 等，最终被国际音标继承，一直沿用至今。

LONG VOWELS.	STOPPED VOWELS.	EXPLODENTS.	CONTINUANTS.
Sounded as	Sounded as	Sounded as	Sounded as
Ɛ <i>ε ee in eel</i>	I <i>i i in ill</i>	P <i>p p in rope</i>	F <i>f f in safe</i>
ʌ <i>a a .. ale</i>	E <i>e e .. ell</i>	B <i>b b .. robe</i>	V <i>v v .. save</i>
ʌ̄ <i>ā a .. alms</i>	A <i>ā a .. am</i>	T <i>t t .. fate</i>	T̄ <i>t̄ th .. wreath</i>
Ɔ <i>œ a .. all</i>	O <i>o o .. olive</i>	D <i>d d .. fade</i>	Ɔ̄ <i>đ th .. wreath</i>
Ɔ̄ <i>ō o .. ope</i>	U <i>u u .. up</i>	Ɔ̄ <i>ç ch .. cheer</i>	S <i>s ss .. hiss</i>
W <i>w oo .. food</i>	Ū <i>ū u oo .. foot</i>	J <i>j j .. jeer</i>	Z <i>z s .. his</i>
DIPHTHONGS.			
Ɔ̄ <i>ij i in isle</i>	Ɔ̄̄ <i>ɛ̄ ow in owl</i>	C <i>c c .. came</i>	Σ <i>ʃ sh .. mesh</i>
Ɔ̄̄ <i>oi .. oil</i>	Ɔ̄̄̄ <i>u .. mule</i>	G <i>g g .. game</i>	Ɔ̄̄̄ <i>ʒ s .. measure</i>
COALESCENTS.			
Y <i>y y in yea</i>	W <i>w w in way</i>	LIQUIDS.	
		R <i>r r in for</i>	L <i>l l in fall</i>
ASPIRATE.			
H <i>h h in hay</i>	NASALS.		
		M <i>m m in seem</i>	Ɔ̄̄̄̄ <i>ŋ ng in sing</i>
		N <i>n n .. seen</i>	

图 1-1 埃利斯设计的“英语语音字母表”

英语的语音和拼写之间为什么会呈现如此严重的不一致？埃利斯正确指出了其背后的奥秘：语音处于不间断的发展变化中，书写形式就像是“生命体的即时照片，将某一瞬间状态定格，而肌体仍在继续生长变化”（《论早期英语的发音》Vol. 1, p. 17）。因此，利用文字揣测语音，就像是“拿着年轻时或儿时的照片，把成年人或老人辨认出来”（出处同上）。为此，他投入毕生精力撰写了5卷本巨著《论早期英语的发音》（*On Early English Pronunciation*, 1869—1889），该书成为以科学方法论述英语语音史的典范，对斯威特以及德国的菲耶托（Wilhelm Viëtor, 1850—1918）、克鲁格（Friedrich Kluge, 1856—1926）等后世学者影响显著。

本单元选文选自1848年出版的《语音拼写请愿书》，埃利斯将英语现行拼写方式与自己所设计的新拼写方式进行了比较，我们可从中思考他对语音细节的一些看法。

## Reading

From *A Plea for Phonetic Spelling* (1848)

### § 14

#### Dr. Johnson's Orthographic Difficulties

Permit us, kind reader, once more to appeal to your own practice. Have you never made a slip in orthography? Have you never felt a difficulty about the letters which a word should contain? Have you never written down a word on a side slip of paper, *to see how it looked*, before you ventured upon inserting it in your more important document? <sup>[1]</sup> Do not blush to own yourself at fault, for the settlers of our orthography are not themselves at one about the matter. Listen to the voice of the mighty lexicographer, Dr. Johnson, labouring at once under an ardent desire to lay down the law, and an inability to determine what that law should be, but contriving to display his own etymological and linguistical ignorance.

“Of this kind anomalous formations, which, being once incorporated, can never be afterwards dismissed or reformed, are the derivatives *length* from *long*, *strength* from *strong*, *darling* from *dear*, *breadth* from *broad*; from *dry*, *drought*; from *high*, *height*, which Milton, in zeal for analogy, writes *highth*. ‘*Quid te exempta juvat spinis de pluribus una?*’ (How are you advantaged by removing a solitary thorn from out a multitude?) To change all would be too much, and to change one is nothing.

