

INTRODUCTION.

evil, our ancestors introduced *k* from the Greek, writing it generally after *c*, as in *liek*, *stick*, though in some instances, omitting *c*, as in *like* and *look*. Hence in all monosyllables in which a syllable beginning with *e* or *i* is added to the word, as in the past time and participles of verbs, we use *k* in the place of the Saxon *c*, as in *licked*, *licking*.

Our early writers attempted to extend this addition to words introduced from the Latin and Greek, in which no such reason exists for the use of *k*. Thus they wrote *publick*, *musick*, *rhetorick*. In these and similar words the Latins used *c* for the Greek *κ*, as *musicus*, for *μουσικος*, and the early English writers took both letters, the Roman *c* and Greek *κ*. This was absurd enough; but they never proceeded so far as to carry the absurdity through the derivatives; never writing *publican*, *musical*, *rhetorical*. After the latter, the word *public*, the word of authority, good sense, has nearly banished this pedantic orthography from use; and all words of this kind now appear, in most of our public acts and elegant writings, in their proper spelling; *public*, *publication*, *music*, *musical*.

In many words, formerly ending in *ie*, these letters have been discarded from the singular number, and *y* substituted. Thus *remedie*, *memorie*, are now written *remedy*, *memory*. But what is very singular, the plural of these words retains the *ie*, with the addition of *s*, as in *remedies*. This anomaly however creates no great inconvenience, except that it has been extended by negligent writers to words ending in *ey*, as in *attornies*. But words ending in *ey* properly make the plural by simply taking *s*, as in *surveys*, *attornours*. The same rule applies to verbs when an *s* is added, as in *conveys*.

5. In a vast number of words, the vowel *e* has been discarded as useless; as in *eggs* for *egges*; *certain* for *certaine*; *empress* for *empreſse*; *goodness* for *goodnesse*. This is an improvement, as the *e* has no sound in modern pronunciation. But here again we meet with a surprising inconsistency: for the same reason which justifies this omission, would justify and require the omission of the *e* in *examine*, *examinee*, *examinees*, *examinee's*, *determine*, *determinee*, and a multitude of others. The introduction of *e*, in most words of these classes, was at first wrong, as it could not plead any authority in the originals; but the retaining of it is unjustifiable, as the letter is not merely useless, but, in very numerous classes of words, it leads to a false pronunciation. Many of the most respectable English authors, a century ago or more, omitted *e* in such words as *examin*, *determin*, *famin*, *cutit*, *fertil*, *definit*, &c. &c. in the improvement of words and rejection of the letter *e*. The same orthography. In like manner, a final *e* is inserted in words of modern coinage, as in *alumine*, *chlorine*, *chloride*, *oxyde*, &c. without the least necessity or propriety.

6. A similar fate has attended the attempt to anglicize the orthography of another class of words, which we have received from the French. At a very early period, the words *chambre, desastre, desordre, chartre, monstre, tendre, tigre, entre, fievre, diamant, arbitre, nombre*, and others were reduced to the English form of spelling; *chamber, disaster, disorder, charter, monster, tender, tiger, enter, fever, diamond, arbitur, number*. At a later period Sir Isaac Newton, Camden, Welden, Milton, Whitaker, Pridaure, and others. But Warton and other authors of the 18th century, attempted to carry through this reformation, writing *septer, center, sepulcher*. But this improvement was arrested, and a few words of this class retain their French orthography: such are *metre, miter, nitre, spectre, sceptre, theatre, sepulchre*, and sometimes *centre*. It is remarkable that a nation distinguished for erudition, should thus reject improvements, and retain anomalies, in opposition to all the convenience of uniformity. I am glad that so respectable a writer as Mitford has discarded this innovation, and uniformly written *center, septer, theater, sepulcher*. In the present instance, want of uniformity is not the only evil. The present orthography has introduced an awkward double *ce* in *center* and *septer*, which is not the case in *sepulchred*; whereas Milton and Pope wrote these words as regular derivations of *center, septer, sepulcher*: thus, "*Sceptered King*." So Coxie, in his travels, "The principal wealth of the church is *centered* in the monasteries." This is correct.

7. Soon after the revival of letters in Europe, English writers began to borrow words from the French and Italian; and usually with some little alteration of the orthography. Thus they wrote *author*, *ambassador*, *predecessour*, *ancestor*, *successour*; using *our* for the Latin termination *us*, and the French *eur*, and writing similar words, in like manner, though not of Latin or French original. What motive could induce them to write these words, and *error*, *honour*, *factor*, *inferiour*, &c. in this manner, following the orthography of the French, and not the more concise? But this orthography continued down to the seventeenth century, when it began to be rejected from certain words of this class, and at the beginning of the last century, many of these words were written, *ancestor*, *author*, *error*, &c. as they are now written. But *favor*, *honor*, *labor*, *candler*, *ardor*, *terror*, *vigor*, *inferior*, *superior*, and a few others, were written with *u*, and Johnson introduced this orthography into his dictionary. Nothing in language is more mischievous than the mistakes of a great man. It is not easy to understand why a man, whose professed object was to reduce the language to some regularity, should write *author* without *u* and *error* and *labor* with it; in which he was not alone, for the *Laborer* and *inferior* without it. *Figur*, with *u*, and *vigorous*, *emigrate*, without it. *Inferiour*, *superiour*, with *u*, but *inferiority*, and *superiority*, without it! Strange as is this, this inconsistency runs through his work, and his authority has been the means of continuing it, among his admirers, to this day.

