

INTRODUCTION.

who were in England between the year 1765 and the revolution, that about that period, the change of *t* into *ch* had not taken place, to any extent. It began to prevail on the stage and among the younger barristers and members of parliament, before Dr. Johnson left England, just before the war with America, and Sheridan's Dictionary, published soon after, undoubtedly contributed to extend the innovation. This change presents a new obstacle to the acquisition of a language, whose anomalies were before brightly found, false and perplexing. The factors of innovation, seem not to reflect on the immense inconsequence of a correct notation of sounds in a language, by its proper characters; the utility of uniformity and permanence in that notation; and the extensive evil of destroying or impairing the use of alphabetical writing. The man who perverts or changes the established sound of a single letter, especially of a consonant, does an injury to that language, and to the community using it, which fifty men of the same talents, can never repair.

In a few years after the publication of Sheridan's Dictionary, appeared Walker's, the author of which introduces the work to the public, with the following remarks, on the labors of his predecessors.

"Among those writers who deserve the first praise on this subject, is Mr. Elphinstone; who, in his principles of the English language, has reduced the chaos to a system, and laid the foundation of a just and regular pronunciation. But this gentleman, by treating his subject with an affected obscurity, and by absurdly endeavoring to alter the whole orthography of the language, has unfortunately lost his credit with the public, for the part of his labors which entitles him to the highest praise."

"After him Dr. Kenrick contributed a portion of improvement, by his Rhetorical Dictionary, but he has rendered his Dictionary extremely imperfect, by entirely omitting a great number of words of doubtful and difficult pronunciation; those very words for which a Dictionary of this kind would naturally be consulted." [Let it be noted, that the same objection lies in full force against Sheridan, Walker, and Jones.]

"To him succeeded Mr. Sheridan, who not only divided the words into syllables, and placed figures over the vowels, as Dr. Kenrick had done, but by spelling these syllables as they are pronounced, seemed to complete the idea of a Pronouncing Dictionary, and to leave but little expectation of improvement. It must be confessed that his Dictionary is generally superior to every thing that preceded it, and his method of conveying the sound of words by spelling them as they are pronounced, is highly rational and useful. But here sincerity obliges me to stop. The numerous instances I have given of impropriety, inconsistency, and want of acquaintance with the analogies of the language, sufficiently show how imperfect I think his Dictionary is, upon the whole, and what ample room was left for attempting another, that might better answer the purpose of a guide to pronunciation."

"The last writer on this subject is Mr. Nares, who, in his elements of oratory, has shown a clearness of method, and an extent of observation, which deserve the highest encomiums. But he seems, on many occasions,* to have mistaken the best usage, and to have paid too little attention to the first principles of pronunciation."

Soon after the publication of Walker's Dictionary, appeared the Dictionary of Stephen Jones, who undertakes to correct the errors of Sheridan and Walker. This author objects to Sheridan, that he has not introduced the Italian sound of *a*, [as in *father*], in a single instance, and that Walker has been too sparing in the use of it. He objects that Sheridan has not, by any peculiar marks, pointed out the sound of *oi* or *oy*, as in *noise* and *clay*; and that Walker has given distinctive marks of pronunciation to the diphthong *ou*, which are terrific to the learner, and not well calculated to express the exact sound. He considers it as no trivial error in Walker's system, that he uses the long *e* in place of the short *y*, which gives to *aspirity*, for example, the ludicrous sound of *asperetree*. He notices also as a fault in Walker's scheme, that he makes no difference in the sound of *oo* in *tooth*, *tooth*, and in *look*, *look*.

In all these particulars, except that of *oi* and *oy*, I think every man who understands genuine English, will accord with Jones. From careful observation, while in England, I know that Jones's notation is far more correct than that of Sheridan or Walker, and except in two or three classes of words, his pronunciation is exactly that which I uniformly heard in England, and nearly the same as that of well-educated gentlemen in New England.

A few years after the appearance of Jones's Dictionary, William Perry published a pronouncing dictionary, in which an attempt is made to indicate the sounds of the letters by certain arbitrary marks. In this work, the author has rejected most of the peculiarities of Sheridan, Walker and Jones, and given the language nearly as it was spoken, before those authors undertook to regulate the pronunciation. This author's manner of designating the sounds of the letters is too complex for convenience, but his pronunciation is nearer to the actual usage in England, than that of either of his predecessors before mentioned. His orthography also is more correct, according to present usage, than that of his predecessors.

During the year past, appeared the dictionary of R. S. Jameson, of Lincoln's Inn, intended to combine the merits of the most popular dictionaries, and to correct the false pronunciation of Walker, whose notation in some

classes of words, he entirely rejects. He condemns, as a slovenly enunciation, the sound given to *d*, which, before *i* and *u*, Walker directs, in certain words, to be pronounced like *j*. He rejects also his notation of *ch*, or *tsh*, in *congratulation*, *flutulent*, *natural*, and all similar words. He rejects also the affected pronunciation of Sheridan and Walker, in such words as *guide* and *kind*. Most of the other errors of Walker, he copies, as he does his antiquated orthography.