“This uncertainty is most frequent in the vowels, which are so capriciously pronounced, and so differently modified by accident or affectation, not only in every province, but in every mouth, that to them, as is well known to etymologists, little regard is to be shewn<sup>1</sup> in the

1 本书保留了原文中的旧拼法，均未做改动，如 *shewn* = *shown*, *domestick* = *domestic*, *Shakspere* = *Shakespeare*, 等等。（本书中的注释，带方括号的数字为原注，集中列于文后；不带方括号的数字为编著者注，以脚注形式给出。）

deduction of one language from another. <sup>[2]</sup>

“Such defects are not errors in orthography, but spots of barbarity impressed so deep in the English language, that criticism can never wash them away; these, therefore, must be permitted to remain untouched; but many words have likewise been altered by accident, or depraved by ignorance, as the pronunciation of the vulgar has been weakly followed; and some still continue to be variously written, as authors differ in their care or skill: of these it was proper to inquire the true orthography, which I have always considered as depending upon their derivation, <sup>[3]</sup> and have therefore referred them to their original languages; thus, I write *enchant*, *enchantment*, *enchanter*, after the French, and *incantation* after the Latin; thus, *entire* is chosen rather than *intire*, because it passed to us not from the Latin *integer*, but from the French *entier*.

“Of many words it is difficult to say whether they were immediately received from the Latin, or the French, since, at the time when we had dominions in France, we had the Latin service in our churches. It is, however, my opinion, that the French generally supplies us; for we have few Latin words among the terms of domestick use, which are not in French; but many French which are very remote from the Latin.

“Even in words of which the derivation is apparent, I have been often obliged to sacrifice uniformity to custom; thus, I write, in compliance with a numberless majority, *convey* and *inveigh*, *deceit* and *receipt*, *fancy* and *phantom*; sometimes the derivative varies from the primitive, as *explain* from *explanation*, *repeat* and *repetition*.

“Some combinations of letters, having the same power, are used indifferently without any discoverable reason or choice, as in *choak*, *choke*; *soap*, *sope*; *fewel*, *fuel*, and many others; which I have sometimes inserted twice, that those, who search for them under either form, may not search in vain.

“In examining the orthography of any doubtful word, the mode of spelling by which it is inserted in the series of the dictionary, is to be considered as that to which I give, perhaps not often rashly, the preference. I have left, in the examples, to every author, his own practice unmolested, that the reader may balance suffrages, and judge between us; but this question is not always to be determined by reputed or by real learning; some men, intent upon greater things, have thought little on sounds and derivations; some, knowing in the ancient tongues, have neglected those in which our words are commonly to be sought. Thus, Hammond writes *fecibleness* for *feasibleness*, because I suppose he imagined it to be derived immediately from the Latin; and some words, such as *dependant*, *dependent*, *dependance*, *dependence*, vary their final syllable, as one or another language is present to the writer.”<sup>[4]</sup>

“In this part of the work, where caprice has long wanted without control, and vanity sought praise by petty reformation, I have endeavoured to proceed with a scholar’s reverence for antiquity, and a grammarian’s regard to the genius of our tongue. I have attempted a few alterations;<sup>[5]</sup> and among those few, perhaps the greater part is from the modern to the ancient practice; and I hope I may be allowed to recommend to those, whose thoughts have been perhaps employed too anxiously on verbal singularities, not to disturb, upon narrow views, or for minute propriety, the orthography of their fathers. It has been asserted, that for the law to be *known*, is of more importance than to be *right*. Change, says Hooker, is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better. There is, in constancy and stability, a general and lasting advantage, which will always overbalance the slow improvements of gradual correction. Much less ought our written language to comply with the corruptions of oral utterance, or copy that which every variation of time or place makes different from itself, and imitate those changes which will again be changed, while imitation is employed in observing them.”<sup>[6]</sup>

...

§ 18

Hetéric and Phonetic Spelling Compared

After having thus seen how words *may be* distorted, it is worth while inquiring how they *are* distorted. Another version of this same letter in the received hetéric orthography, side by side with its phonetic representation, will enable the reader to judge, not only of the gulf that lies between hetéricism and phoneticism, but of the ease with which this gulf may be bridged over by means of the phonetic alphabet, which we propose to adopt.

“LOOK ON THIS PICTURE,

To the Editor of the *Phonotypic Journal*.

