

bluster with which Mr. Chamberlain, at the Cape Chamber of Commerce, informed the Colonies that they should either share in the military policy of the Empire or cut the painter. His Eminence likewise condemned the principle announced, by necessary implication, by the Colonial Secretary, that, in these new lands, the obligation of loyalty to England stands before the duty of loyalty to ourselves. Some of our daily papers smote at the Cardinal with great vehemence. But they began, with great unanimity, by putting themselves in the wrong: they misrepresented the plain purport of his words, and they coolly denied that Mr. Chamberlain had used any such expressions as those which appeared in their own columns on February 25

Cardinal Moran's words, as reported in the Sydney daily papers, ran as follows: 'It was only yesterday,' he said, 'one of the great statesmen of the Empire declared that the burden of the Empire was becoming too weighty to bear at home, and that if the great colonies that had grown up under her mantle were to attain the destiny that awaited them they could either cut the painter or assist to bear the burdens that pressed upon the mother country at home. I am sure, speaking for Australians and Hibernians, that it is not for the interests of Australia that we cut the painter just now. In another fifty years the Hibernians of that day will state what their sentiments may be. But in the meantime we are attaining that destiny that Providence has marked out for Australia. We look to the statement made by Mr. Chamberlain, who has been trying for years to cajole the statesmen of Australia to adopt his own Imperialistic views, and not to promote the interests of Australia, but to sink Australian interests in what he would judge to be the interests of the home country. He has failed and now comes with open threats to force upon Australia that system of Imperialism which our statesmen have so justly repudiated.'

Almost on the same date, Mr. Seddon, when interviewed on the raw and angry question of the recent loan, declared that 'the British investor had, without warning, cut the first strand of the financial painter. Cable cutting during a war,' Mr. Seddon added, 'was naturally expected from an enemy, but severance by those relied on caused more than a passing regret.' When he said this, we naturally expected that the company of leader-writers would go off in a state of spontaneous combustion. But they exhibited no visible rise in temperature and have apparently returned to their normal state of prosy dullness. But it is clear that a patriotic Prince of the Church must not dare to say 'crooked pins' where a colonial Premier may heedily throw a picrine bomb.

### Spelling Reform

'What could you expect from fellows who eat frogs?' said Dr. Johnson, when somebody complimented him upon having succeeded in publishing his dictionary before that of the French Academy saw the light. The work of the puffing, elephantine Doctor was issued in 1755, and is described as 'the first real English dictionary.' The great lexicon-maker followed throughout the erratic spelling of British writers whom he deemed to be the most correct in their language. He thus lost a happy opportunity of throwing some decent semblance of rule and method and analogy into modern English orthography, which is as arbitrary as the characters in a Chinese poster, a plague to the lives of our school-children, a trap for our grown-ups, and the abomination of desolation for foreigners who endeavor to master the labyrinthine tangle of our spelling and pronunciation.

In Chaucer's days, and even into the times of 'rare Ben Jonson,' the English orthology was not fixed—it was in a state of flux, and every man spelled out his words as to him seemed best. And they generally contrived to do their spelling phonetically, like the modern Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and German, and the written tongue of our own New Zealand Maori. The rigid uniformity of later days came slowly. It took its cast-iron shape well on in the seventeenth century, and every school-child and every foreigner wrestling with the tangled absurdities of 'English as she is wrote,' have a grudge against Dr. Johnson for having, by the publication of his dictionary, given fixity of tenure and universal application to the unscientific spelling of his day. The late Archbishop Trench was, perhaps, the greatest authority of the nineteenth century on the history of

English words. And he describes the pronouncing dictionaries of our time (which are built upon the foundation of Johnson) as 'the absurdest of all books.'

The nonsensical puzzledom and the elaborate hand-made difficulties and anomalies of English orthography are bad enough in their way. But the worst of it is, that an acquaintance with them—or what, by a strange irony, is called 'good spelling'—is deemed essential not only to a liberal, but even to an elementary, education. This illogical fancy is as prevalent in France at the present time as it is in any English-speaking country. It was curiously manifested in 1790, when the Marquis de Favras, a French officer, was sentenced to death for conspiracy. The sheriff solemnly and silently laid the death warrant before the condemned man. De Favras perused it. 'Sir,' said he, when he had finished, 'you have made three mistakes in spelling.' When that famous hard-hitter, Marshal Saxe, was offered the honor of a seat among the literary elite in the French Academy, he replied: 'It would become me as a ring would a cat; I do not know how to spell.' And his written communication abundantly proved the truth of his assertion. And does not Chesterfield tell us that Queen Anne's great military leader, the Duke of Marlborough, 'wrote bad English, and spelled it worse'? Bad writing is supposed to be a sign of literary genius—it is about the only sign of literary genius that some people possess. Are we to conclude that bad spelling is an indication of military talent?

Ward and Billings poked gentle railery in various of their books at the idea that a minute knowledge of the irrational intricacies of English spelling is indispensable even to a moderate education. 'Some kind person,' says Ward, 'has sent me Chawcer's poems. Mr. C. had talent, but he couldn't spel. No man has a right to be a lit'rary man onless he knows how to spel. It is a pity that Chawcer, who had geneyuss, was so uneducated. He was the wuss speller I know of.' 'Korrek spelling,' says 'the Philosopher of the Sandwich Islands,' 'iz the verry bowels ov suckcess. This art is oncommon hard tew obtain; but few ever reach it, and liv.' Americans have broken away to a small extent from the iron-bound tradition of the modern English dictionary. In our recent journeyings through the United States we noticed that a few book and magazine publishers had sensibly adopted 'thru' for through, and 'tho' for 'though,' and had gone and done likewise with their derivatives, 'altho,' 'thruout,' etc. 'Program' and 'catalog' have been for several years among the commonplaces of the American printing trade; and we learn from a recent issue of a Chicago contemporary that the Illinois State Teachers' Association has formally accepted these and several other amended and phonetic spellings for regular use in their publications and correspondence. We ourselves have, in the columns of the 'N.Z. Tablet,' discarded some of the oppressive absurdities of the accepted British spelling of a large class of words. We shall not be the first to adopt the latest samples of reformed orthography, neither shall we be 'the last to lay the old aside.'

Rhymesters as well as prose writers have had their fling at the unscientific character of English spelling; and its sweet irregularities in analogy afford ample scope for their oft-times lumping numbers. Here—a propos of the substitution of 'thru' for through—is a sad specimen of this kind of 'verse.' An old farmer loquitur:

Wife, make me some dumplings of dough,  
They are better than meat for my cough,  
Pray, let them be boiled till hot through,  
But not till they're heavy or tough.  
Now I must be off to the plough,  
And the boys, when they have had enough,  
Must keep the flies off with a bough  
While the old grey mare drinks at the trough'

And this, we trow, is 'enow' for the present on the subject of spelling reform

On Sunday, March 15, the Rev. Father Ganly was to preach a panegyric on St. Patrick in Gaelic in St. Francis's Church, Melbourne. It will be remembered that Father Ganly preached in the Irish language, in the Catholic church, Milton, on his recent visit to Dunedin. The discourse on last Sunday is said to be the first of its kind delivered in Australia.