

# New Alphabet to Save a Billion a Year



By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

**R**EMEMBER the days when you started on the royal road to learning by diligent study in the front of the old first reader and then, at the command of "teacher," you, in company with other neophytes in formal education as offered in the old district school, chanted in chorus "A-B-C-D-E-F" and so on through the alphabet until you ended triumphantly "X-Y-Z and so forth"? Remember that queer little wiggly symbol which stood for "and so forth" and how, when you grew a little older and knew what "so forth" meant, you wondered why it said "and so forth" when there were just 26 letters in the alphabet and no more?

Well, that "and so forth" is coming true if a certain Harvard graduate has his way about it. For Dr. Godfrey Dewey has a new system of A-B-C's which adds 15 letters to the present alphabet. Of course, modern pedagogy has done away with the old-fashioned method of having the child commit the alphabet to memory before he begins to learn words, and the schools of today start the child immediately upon the task of putting the letters together to form words instead of his learning them as individual symbols in a certain sequence.

This is considered a vast improvement over the old-fashioned chanting procedure, but Doctor Dewey believes that even it can be improved upon and the speaking and writing of English simplified by enlarging the alphabet. During all these years, says he, we have been trying to cram a cosmopolitan language, made up of different elements from many tongues, into 26 Latin symbols and he thinks that by using 41 symbols we can straighten out the Mother Tongue and avoid working some of our present 26 symbols overtime. Incidentally, he believes that he can save the nation a billion dollars a year on its printing bill by eliminating the waste due to the use of the present alphabet.

Doctor Dewey proposes to make these sweeping changes by a "Fonetic Key Alphabet," consisting of 24 consonants, 13 vowels, four diphthongs and a supplementary sign for the word "the." That one word, incidentally, is the source of greatest waste in our language, says Doctor Dewey, who as secretary of the Simplified Spelling board, founded and endowed by the late Andrew Carnegie, has studied the English language carefully for many years. He has found that in modern printed literature the word "the" appears 7,310 times in every 100,000 words and that 7 per cent of all printed paper is covered with "the's." A sheer waste, he declares, and it can be remedied by using one symbol to take the place of this word made up of three symbols.

The ten commonest words in our speech and writing, he also finds, are "the," "of," "and," "to," "a," "in," "that," "it," "is," and "I," and these compose 25 per cent of the written language. By condensing these words, but more especially by condensing much longer words which are burdened with superfluous letters, he estimates that the total cost of writing and printing in this country, which has been estimated at \$3,000,000,000 can be reduced one-sixth or to \$2,000,000,000.

Doctor Dewey, basing his conclusions upon eight years of research in the matter, declares that one-sixth of the letters we use in writing words are useless. And he believes that his statement is based upon sufficient evidence, for during the eight years he has counted and tabulated 100,000 words

## Fonetic Key Alphabet

24 CONSONANTS				13 VOWELS			
Print	Script	Name	As in	Print	Script	Name	As in
p	ps	pi	pin, cup	a	at	am, pat, (pair)	
b	bt	bi	bin, cub	ā	aa	alms, part, ma	
t	tt	ti	ten, bet	e	et	edge, let	
d	dt	di	den, bed	ē	ee	age, late, may	
k	kt	ki	come, back	i	it	is, sit, army	
g	gt	gi	gum, bag	ī	ii	ease, seat, me	
f	ft	fi	fan, safe	o	ot	odd, not	
v	vt	vi	van, save	ō	oo	owed, naught	
h	ht	hi	thigh, bath	u	ut	up, ton, (turn)	
th	tht	thi	thy, bathe	ō	or	about, utter, na-	
s	st	si	seal, race	o	o	open, tone, show	
z	zt	zi	zeal, raise	u	ut	full, could	
ʒ	ʒt	ʒi	assure, rough	ū	uu	fool, shoe	
ʒ	ʒt	ʒi	azure, rough				
ʒ	ʒt	ʒi	choke, rich				
j	jt	ji	joke, ridge				
m	mt	mi	met, him	4 DIPHTHONGS			
n	nt	ni	net, thin	ā	ai	aisle, pint, by	
h	ht	hi	ink, thing	ē	ei	oil, point, boy	
l	lt	laid, deal	ai	ai	out, power, now		
r	rt	ri	raid, dear	ū	ui	pure, few	
w	wt	wi	wet, quit				
y	yt	yi	yet, you				
h	ht	hi	head, who				