Sir,—I observe you propose to introduce a new system of writing, by which you express only the sounds, and not the orthography of the words; but I think you go too far in changing our time-honoured alphabet, and adding so many new letters. I make bold to say that it is quite easy to write according to sound, with the letters of the old alphabet, and, indeed, I have for many years been in the habit of doing so. I found, as most people do, that it was impossible to make any thing of the common spelling, from the total want of rules; so I made up my mind to discard orthography, and to spell by sound, but in a manner very different from yours, and, I flatter myself, very superior to it. It appears to me, that all the writers on this subject have altogether misunderstood the peculiar character of the English language, which I take to be this, that every word may be spelt in an infinite variety of ways, no one of which is more right than another. Any person will see that it must be so, if he considers that every “sound” in our language is expressed in a great number of ways; and consequently every “word” ought to be, for words are made up of single sounds. This infinitely diversified plan of spelling, as just observed, I take to be the peculiar characteristic and glory of our written language.

—AND ON HIS.”

Tu ðe Editer ov ðe *Phonotypic Journal*.

Ser,—Ë obzêrv u propoz tu introdús a nu sistem ov rjtij, bj hwiq u eesprés onli ðe sændz, and not ðe ertografi ov ðe wurdz; but j tije u gø tú far in ganjij sr tjonurd alfabet, and adij sø meni nu letêrz. Ë mac bold tu sa ðat it iz ewjt ezi tu rjt acerdij tu sænd, wid ðe letêrz ov ðe old alfabet, and, inded, j hav fer meni yerz ben in ðe habit ov dwij sø. Ë frnd, az most pep’l du, ðat it woz imposib’l tu mac eni tij ov ðe comun spellij, from ðe total wont ov ruulz; sø j mad up mj mjnd tu discard ertografi, and tu spel bj sænd, but in a maner veri diferent from urz, and, j flater misêlf, veri superiur tu it. It aperz tu mæ, ðat el ðe rjterz on ðis subject hav eltugéêr misunderstúð ðe peculijer character ov ðe Inglij langwej, hwiq j tac tu be ðis, ðat everi wurd ma be spelt in an infinit varjeti ov waz, no wun ov hwiq iz mor rjt ðan anúêr. Eui persun wil se ðat it must be sø, if he considêrz ðat everi “sænd” in sr langwej iz eesprését in a græt number ov waz; and consecwentli everi “wurd” et tu be, fer wurdz qr mad up ov sigg’l sændz. ðis infinitli diversifjð plan ov spellij, az just obzêrvd, j tac tu be ðe peculijer characteristic and glori ov sr rit’n langwej.

Ë of’n smjl hwen j red ðe laborius efurts ov ertograferz tu fics ðe spellij ov Inglij, hwiq woz never inténded tu be fics, but,

I often smile when I read the laborious efforts of orthographers to fix the spelling of English, which was never intended to be fixed, but, on the contrary, to exhibit an endless variety. I think we may be proud of the circumstance, that there is no other language in the world which in this respect can compare with ours. But the most remarkable thing is, that while the educated classes have lost the true idea of English writing, we, that is, the uneducated, have always retained it. Orthographers call our spelling, "bad spelling", but I say it is good spelling, and I am sure you will agree with me. Our method is the only one which enables us to avail ourselves of the infinite variety afforded by our native tongue.

Again, every one knows that one great boast of Englishmen is, that it is impossible for foreigners to learn our language. This, with our so-called orthography, is, unfortunately, not quite true; but if my method were adopted, our language would be absolutely inaccessible to *Mouseteers* and all such stupid people as cannot speak English. The received spelling answers this purpose tolerably well, but it is evident that on my plan, for a foreigner to spell English, will be, as it ought to be, quite out of the question.

Besides, our children, at present, spend, say, ten years, in learning to spell and read, which is a great advantage; but on my plan, it would take them a whole lifetime, and after all, they would fail; so that they would have to work hard, not only at school, but always; and the habits of industry thus acquired would be invaluable.

In short, every advantage possessed by the received system, would be found to a far greater extent in that which I propose, as I think this letter will prove.

I remain, your's truly,  
A Lover of Bad Spelling.

on ðe contreri, tu egzibit an endles varjeti. ði tiŋe we ma be prsd ov ðe sercumstans, ðat ðar iz nō uder langweĵ in ðe wurld hwiĵ in ðis respēct can compar wid srz. But ðe most remarcab'l tiŋ iz, ðat hwĵl ðe educatēd clāsez hav lost ðe truĵ ĵdea ov Igglij rĵtiŋ, we, ðat iz, ðe uneducatēd, hav ēlwaz retand it. Ortograferz cel sr spelij, "bad spelij," but ĵ sa it iz gud spelij, and ĵ am ĵur ū wil agrē wid me. S'r metod iz ðe onli wun hwiĵ enab'lz us tu aval srselvz ov ðe infinit varjeti afordēd bj sr nativ tuĵ.