In this country, many of our best writers have rejected the *u* from all words of this class, and reduced the whole to uniformity." This is a desirable event; every rejection of an anomaly being a valuable improvement, which sound judgment approves, and the love of regularity will vindicate and maintain. I have therefore followed the orthography of General Washington, and the Congress of the United States, of Ash in his Dictionary, of Mitford in his History of Greece, &c.

8. There is another class of words the orthography of which is not uniform, nor fully settled, such as take the termination *able* to form an adjective. Thus Johnson writes *proveable* with *e*, but *approvable* and *reprovable*, without it. So *moveable*, but *immovable* and *removable*; *tameable*, but *blamable*, *censurable*, *desirable*, *excusable*; *saleable*, but *ratable*.

With like inconsistency Walker and Todd write *daub* with *u* and *bedaub* with *w*, deviating in this instance, from Johnson. Todd writes *abridgement* and *judgement* with *e*, but *acknowledgment* without it. Walker writes these words without *e*, but adds it to *lodgement*. I have reduced all words of this kind to uniformity.

9. Johnson writes *octoedrical*; Todd *octoedral*; Sheridan, Walker and Jones follow Johnson; but Jones has *octhedron*, which is not in the other Dictionaries. The Greek, in words of this kind, is inconsistent, for *εξω* is changed, in compound words, to *εξτα*. I have followed the Greek compounds, and have inserted *h* which I consider as almost indispensable in the English orthography, as *octhedron*.

10. Johnson introduced *instructor*, in the place of *instructor*, in opposition to every authority which he has himself adduced to exemplify his definitions; Denham, Milton, Roscommon, Locke, Addison, Rogers, and the common version of the Scriptures. But what is more singular, this orthography, *instructor*, is contrary to his own practice; at least, in *four* editions of his Rambler which I have examined, the word is uniformly written *instructor*. The fact is the same with *visitor*.

This is a point of little importance in itself; but when *instructor* had been from time immemorial, the established orthography, why unsettle the practice? I have in this word and in *visitor* adhered to the old orthography. There is not a particle of reason for altering *instructor* and *visitor*, which would not apply to *collector*, *cultivator*, *objector*, *projector*, and a hundred other words of similar termination.

11. Most of these and some other inconsistencies have been of long continuance. But there are others of more recent date, which admit of no etymology, as they are changes from right to wrong. Such is the change of the old and correct orthography of *defence, expense, pretence, and recompense*, by substituting *c* for *s* as in *defence*. This change was probably made or encouraged by printers, for the sake of avoiding the use of the old long *s*; but since this has been discarded, that reason no longer exists. The old orthography, *defence, &c.* is justified, not only by the Latin originals, but by the rule of uniformity; for the derivatives are always written with *s*, *defensive, extensive, offensive, pretension, recompensing*.

12. No less improper was the change of *sceptic* into *skeptical*. In favour of this innovation, it is alleged that the word is from the Greek *skeptikos*. True; but is not *sceptic* derived from the Greek *σκηπτις*, and *scepter* from *σκηπτρον*, and *asceptic* from *ἀσκητις*, and *occeat* from *ὀκκεαίς*? Are not all these words in exact analogy with each other, in their original orthography? Were they not formerly analogous in the English orthography? Why violate this analogy? Why introduce an anomaly? Such innovations, by dividing opinions and introducing discrepancies in practice, in classes of words of like formation, have a mischievous effect, by keeping the language in perpetual fluctuation.

13. In like manner, *dispatch*, which had, from time immemorial, been written with *sch*, was changed into *despatch*, on the wonderful discovery, that the word is derived from the French *dépêcher*. But why change one vowel and not the other? If we must follow the French, why not write *despêcher*, or *depech*? And why was this innovation limited to a single word? Why not carry the change through this whole class of words, and give us the benefit of uniformity? Is not *disaster* from the French *desastre*? Is not *discharge* from *décharger*? Is not *disarm* from *désarmer*? Is not *disburse* from *déboursé*? Is not *disbudge* from *débudger*? Is not *disorder* from *déranger*? Is not *disorder* from *déranger* English than *de*, though both are used with propriety? But *dispatch* was the established orthography; why then disturb the practice? Why select a single word from the whole class, and introduce a change which creates uncertainty where none had existed before? For ages, without the smallest benefit to indemnify us for the perplexity and discordance occasioned by the innovation?

It is gratifying to observe the stern good sense of the English nation, presenting a firm resistance to such innovations. Blackstone, Paley, Coxe, Milner, Scott and Mitford, uniformly use the old and genuine orthography of *instructor, visitor, sceptic and dispatch*.

14. The omission of one *l* in *befall*, *install*, *installment*, *recall*, *enthrall* &c., is by no means to be vindicated; as by custom, the two letters *ll* serve as a guide to the true pronunciation, that of broad *a* or *aw*. According to the established rules of English pronunciation, the letter *a* in *instal-*

* The reformation commenced or received its most decided support and authority at the revolution. See *Washington's Letters*, in two volumes, 8vo. 1795.