

INTRODUCTION.

hieroglyphics, requiring interpretation. A great part of English words have an orthography sufficiently regular, and so well adapted to express the true pronunciation, that a few general rules only are wanted as a guide to the learner.

7. Another error of notation, in most of the English books, is that of the vowel in the first syllable of *circle, circumstance*, and many other words, the first syllable of which Sheridan first and afterwards Walker and Jones directed to be pronounced *ser*. This pronunciation I have never heard either in England or in this country. Perry's notation makes the syllable *sur*, according to all the usage with which I am acquainted.

8. Another objection to the books offered as standards of pronunciation, particularly to the dictionaries of Sheridan and Walker, is that the rules are inconsistent, or the execution of the work is inconsistent with the rules. Thus Walker lays it down as a rule, No. 357, that *c* after the accent and followed by *ea, ie, io, eo, ouis*, takes the sound of *sh*, as in *accen, social, Phocion, saponaceous*, which are pronounced as if written *oshen, sohsel, shosheon, saponashous*. But in the Dictionary, the author departs from the rule, and directs these words to be pronounced as if written *oshun, so-shil, saponashus*. So also in *gracious, ancient, especial, provincial, tenacious, rapacious*, and I know not how many others, the author departs from his own rule; so that either his rule or his practice must be wrong.

And here it may be proper to notice a mistake of the author which has led to an erroneous notation in a great number of words. The mistake is, that he assigns to *c* and *b* before the vowels *ea, ia, ie, eo*, and *io*, the sound of *sh*. Thus in *accen*, he considers *c* as pronounced like *sh*; and in *partial* he considers the sound of *sh* as proceeding from *t* only. Now the truth is, that the sound of *sh* in these and in all similar cases, results from the combination of *c* and *t* with the following vowel; that is, from the rapid combination and blending of the two letters. Then the sound of the first vowel being blended with *c* or *t*, it ought not to be repeated and form a distinct syllable. To make three syllables of *accen*, is to use the vowel *e* twice. In most cases, all the orthoepists agree in pronouncing these combinations correctly in dissyllables, and primitive words; as *oshun, grashus, tenashus, parshal, substanshal, nashun, relashun, preshus*, and the like. But in a number of words that are primitive in our language, Walker and Jones depart from this rule; for although they pronounce *conscience* in two syllables, *conshense*, yet they pronounce *conscience* and *presience* in three, *neshynse, preshyence*. So also when they make *tiol* one syllable in the primitive word, they make two syllables of these letters in the derivatives; *partial* is *parshal*, but *partiality* is *parshality*. Thus one error has led to another, and a large part of all words of this kind are mispronounced. Sheridan and Perry, in this respect, are consistent and correct; making one syllable only of *cia, cie, cio, tie, tio*, both in primitives and derivatives, throughout the language. A single line of poetry ought to settle this point forever.

9. A remarkable instance of inconsistency occurs in the following words. *Armature, aperture, breviture, feature*, &c., Walker pronounces *armashure, apertshure, brevishature, overshure*; but *forfeiture* is *forfeshiture*, and *judicature, ligature, literature, miniature, nunciature, portraiture, prefecture, quadrature, signature*, are pronounced as here written. Can any reason be possibly assigned for such inconsistency?

10. Obedience and its family of words. Walker pronounces *obeshente, obeshent, obeshently, but disobedience, disobedient*, as here written. *Expendit* is either as here written, or *exshent*; but *expenditure* without the alternative. Why this inconsistency?

11. *Obdurate, obduracy*, are marked to be pronounced *obdurate or obduracy, obduracy or obduracy*; but *obdurately, obdurateness*, without an alternative. In these last words occurs another error, the *a* in the third syllable is made short, as if pronounced *rat*; a deviation from all good usage.

This notation of *obdurate* is inconsistent also with that of *indurate*, and with that of *obdure*; an inconsistency which appears to have no plausible reason.

The conversion of *d* into *j* before *e*, is rejected, I believe, in all words, by Jones, Perry and Jameson, and before *e* is rejected by Perry and Jameson, and in many words by Jones. It is a departure from orthography wholly inexcusable.

12. Walker, Principles No. 92, lays it down as a rule, that when *c* is preceded by the gutturals *h* or *g*, [he should have said palatals.] it is, in polite pronunciation, softened by the intervention of a sound like *e*, so that *card, cart, guard, regard*, are pronounced like *keard, keart, gheard, gheard*. Now it is remarkable that in the vocabulary or dictionary, the author has departed from his rule, for in not one of the foregoing words, except *guard*, nor in a multitude of other words which fall within the rule, has he directed this sound of *e* before the following vowel. Had he conformed to his own rule, he must have perverted the pronunciation of *car, carbuncle, care, carcass, cardinal, cargo, garden, garter, discord*, and a long list of other words, too long to be here enumerated. The English orthoepists now pronounce these words with the sound of *e* to *guard, gheard, guardian, gheard, kind*, and a few others. The probable origin of this fault, has been already assigned, in treating of the letter *u*. It is an affected pronunciation, which Nares calls "*a monster, peculiar to the stage*." Indeed this slender sound of *e* before another vowel, is wholly incompatible with that manly enunciation which is peculiarly suited to the genius of the language. Perry and Jameson have rejected it.