Agēn, everi wun noz ðat wun grat bost ov Igglijmen iz, ðat it iz imposib'l fer forenerz tu lern sr langweĵ. ðis, wid sr sō-celd ertografi, iz, unfertunetli, not cwĵt truĵ; but if mj metod wer adōptēd, sr langweĵ wud be absolutli inacēsib'l tu *Mouseters*, and ēl sug stupid pep'l az can not spec Igglij. ðs resevd spelij anserz ðis purpus tōlerabli wel, but it iz evident ðat on mj plan, fer a forener tu spel Igglij, wil be, az it et tu be, cwĵt st ov ðe cwestyūn.

Besĵdz, sr ĵildren, at prezent, spend, sa, ten yerz, in lerniŋ tu spel and rēd, hwiĵ iz a grat advantēĵ; but on mj plan, it wud tae ðem a hol lĵftiŋ, and after ēl, ða wud fal; sō ðat ða wud hav tu wurc hard, not onli at scul, but ēlwaz; and ðe habits ov industri ðus acwĵrd wud be invāluab'l.

In fert, everi advantēĵ pozēst bj ðe resevd sistem, wud be fōnd tu a far grater ecstēt in ðat hwiĵ ĵ propoz, az ĵ tiŋe ðis leter wil pruv.

Ī reman, ūrz truĵli,  
A Luver ov Bad Spelij.

 § 21**Hetéricism a Bar to Education**

The misfortune of the hetéric system, therefore, is not so much that it is a scientific failure, as that it opposes a great and most unnecessary obstacle in the path of knowledge. Let it be always remembered, that though a person is not educated who can only read and write, yet no person can be educated without being able to read and write; no person can even derive proper benefit from education unless reading and writing are almost as easy to him as hearing and speaking. If the mechanical action of the hand in writing, even in that brief and beautiful phonographic style which keeps pace with the speaker's tongue, be necessarily somewhat more fatiguing than the action of the organs of speech, yet it can be kept up for a longer time; the voice fails before the hand. And reading should never be any effort; it should be the recreation and delight of mankind, even more so than listening. The most honeyed words pall on the ear; the excitement of listening wearies the brain; we long for retirement and quiet, when, with our silent and ever-ready friend—the written word—we indulge in communings that are inexpressibly gratifying to our intellectual existence. Could we indeed sum up the amount of pleasurable instruction which we have derived from spoken words, and compare it with that derived from written sources, how small would the former appear! Without the mystic scratches that cover the scholar's paper, where indeed were our knowledge? Can anyone, then, fully impressed with the immense advantage of learning to read, in the acquirement of a knowledge of nature and nature's God, consent to allow of any impediments in the learner's path, impediments formidable enough to prevent very many from ever attaining the power—the simple, lowest, most indispensable power, of reading? Can anyone willingly consent to a state of things from which such effects as the following can result? *“England and Wales, with their SIXTEEN MILLIONS of people, contain nearly EIGHT MILLIONS unable to write their names, and not less than FIVE MILLIONS unable to read their mother tongue.* This is a startling,

an unwelcome, statement. It is natural that good men should endeavour to escape from an admission of its truth. To ourselves it is unwelcome. We would not believe it true, if we could avoid it. But it is a conclusion which results, not merely from the publications of the Registrar General, nor from any solitary testimony, but from evidence emanating from a multitude of points, and all converging upon this issue.”<sup>[7]</sup> It is not merely from want of instruction, although this has been remarkably deficient in our otherwise civilized country, that these lamentable results have ensued; much, very much, must be attributed to the tediousness and trouble, “the labour and disgust of learning to read”, which have made it, in the words of the same sagacious educationalist who has thus characterized it, “the most difficult of all human attainments”.<sup>[8]</sup>



### Phoneticism a Help to Education

Our alphabet is, therefore, not merely a scientific failure, it is a moral failure, because it deprives a large portion of our population of enjoying one of the most indispensable blessings of civilized life, the power to read.

Change the system, abolish the hetéric mode of spelling, print phonetically, and more will be done towards teaching the whole people to read, than doubling or tripling the number of schools in the kingdom; for the plan of reading on the phonetic system is so simple and so easily comprehended and explained, that one would teach another for the pleasure of the thing, without the necessity of the formal intervention of a school apparatus.

