

SPELLING REFORM BY EXECUTIVE ORDER.

President ROOSEVELT's order that the revised or reformed spelling of English words shall henceforth be adopted in his official dispatches and communications, and in all messages to Congress, gives timeliness to Prof. BRANDER MATTHEWS's article upon the adoption of simplified spelling in the schools published elsewhere in this morning's issue of THE TIMES. In one respect, at least, the President directly meets and acts upon the views expressed by Prof. MATTHEWS. "What is needed," says the Professor, "is to focus attention upon this important subject and to arouse a lively interest in it." In no other possible way could the attention of the American people be focused upon simplified spelling more immediately and intently than through the issue of this Executive order from Oyster Bay. Every newspaper reader in the country will know to-day that a very important step in the accomplishment of the "reform" has been taken.

It is more difficult, however, to reconcile the President's action with the counsel given by Prof. MATTHEWS in this passage of his article, in which, referring to the natural popular prejudice in favor of the accustomed spelling, he says:

This is the obstacle which confronts all who seek to better our orthography; and it is not easy to overcome. It forces all the advocates of improvement to be cautious, to go very slowly, to urge nothing violent or sudden, to be as tolerant and as persuasive as possible, and to be satisfied with faith unaccompanied by good works.

Mr. ROOSEVELT is nothing if not sudden, and his unexpected adoption of the simplified list of words prepared by the Simplified Spelling Board, whose expenses are borne by Mr. ANDREW CARNEGIE, is perfectly characteristic. In Germany they were more deliberate. The matter was under discussion for years, and the moderate changes recommended, though put forth with the Government authority, were not made the subject of an imperial decree. The French language, too, was slightly simplified in its spelling, but upon a report made by a committee learned in such things, and adopted by the Government.

The "natural prejudice" to which Prof. MATTHEWS refers is undoubtedly a thing to be reckoned with. There are sound philological arguments to be made in support of the reform, and the committee has made them. There are also many reasons and serious ones for heeding Prof. MATTHEWS's advice to "go slow."