13. In the first edition of Walker's Dictionary, the author, under the word *tripod*, observes, that "all words of two syllables, with the accent on the first, and having a consonant between two vowels, ought to have the vowel *e* in the first syllable long." But this was too rash, for such words as *coadjutant, desert, preface, prescient, profit, rebel, tropic*, and a multitude of others, stand, in the author's book, in direct opposition to his own rule. In a subsequent edition, the author, or some other person, has qualified the rule by an exception in favor of settled usage. This exception destroys the value of the rule; and indeed there is, and there can be no rule applicable to words of this class. The pronunciation of the first vowel can be known only by the usage.

14. The derivatives of *nation* and *ratio*, Walker and Jones pronounce *nash'anal, rash'anal*. If this should be defended on the ground of the shortening power of the antepenultimate accent, then let me ask why we have not *nash'anal* from *nation*, *dash'anal* from *devotion*, *probash'oner* from *probation*, *stash'onary* from *station*? Why make rules and not apply them? Why indulge such palpable inconsistencies and multiply anomalies?

15. *Possess* is, by the English orthoepists, pronounced *possess*; but why not then pronounce *assess, assist, assassinate, concession, obsession*, with the sound of *e* in the first syllable? In any good reason for making *possess* an exception to the pronunciation of this class of words? This utterance of sounds through the nose is always disagreeable to the ear, and should be restricted to words in which usage is established. Good taste should rather induce a limitation, than an extension of this practice. This remark applies also to some words beginning with *dis*, in which Walker goes beyond other orthoepists in giving to *s* this nasal sound.

16. Walker lays it down as a fact, that *u* has the sound of *e* and *oo* or *yu*. This is true in many words, as in *union, unite, unanimity*, &c. Hence according to his principle, *u* in these words is to be pronounced *yunion, yunite*, without the letter *y* prefixed. Yet he writes these and similar words with *y*, *yunion*, which upon his principles, would prefix *yu* to the sound of *y*, and the pronunciation would be *yunimite*, or *coyunite*. But his notation of this sound of *u* is not uniform; for he writes *disunion* and *disunite* without *y*, though it must be as proper in the compound as in the simple word. The same inconsistency occurs between *use*, written *yuse*, *yuse*, and *disuse*, *disuse*.

17. There is a fault in Walker's notation of *oo*, when it has the sound of *oo*, the French *ou*. In the Key, he marks *o* when it has this sound with the figure 2, and gives *more* as an example. Then according to his Key, *o* alone when thus marked, sounds as *oo*. But in the vocabulary, he thus marks both vowels in *book, look, boot*, and all similar words. Then according to his notation, each of the vowels has the sound of *oo*, and *book, look*, are to be pronounced *boo-ook, loo-ook*. He certainly did not intend this; but such is precisely his direction, or the result of his notation; and a fore-ginger, without counter-direction, must be led into this pronunciation.

The same fault occurs in his notation of *ee*, as in *meet* and *seek*.

18. *Volume*, Walker and Jones pronounce *polyume*; why not then change *column* into *colym*? Will it be said that in *volume* the *u* is long? This is not the fact; at least I never heard it thus pronounced either in England or America; it is always short in common usage, and so marked by Perry.

19. *Ink, uncle, concord, concourse, concubine*, are pronounced by Walker, *ingk, ungkl, kongkord, kongkorse, kongkubine*; and these odious vulgarisms are offered for our adoption. There can be no apology for such attempts to corrupt our language.

20. The words *bravery, finery, knavery, nicely, scenery, slavery*, are, by Walker and the other orthoepists, pronounced in three syllables, and *imagery*, in four; the final *e* of the primitive word being detached from it, and uttered with *r* as a distinct syllable. Why *savagery* has escaped the same fate, I do not know. It is obvious that in negligent practice, these words have often been thus pronounced. But the most correct pronunciation retains the original word entire in the derivative, the slight sound of *e* before *r* no more constituting a syllable, than it does in *more* and *mirre*. Take the following examples.

Of marble stone was cut

An altar carv'd with cunning *imagery*.

When in those oratories might you see

Rich carvings, portraitures, and *imagery*.

Your gift shall two large goblets be

Of silver, wrought with curious *imagery*.

What can thy *imagery* of sorrow mean?

Pronounced in four syllables, *imagery*, in these lines, makes a syllable too much, and injures the measure, and in the last example, utterly destroys it. The true pronunciation of Spenser, Dryden and Prior is the same as it always has been in my elementary books.

21. Formerly, the words *puissant, puissant*, had the accent on the second syllable; although the poets seem, in some instances, to have blended the four first letters into one syllable. But the modern change of the accent to the first syllable is a corruption from analogy with English analogues, and it impairs the measure of many lines of poetry in which these words occur. In the adverb *puissantly* it has a very bad effect.

The foregoing observations extend to whole classes of words, in which the genuine pronunciation has been changed, unsettled and perverted. It would be inconsistent with the limited nature of this Introduction, to enter into an examination of every particular word of disputable pronunciation. 11