We are not decrying schools, because we do not think that education consists solely in the power to read, or to read and write. This power forms but a very small fraction of education, which may be commenced, but can never be conducted far, without it. Education is three-fold—physical,

moral, and intellectual; the power to read belongs only to the elements of intellectual education, and is in that only a means for acquiring knowledge, and scarcely to be called knowledge itself. But education does not finish at school; it lasts a man's life; and much is contributed to it by the ability to read, without which most men would be, as it were, cut off from the world of great and good and intellectual men—men whose sayings are worth treasuring, and whose thoughts are for all time—simply because they have no opportunity of personal communication with such men, or, if they have, cannot derive the same advantage from their society as they can from their writings. We do not despise the hetéric system. We have ever looked upon the invention of writing as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, achievement of human intellect. Any system by which the thoughts of men can be made evident to the sense of sight, and to last beyond the grave, however clumsy the contrivance, or however difficult to acquire, is an incalculable advantage to mankind. But as the carriage-roads superseded the mule-tracks, and have themselves been in turn superseded by the railway, the earlier and clumsier contrivance must always yield to the new and commodious invention. The hetéric system has done its duty; it has had its day; it must be numbered with the things we reverence for the advantages they have bestowed upon us, and yield to the phonetic plan, as the last year's express gives way to the electric telegraph; and for the same reasons, the loss of time which its retention would necessitate.

...

§ 26

**The Disadvantages of Hetéricism Stated**

The objections then against the hetéric system of spelling English, so far as has been proved in the preceding pages, are contained in the following propositions.

1. No Englishman can tell with certainty how to pronounce any word which is presented to him in the hetéric orthography, unless he has heard it uttered by others; he may guess at its sound, and, if a practised reader, will frequently, but neither always, nor even in a very large majority of cases, guess correctly; the unpractised reader, on the other hand, is almost sure to guess incorrectly.

2. No Englishman can tell with certainty how to exhibit the hetéric orthography of a word which has never been presented to him in that orthography. Here again he may guess, and his guess will be more likely to be correct the greater his practice as a writer. Those who write seldom, such as the lower classes of society, rarely guess correctly; but it is as much guesswork with the educated as with the uneducated.

3. As a consequence of the above propositions, the truth of which cannot be denied after a glance at the tables in the Appendix, it follows that the pronunciation and spelling of each word of the language has to be learned before a person can read and write the language with hetéric correctness.

4. The great labour consequent upon attempting to commit to memory such a number of arbitrary symbols, or rather arbitrary combinations of twenty-six symbols, renders learning to read not only a hateful task to the child, but, in the words of an eminent educationalist, “the most difficult of human attainments”.<sup>[9]</sup> “Spelling”, continues the same author, “comes next to reading: new trials for the temper, new perils for the understanding; positive rules and arbitrary exceptions; endless examples and contradictions; till at length, out of all patience with the stupid docility of his pupil, the teacher perceives the absolute necessity of making him get by heart, with all convenient speed, every word in the language. The formidable columns rise in dread succession. Months and years are devoted to the undertaking; but after going through a whole spelling-book, perhaps a whole dictionary, till we come triumphantly to spell *Zeugma*, we have

forgotten how to spell *Abbot*, and we must begin with *Abasement*.” <sup>[10]</sup> It is needless to say that, although such tyranny may be practised upon the young, the old will not submit to it; and hence the adult who cannot read at twenty-five, is never likely to attempt learning to read all his life.

5. The dreadful consequence to the nation, of these difficulties being thrown in the path of the vanguard of knowledge, is the astonishing want of education among the lower classes of English society, a want shewn by the fearful fact, that, of those who are married, only about two men in three, and one woman in two, can or will sign their names. That this lamentable fact is chiefly due to the absurdities, contradictions, and consequent difficulties of the hetéric system of orthography, may be looked upon as proved, because it is now a very laborious task, and one by no means successfully overcome in all cases where it is tried, to teach reading and spelling at all, by means of the costly apparatus of a school, so that it is very rare indeed that we find one person volunteering to teach another in his spare hours; whereas, on the phonetic plan, it is so easy to learn and to teach to read, that we have every reason to hope working people will find it a pleasure (although a brief one) to teach their children and comrades in their over hours. Writing opposes mechanical difficulties, which the rough-handed labourer, with fingers unfortunately stiffened by the tool of his trade, the file, the hammer, or the plough, cannot easily overcome; but even these will find it more easy to form the simple strokes of phonetic short hand, than the “pothooks and hangers” in which alone the hetéric spelling admits of being exhibited, while he will have no orthographical and other intellectual difficulties to surmount in addition to the mechanical ones just pointed out, as he has on the present hetéric system. But there is another mode in which the difficulties of hetéric spelling, and the consequent length of time necessary to subdue them in order to learn to read with any degree of fluency, acts disadvantageously on the state of education in this country. It is found that the generality of children stop so short a time even at the low-priced or gratuitous schools of the National and British

