

SIMPLE SPELLERS START WITH 300 PRUNED WORDS

They Want to Avoid Scaring People at First.

NOT REFORMERS, THEY INSIST

Col. Sprague Thinks Many Persons Object to the Term—Some Publishers and Editors Enlisted.

With its coffers filled and with Andrew Carnegie ready to give more money when the present supply runs low, the Simplified Spelling Board will straightway set about spreading the propaganda of plain spelling. Though celebrities have consented to lend the lustre of their names, the Executive Committee will do the actual work. It has already begun by taking an office in the Metropolitan Life Building, 1 Madison Avenue.

The members of the Executive Committee are Brander Matthews, Dr. Charles P. Scott, Dr. William Hayes Ward, Henry Holt, Dr. Isaac K. Funk, and Col. Charles E. Sprague, President of the Union Dime Savings Institution. Col. Sprague is Treasurer of the board.

The first step will be the sending out of 300 words simply spelled. These will not be revolutionary in their appearance. The Simplified Spelling Board does not wish to shock the public. Its first recommendations will consist of forms that have already been used to some extent, like thru, (through,) tho, (though,) catalog, (catalogue,) and past, (passed,) and of forms which, though unfamiliar to the ordinary citizen, have been passed on and declared fit by philological associations.

It is significant that the name of the new organization that draws its inspiration from Andrew Carnegie does not contain the word "reform," either as noun, adjective, verb, or any other part of speech. The omission was by design. Col. Sprague said so last night.

Might Object to "Reform."

"We were very careful not to put anything about 'reform' in the name," he said. "A man might say: 'I'm against reform,' and he'd get some sympathy. But it doesn't sound so well to say, 'I'm against simplification.' The word 'reform' is not so well loved as it might be. Some men have a congenital opposition to reform—they have that 'agin' the government' spirit—and they just don't like the word."

Except for the money-backed organization there is nothing new about the attempt to change the spelling of English words. Dr. Francis A. March has led the fight in recent years. Less than a month ago he talked to the Lafayette Alumni at the St. Regis and predicted that the spelling millennium would come, whether he lived to see it or not.

Publishers and editors, members of the Simplified Spelling Board, have agreed to adopt the new forms. Henry Holt will use them so far as his authors permit, but if they insist that the "old" spelling be used in their books, then the publisher will give in. Many newspaper editors, too, it was said last night, have joined in.

"As soon as there is established authority for simple spelling," Col. Sprague said, "then people will not be afraid of being considered ignorant when they use the new form. If a man writes a letter to you now and uses g-i-v instead of g-i-v-e, you don't know whether he is ignorant or a spelling reformer. It will be different when recognized authorities have given their sanction to the new method."

Dislikes Those "Ie" Words.

"When a man was talking to me about this matter the other day, he said to me: 'I wish you would drop the "i" out of believe, and receive, and deceive, and all those "ie" words.' That is not one of the changes already decided on, but I'm inclined to be in favor of it. That 'i' in words of that kind has no value, and might as well be left out. It has neither historical nor etymological significance, and its presence is ruinous to some persons' spelling. If believe were spelled 'beleve,' I think it would be a good change."

"We are going about the simplification gradually, and are not trying to startle or shock anybody. There was an editorial in an afternoon paper rather unfavorable to our plan, but it did not strike me as being very forceful. The funny man hasn't jumped on us yet—he will begin about the end of the week. Of course we look for all that, and are prepared to stand it."

"One criticism of simplified spelling is that it destroys the history of the language—that it is not consistent with etymology. The best answer to that is that those who so criticize are not usually great etymologists, while at the front of the simple spelling movement you find the greatest etymologists and philologists in the land. There is Dr. March of Lafayette, for instance. He is perhaps the leading philologist in this country now, and he has devoted a great part of his life to trying to introduce simple spelling."

Dr. Isaac K. Funk, one of the editors of the Standard Dictionary, has already begun to give currency to the new forms. For instance, "give" and "givn" appear in the Standard in just as black type as "give" and "given," though for the

meaning of the words the reader is referred to the more familiar forms. In the word "infinitive" the final e is separated from the rest of the word by a single parenthesis mark, which means that "the joint rules of the Philological Societies require the dropping of the letter." The word "slapt" appears, with the definition as "slapped," and it is the same way with "tho" and "thru."

Some New Forms Proposed.

Among the new forms advocated by the Simplified Spelling Board are program, infinitiv, definit, cigaret, coquet, slapt, mapt, deth, welth, tung, stelth, and wisht.

Here follows part of some resolutions passed by the Missouri Press Association several years ago. The form of the resolutions is chiefly valuable as showing lengths to which the Simplified Spelling Board will not go, at present, anyhow:

"Hweraz the iregyularitiz ov Inglish orthogرافي ar a great obstacl in the progres ov the pepl; and,

"Hweraz silent leterz alone ad about 25 per cent. tu the cost ov ol riting and printing,

"Therefor, be it resolvd by the misuri editorz, in convenshun asembled, that

"We heartili simpathiz with the earnest efforts hwich ar being put forth tu simplifi Inglish orthogرافي. and,

"We wil aid and encureg wun anuther tu begin and mak such gradual changes in speling az ar recommended bi the American Filological Asoshiashun and bi the Speling Reform Asoshiashun."