The English orthoepists have analyzed, and in general, have well defined or described, the sounds and appropriate uses of the letters of the alphabet. Sheridan's analysis, which appeared a few years before Walker's, is for the most part, correct; but in describing the sounds of what may be called the diphthongal vowel *i*, I think he has erred, in making it to consist of the broad *a* or *ae* and *e*. He admits indeed that the voice does not rest on the sound *ae*, but he contends that the mouth is opened to the same degree of aperture, and in the same position, as if it were an *e* sound *ae*; but before the voice can get a passage to the lips, the under jaw is drawn up to the position, for sounding *e*. On this it is justly remarked by Walker, that *ae* and *e* are precisely the component elements of the diphthong *oi* and *oy*. If the *ae* is pronounced, I would add, then *i* and *oy* must be pronounced exactly alike; and if *ae* is not pronounced, then it is not a component part of the diphthongal vowel *i*.

Walker contends that this diphthong *i*, is composed of the sound of the Italian *e*, as in *father*, and the sound of *e*. If so, he must have given to *ae*, a very different sound position, than which we are accustomed to give it. But this is a mistake; that sound of *i* is no more heard in *i*, than the sound of *ae*. The sound of *i* in *fight*, *mind*, *time*, *idle*, is not *faeght*, *maewnd*, *taewnd*, *aeedle*; nor is it *foeght*, *muend*, *taem*, *iedle*. Let any man utter the *ae* or the Italian *a* before the *e*, and he will instantly perceive the error, and reject both definitions, as leading to a false pronunciation. The truth is, the mouth, in uttering *i*, is not opened so wide as in uttering *ae* or *a*; the initial sound is *not* that of *ae* or *a*; nor is it possible, by any characters we possess, to express the true sound on paper. The initial sound is not formed, so deep in the throat as *ae* or *a*; the position of the organs is nearly, yet not exactly the same. The true sound can be learned only by the ear.

Equally inaccurate is the definition of the diphthong *oo*, or long *u*; which these writers alledge to consist of the sounds of *e* and *oo* or *u*; it has this sound indeed in certain words, as in *unite*, *union*, and others; but this is a departure from the proper sound of this character, as heard in *cube*, *abuse*, *durable*, *human*, *jury*. These words are not pronounced *keeb*, *abuee*, *duurable*, *humaen*, *jeery*. The effort to introduce this affected pronunciation is of most mischievous tendency. The sound of *e* is not heard in the proper enunciation of the English *u*, and for that reason, it should not be so stated on paper, nor named *yu*; as the error naturally leads to a corrupt pronunciation. Dr. Kenrick remarks that we might as well prefix *y* to the other vowels, as to *u*, and pronounce them *ya*, *ye*, *yi*, *yoo*.

But this is not the whole evil; this analysis of *u* has led orthoepists to give to our first or long *u*, two distinct sounds, or rather to make a diphthong and a vowel of this single letter. Thus they make it a diphthong in almost all situations, except after *r*, where they make it a vowel equivalent to *oo* or the French *ou*. They represent *u* as being equivalent to *eu*, that is, *e* and *oo*, in *cube*, *tube*, *duty*, *confusion*, *endure*, pronounced, *keube*, *teebe*, *deuty*, *confusion*, *endeure*, but in *brute*, *fruit*, *rude*, *intrude*, *ruby*, they make *u* equivalent to *oo*; thus, *broote*, *froot*, *roode*, *introotde*, *rooby*.

I know not where this affectation originated; it first appeared in Sheridan's Dictionary, but it is a most unfounded distinction, and a most mischievous error. No such distinction was known to Dr. Johnson; he gives the long *u* but one name, as in *confusion*; and no such distinction is observed among good speakers generally, either in this country or in England. I was particularly attentive to the public speakers in England, in regard to this point, and was happy to find, that very few of them made the distinction here mentioned. In that country as in this, the long *u* has a uniform sound after all the consonants.

The source of the error in this as in another case to be mentioned hereafter, may be an intention to the manner in which the articulations affect the vowels which follow them. To understand this, it will be necessary or useful, to examine the anatomical formation of articulate sounds.

"An articulate sound," says Lowth, "is the sound of the human voice, formed by the organs of speech. A vowel is a simple articulate sound."

These definitions seem not to be sufficiently accurate. Articulation, in human speech, is the jointing, juncture or closing of the organs, which precedes and follows the vowels or open sounds, and which partially or totally intercepts the voice. A vowel or vocal sound is formed simply by opening the mouth. Thus in sounding *a* or *o*, the mouth is opened in a particular manner, but without any articulation or closing of the organs. In strictness therefore, to examine a vowel is not to examine an articulate sound, as Lowth supposes; and it is certain that many irrational animals, without the power of articulation, do utter vowel sounds with great distinctness.

An articulate sound then is properly a sound preceded or followed or both, by an articulation or junction of the organs. Thus *ba*, *ab*, and *bad*, are articulate sounds; the vowel being begun or closed, with a junction of the lips, interrupting the voice, in *ba* and *ab*; and in *bad* the vocal sound being preceded by one articulation and followed by another. The power of arti-

* In many instances, I suppose the writer means.