Societies, that when they leave them, they are, in very many cases, far from having acquired the power of reading with that facility, which can alone induce them to take up a book for self-instruction or amusement, and they are therefore totally unfitted for instructing others. Books are consequently almost as much sealed to such persons after schooling as they were before. A book may lie on their shelves, but it is rarely opened. They *cannot read*, they can *only spell*; that is, they cannot tell the combined values of the letters, they can only give them their alphabetical names, of which it would require more than an Œdipus to unriddle the combined signification. "It is scarcely worthwhile going through so much to learn so little," (as we are informed the charity boy said when he had learned his alphabet), if, when the long and wearisome instruction in reading (on the hetéric plan) has been conscientiously gone through, the poor victim is not able to read any book with ease and certainty. What should we think of a government which permitted half its people to remain dumb, and at least a quarter more to stutter and stammer, when the power of preventing it lay in its hands? But this is effectively the case in England at the present day, where one half the people cannot read, and one quarter can only read a very small portion of their own language, and that with difficulty. There is scarcely an educated young lady in the kingdom (those who have devoted themselves to literary pursuits perhaps excepted) into whose hands you could put a scientific work on the most common subjects of natural philosophy, and request her to read it aloud. There is scarcely one who would accept the challenge. With educated men the case might be different, because these have learned Greek and Latin, and hence have more abundant means to guess at the pronunciation of scientific terms; but there is hardly one, if one, in the British empire whose reading has been so universal, or whose self-confidence is so great, as to allow him to risk his reputation by attempting such a feat as we have proposed, provided only that the subject of the treatise be thoroughly new to him. But if we proceed beyond natural philosophy, and enter upon the mysteries of technical terms in the various branches of trade and commerce—words whose use is

generally confined to sets of workmen, or professionalists—then we may hazard the assertion, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that there is no man in the whole world, (except perhaps the author of a pronouncing dictionary, whose business it has been to collect pronunciations from all available sources, and even his memory may fail him), there is no man, we repeat, in the whole world who could arrogate to himself the power of reading with a perfectly correct pronunciation any book at hazard, in which such expressions occurred. Listen to the landsman reading a tale of the sea; the townsman lost in the mysteries of agricultural phraseology; the ploughman wondering over the world of new words which pass current in the town; the philologist reading a work on printing; the tradesman poring over philology; the lawyer studying theology; and the theologian puzzling his brains over the equally inscrutable books of law; the man of any one profession opening a work for the first time which relates to any other profession whatever, and hear what extraordinary mistakes, confusion, blunders, or, in the case of the modest and unassuming, confessions of ignorance, abound. These are, all, the stutters of the reading world. They can get on with a certain number of written words, as the stutterer can with a certain number of vocal sounds; but once attack the dangerous quarter, and their mouths are closed, or they can produce naught but splutter and gabble. We have put these down, at a very low estimate, at one quarter—they ought to be put down at the whole—of the reading population: and the reader will recollect that there would be no stutters on the phonetic plan. But the dumb! The dumb! Those to whom a book is a great unsolvable mystery, one of the things to wonder at, but not to touch—this is the class for which we grieve. Who will dare to deny them the help we offer, or beat down the arm we stretch out to raise them from their prostration of intelligence? We may sum up this objection to the hetéric system of spelling in one short sentence: *Hetéricism is the mother of Ignorance.*

6. It may seem a light objection to advance after the above, but it is one much felt by men of science, by students of languages, and investigators