with all their sounds, syllables and letters. Our present system of spelling is unwieldy, confusing, irregular and incomprehensible to the child or the foreigner who attempts it for the first time. This is due mainly to the inconsistency between spelling and pronunciation, even in such simple words as "gave" and "have." The best illustration of this inconsistency is in words containing "ough" which has eight different pronunciations, as illustrated in the following rhyme:

Through the rough cough and hiccough plough me through  
I ought to rub your horse's hough for you.

Each of these words, therefore, can be pronounced eight different ways. Thus, according to the laws of mathematics, eight times 8x8x8x8x8x8x8 equals 10,777,216 different pronunciations of the entire sentence. And only one of that number will be right!

Or take the word "foolish." He can show 613,975 different ways of spelling it, since the sound "f" has seven different ways of spelling; the sound "oo," 23; the sound "l," 11; the sound "i," 23; and the sound "sh," 11. One way in which this word could be spelled and yet pronounced as it is would be "pphoughtlaphse" (as in the words "sapphire," "through," "hustle," "marriage" and "pshaw").

Under Doctor Dewey's system in the "Fonetic Key Alphabet," there is a symbol for each sound. In the majority of cases these symbols look exactly like the letters of the present alphabet or are so similar to them that it is easy to distinguish them. Capitals have been dispensed with, since they waste time. Instead, in printing, the first letter of every sentence would be set in bold face type and would be blacker than the others. In writing, a little cross is placed above and to the left of the letter to indicate that it is the beginning of a sentence or is a capital letter. The pronouns would be entirely changed and if you (only we should say "yu") wanted to refer to yourself, instead of the present capital "I" you would write a small letter "a" with a dot over it (see first character in 4 diphthongs in the alphabet shown above).

In the present way of spelling one hundred average words contain 438 letters. Under Doctor Dewey's plan 100 words can be printed with 365 letters. So by removing many of the superfluous letters and syllables in our present words, such as the "ough" and the final "e" on a large number of words a great saving in time and effort could be effected. In fact, there are three positive benefits claimed by the originator of the Phonetic Key Alphabet if his plan is adopted. They are as follows:

1. An initial saving of \$600,000,000 and a corresponding saving in the time of this nation. Working hours of printers will be shortened. Typists and stenographers will have less work to do and less stationery will be required for business correspondence.
2. A saving of one and one-half years for each child. It is estimated that adoption of the Alphabet would save the country annually \$220,000,000

in the first four grades alone. Books would be thinner and children could progress faster with the English language simplified for them if they did not have to waste time and effort figuring out queerly spelled words.

3. The Alphabet would enable foreigners to learn English more easily and would help break down the prejudices which prevent the adoption of English as a universal language. Radio has brought the need of such a universal language to the attention of the whole world. English, because of its cosmopolitan vocabulary and grammatical simplicity, is well fitted for destiny as the universal language. But its spelling needs to be straightened out.

It is as a teaching system that Doctor Dewey hopes to have the new Alphabet adopted. He believes that it will prove its value there and that fact will lead to its general adoption. To test his theory that a child can learn the new system easily, he taught it to his daughter at the age of seven. After five hours' study she could use the new Alphabet correctly in writing a letter to her mother. Doctor Dewey realizes that general adoption of the system would necessitate new printing type, but he is firmly convinced that the eventual saving would make up for the immediate cost. He estimates that it can become universally established within three generations and of general public use in one. Already it has passed one barrier. In that a typewriter with the new phonetic type has been made by one of the oldest typewriter manufacturing companies and is available for public use.