of the histories of nations, that on the hetéric plan there is no uniform method of reducing unwritten languages to writing, or presenting names of persons and places in those countries where either alphabetical writing is unknown, (as China, Japan, and the barbarous countries which have no writing, alphabetical or symbolical,) or the Roman alphabet is not used (as in Russia, Greece, and the whole of Asia and Africa). Indeed, even in those countries where the Roman alphabet is used, the varieties of sounds attributed to the different letters are so great, that the mere English scholar can never even guess at the pronunciation. We do not say that if the words were spelt phonetically, he would be able to utter these sounds; but as there are but about as many French sounds to be learnt as there are sounds in his own language, he would stand a much better chance of pronouncing them correctly, if they were extracted from the language, and symbols provided for each, the meaning of which were taught in childhood, when the organs of speech are most adaptable to the expression of varied sounds. Let any teacher explain the difficulties he has felt, even if he has proceeded no further than a map of Europe, or the history of England: may, to come closer home, if he does not advance further than the names of the towns in his own country, and those of the statesmen who have ruled it. Names are proverbial for the absurdities of their orthography, the pertinacity with which their owners cling to extravagant combinations of letters, and the mortification they feel when addressed by a wrongly pronounced appellation. It is felt perhaps that a strange uncouth orthography is proof of an old descent; it is, however, only a remnant of those times when the owners of such fine sounding titles could not write; when the seal was considered a more valid execution of a document than the signature; because no lord whose intellects were above an idiot's could fail of being able to job down the hilt of his sword upon the melted wax, while reading and writing were rare qualities enough to save a man's life when convicted of a capital crime. Those unpronounceable combinations in which the aristocracy of surnames delights, remind one forcibly of the misshapen monsters which we owe to the wild imagination of heralds, serving to

designate a family, and puzzle the naturalist. They were the address-cards of olden times, and will, it is hoped, go out with shop-signs as the power of reading extends. Even now, the words *Duke, Earl, Baron*, etc., would be more generally intelligible to the many if printed on carriage-panels, than the mysterious caps which at present adorn them.

7. Our language is continually changing. It has greatly changed, both in its vocabulary and its construction, since the days of Wickliffe, of Chaucer, and of Shakspeare. Even the hetéric orthography exhibits very different appearances in the works of those writers, and at the present day; at no time did it exhibit the pronunciation so clearly that no mistake could arise on the matter. We are still in doubt, and must perhaps forever remain in doubt, not merely as to the pronunciation of the dead Latin and Greek, but of the dead English of these three great English writers, dead, because no longer used in speech or writing, dead, because we can give it no tongue which we are certain would have been understood by these illustrious fathers of our language, were they living to hear us. Nay, there are very many who do not know that the pronunciation of English 100 years ago was different to ours. The sounds of many words have been changed, and their orthography left untouched. In all that class of words in which *ea* now represents the sound *ε*, as *peace, tea, appear*, etc., it was formerly pronounced *a*. It is difficult to believe this fact. We were ourselves astonished when, on conversing with the well-known Dr. Patrick Kelly, since deceased, he told us that he *recollected the change*. It has therefore happened almost in our own day, and yet how few will believe it. These changes of pronunciation are in reality changes of language, which are lost forever to the etymologist from not having been fixed by the orthography; for it is to the written language alone, and not to the spoken one, that the etymologist in his study is able to refer, first, because he cannot have constant access to a number of persons perfectly well acquainted with different languages, and speaking them as natives; and secondly, because the opinions of persons long since deceased have to be attended to. It would occasion no difficulty to the student, in reading old books, to see a variety of pronunciations

represented by symbols, as we even now condescend to spell Lowland Scotch<sup>2</sup> differently from London English, and as in ancient times—although all such representations are and were imperfect, owing to the imperfection of alphabets—Herodotus, Theocritus, and Thucydides, wrote the same words very differently, to indicate (as they may have done with some effect *to an ancient Greek*) their own peculiarities of pronunciation; a very few words of explanation would be sufficient to render such a process easy and intelligible; but it would be of great importance for those who strive to trace the gradual formation of language, to have a mirror in which every change is exactly reflected.

8. Lastly, the hetéric system of representing our language, which is such a hindrance to natives who learn to read and write, is a still greater hindrance to foreigners. A very acute and learned German writer, who has shown his extensive acquaintance with all the European languages of the classical and Germanic stems, not only in their grammatical construction, but in their phonetical development, thus introduces his remarks on English: “French has been for some centuries the common language of Europe for diplomatic and social purposes; but it has never gained a firm footing in extensive tracts of country exterior to Europe; for France has not had more enterprize<sup>3</sup> in colonization than Italy itself. On the other hand, English may pass for the general language of all the world, with the exception of Europe. This idiom has become incomparably flowing, from a bold mixture and consequent resolution of the grammatical forms of its Gothic and Roman elements; and it certainly appears destined more than any other living tongue to play this part. The suitableness of this language

---

2 低地苏格兰语指的不是苏格兰原有的属凯尔特语族的苏格兰盖尔语，而是苏格兰南部地区通行的属日耳曼语族的民间语言，由七国时代的诺森伯兰日耳曼语演化而成，曾为苏格兰王国国语，英格兰与苏格兰合并后，逐渐被视为英语的方言。低地苏格兰语今通称为 Scots，历史上通行的 Scotch 一词已不再作为语言名称、民族名称使用。

3 英语中有许多动词，词尾拼写为 -se 和 -ze 皆可（其派生词亦如此）。通常，-se 见于英国英语，-ze 见于美国英语。埃利斯虽为英国学者，但是其著作中使用的却一律都是 -ze。显然，作为拼写改革的积极推动者，他选择的是符合发音实际的拼法，而不是合乎传统的拼法。

for universal adoption (*die Universalität dieser Sprache*) would be still more evident, were it not obscured by a whimsically antiquated orthography. The other nations of Europe may esteem themselves happy that the English have not yet made this discovery.”<sup>[11]</sup> This is a warning which those who are interested in the spread of our language beyond our own shores, should lay to heart. There is perhaps no language which is now spoken as their native tongue by a greater number of persons, none which is more generally diffused in all parts of the world; for the sun never sets on the British empire, and the British language is spoken wherever the British rule predominates. Over the immense peninsula of Hindostan, on the new continent of Australasia, the islands of New Zealand, the scattered rocks and islands of Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Singapore, Labuan<sup>4</sup>, and Hong Kong; at the Cape of Good Hope, in the West Indies, over Canada; and, above all, in its new country, the United States of America, the British language asserts its claim to be heard; and the commerce of our country and of America will cause it to be heard far and wide. The English are not good linguists, their traders require to be spoken to in their own tongue. It is a matter not of merely national pride in extending a knowledge of our own fine idiom, it is a matter of commercial interest, to facilitate, as far as it lies in our power, the means and appliances for learning it. No means half so potent could be devised as a well-constructed phonetic alphabet. Our grammar is easy, one of the simplest in existence. We have no inflections and no genders of nouns and adjectives, no conjugational varieties of verbs, and very few and simple alterations in our tenses. The order of our words, proceeding from subject to predicate, and thence to object, is that recognized as the simplest logical arrangement. Our vocabulary is enormous, while its capabilities for receiving or inventing new words, with the resources of the German, Latin, and Greek at our command, are endless; nay, we can press an Indian or Arabic word into service, and yet dress it up so that the stranger should scarcely be discoverable. If a universal language should ever

---

4 纳闽 (Labuan), 沙巴外海的一个小岛。原属文莱, 1846 年割让给英国。今为马来西亚纳闽联邦直辖区, 是重要的自由港和国际离岸金融中心。

prevail, we seem to feel that it must be the English, or some descendant of it. Other idioms are spoken by too few, or are too original and straight-laced to admit of the introduction of new terms. When French, Latin, and Greek words are Germanized, they produce a painful sensation on the ear; their foreignism is so apparent; they seem to have no more business where they are, than flies in amber. The French have shewn themselves slow and unapt at incorporating new words; the Italians seem to look no further than the Latin; the Dutch will not allow the rights of citizenship to a single un-Germanic expression. The Slavonic languages are almost unheard of beyond the immediate neighbourhood in which they are spoken; the Spanish and Portuguese, although prevalent over immense tracts in central and southern America, are so little known beyond the countries which speak nothing else, that they can put in no claim to be universally adopted. The great dialect of the East, the Arabic and its sister languages, are so uncouth to European organs of speech, are founded upon such a totally different grammatical system, are written in such a cumbrous illegible character, and, although very copious, are so ill supplied with the terms which are indispensable to a European, that it would be impossible to attempt founding a universal language upon them. The Hindustanee<sup>5</sup> language indeed, being already a mixed tongue, might have some claims, if it did not come into such immediate collision with the English as to have no chance of standing against it. The Chinese system of writing, and very complex rules of accentuation and intonation, which a foreigner scarcely ever catches with sufficient correctness to be perfectly intelligible, is not likely to extend beyond the three or four hundred millions who at present make use of it or its dialects. The contest lies between English and French. Our commerce and colonial possessions must, in the course of things, decide for the English, independently of any other consideration; but when it is recollected that the English can appropriate all and every word in the

---

5 Hindustanee (印度斯坦语), 今更常见的拼写形式是 Hindustani, 是当时对印地语和马尔都语的统称, 随着 1947 年印巴分治后, 两国分别制定了不同的书写标准, 两种语言逐渐被视为不同的语言, 印度斯坦语这一统称的使用率也大幅下降。