Although Doctor Dewey is secretary of the Simplified Spelling board, the new Alphabet is not connected with the new simplified spelling, except that it, too, is a part of a growing movement to write as we speak. His Alphabet is based upon a similar one often referred to as the National Education Association Alphabet, used as key one of the New Standard Dictionary. This Alphabet recognizes 48 different sounds, but Doctor Dewey has reduced that number to 41. "Only one sound for each sign and only one sign for each sound" is the slogan through which he hopes to make the new Alphabet popular.

The new Alphabet is not only a hobby with him. It is an ideal and something of an inheritance. His father, Melvil Dewey, was one of the founders of an international conference for the amendment of English orthography 50 years ago. As a boy Doctor Dewey was a natural speller and champion in many a school spelling bee. He has been studying shorthand for 30 years and during the last six or eight years has been concentrating on the new Alphabet for general use. He was graduated from Harvard in 1909 and returned for a master of education degree in 1921, receiving his doctor of education degree last year. In 1923 he published a book "The Relative Frequency of English Speech Sounds" which was a forerunner of the new Alphabet which he has evolved from his years of study.

# Albert Rooke Makes His Comeback

Wins six-year fight for health. Now well and strong at 60. Husky as ever, he praises Tanlac

At 1830 West 39th Place, Los Angeles, lives Albert A. Rooke, a respected citizen with 38 years of active railroad experience. He tells of a very interesting experience.

"About seven years ago," says Mr. Rooke, "my stomach and liver went back on me. It was a most distressing experience. Nothing seemed to agree with me; I lost all desire for food. A sound night's sleep was out of the question, so I rose each morning tired and peevish. Then constipation developed and made life a continuous misery. I lost weight and could hardly drag myself around a good deal of the time. After six years of that I was all in. Along came the 'flu' when I had no resistance left. That was about the last straw. Nothing seemed to help me.

"On a friend's advice I tried Tanlac, and that certainly did help. I soon began to get refreshing sleep again, to eat with old-time zest. The distressing stomach and liver troubles disappeared. Briefly, Tanlac put me on my feet, with all my old-time vigor and enjoyment of life. I put on weight and after five bottles was as well as



over in my life. That was a year ago. I'm still in fine shape, as you see. Few men of 60 are as well as I am, thanks to Tanlac."

Tanlac is nature's own tonic and body builder, made from roots, herbs and barks by the famous Tanlac formula. Try a bottle—it may do for you what it did for Mr. Rooke. Your druggist has it. Over 62 million bottles sold.

## Extremes of Heat and Cold in Park

While skating through the frozen forests of Yellowstone National park this winter on an inspection patrol, Chief Ranger Sam T. Woodring, writing for "Nature Notes From Yellowstone Park," tells of taking a bath in one of the hot springs near Lake Yellowstone, after crossing the lake on 'ice.

In his record of the trip the ranger and his companion made a complete circuit of the park in a two-weeks' ski trip, visiting all of the isolated posts, manned by other men in the service.

"We skied directly across Yellowstone lake and found the snow conditions fine," Woodring reports. "The following day we skied five or six miles up the Old Faithful road from the ranger cabin on the lake shore so as to break a track and make the traveling the next day a little easier. Returning, we enjoyed a fine bath in natural hot water from one of the springs between the station and the lake shore."

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## Odd Changes Wrought by Time's Whirligig

The silver alms dish which King George V has given the cathedral of St. John the Divine was presented by Sir Esme Howard, the British ambassador, at special services in the cathedral and accepted by Bishop William I. Manning.

In the sermon after the presentation Bishop Manning said: "In the year 1783 the rector of Trinity church in this city was compelled to resign his office because, in spite of the events which were then taking place, he insisted upon continuing to pray publicly for the king of England. Today we are here for the presentation of a gift from the king of Great Britain which we shall hold as one of our most treasured possessions as long as the granite walls of this cathedral stand."

## Strenuous

"Your wife looks rather tired."  
"Yes, she's got a lot of new labor-saving appliances to try out."



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**And How!**

"I don't suppose she suffered any after effects of her operation?"  
"No, but everybody else did."—Judge.