

by some short cut, and gave the warning which enabled the Governor and all the legislators but seven to escape in time. Of course this was no other than Jack Jouett. His father kept a tavern in Charlottesville and owned a farm down at Cuckoo, in Louisa county, forty miles away. Jack, at Cuckoo that June night, heard the troopers go thundering by and took his famous midnight ride. In spite of Jouett's efforts, Tarleton might not have arrived too late had he not stopped at Castle Hill to capture host and guests and to demand breakfast. They gave him a good meal, long-drawn-out in the preparing and in the serving. They even took interest in detaining him to measure in wonder the height of his orderly, six feet nine. The "mark" is still shown there today.

But it is in the lower part of Albemarle, now known as Fluvanna, and in Goochland, that the raids of Tarleton and Cornwallis come nearest to me. The malice of the latter was directed especially against the estate of Jefferson at Elk Hill, where he cut the throats of all the colts he could not use. The British burned the mills and plundered the farms of the citizens round about, but without special cruelty. For instance, an old walnut desk of my great-grandfather's was broken into, while he was too far away in the Carolinas to defend his property. It is in use at the home there, now. In fact, the Northern raiders broke into it again during the War between the States. I feel sure that no hidden treasure was forthcoming at either time.

This desk not being of the portable type, I have brought to show you this afternoon a long waistcoat worn by that Stephen Perkins. It was not a part of his war garb, for his clothes were in tatters and he himself was starving while he pushed on with Greene through the Carolinas to help close in around Cornwallis and "end the business" at Yorktown. His rations were sometimes just a handful of corn and sometimes

a handful of meal as they passed a mill. The mill would be guarded by soldiers to see that no man took more than one handful. They were on forced marches for days—sometimes with nothing but an ear of corn from the field, sometimes with not even that. This great-grandfather of mine offered a hundred dollars—of course in continental money—for one ear of corn, but in vain. The ear of corn was a surer reality than the currency of our Government in that crisis. The first food that he found in his dire need was some grains of corn that had dropped from the horses' mouths. No wonder that his descendants have always been taught to respect corn bread.

No wonder, too, that after Yorktown, when he had come back to his home with the little dormer windows, in Fluvanna, it seemed to him a long time before the treaty of peace was actually signed. There had been the understanding that when this treaty should be achieved, the signal should be thirteen cannon shots—one for each colony. One day he heard a cannon. He put his ear to the ground and counted. When he reached thirteen, he threw his hat as far as he could send it, shouting "Peace! Peace!"

ELIZABETH P. CLEVELAND

STANDARDS OF PRONUNCIATION AND SPELLING ABOUT THE TIME OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

THE same spirit of protest and revolt which underlay the economic and political revolutions against the British government also manifested itself in the speech habits of our Revolutionary ancestors. Moreover, in the written comments of men like Noah Webster, the protest was especially pronounced. If the following citations seem to come out of the North only, it is perhaps because general

A talk before the Fort Loudoun Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, meeting at Woodstock, Virginia, on October 14, 1936.

education in that day met with more favor in New England than in the South.

Governor Berkeley in 1670 had reported to the English government: "But, thank God, there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience and heresy and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both!"—One is not surprised, in view of this pronouncement, to learn that in 1683, after two years, the use of Virginia's first printing press was prohibited; there was no more printing in Virginia until 1729—almost a half-century later.

In 1715 Governor Spotswood dissolved the colonial assembly with the comment, "I observe that the grand ruling party in your house has not furnished chairmen of two of your standing committees who can spell English or write common sense, as the grievances under their own handwriting will manifest."

Still, Virginians can take some pride in the fact that the first English grammar by an American had been written by Hugh Jones, a professor of mathematics at William and Mary College; but it was published in London in 1724. And another "priority": the first college to prescribe for admission an examination in the English language "taught grammatically" was a Southern institution—the University of North Carolina, in 1795. Nevertheless, there was probably more than a grain of truth in Noah Webster's assertion: "Virginians have little money and great pride, contempt of Northern men and great fondness for dissipated life. They do not understand Grammar."¹

¹Perhaps there was just a flavor of provincialism in his vigorous patriotism. For instance, in his *American Dictionary of the English Language* he had, after defining the word *sauce*, added: "Sauce consisting of stewed apples is a great article in some parts of New England; but cranberries make the most delicious sauce."

Professor Kemp Malone of Johns Hopkins University has pointed out that Noah Webster had issued his own declaration of independence against England in the matter of orthography, when he wrote, in an "Essay on a Reformed Mode of Spelling":

".....Ought the Americans to retain these faults which produce innumerable inconveniences in the acquisition and use of the language, or ought they at once to reform these abuses, and introduce order and regularity into the orthography of the AMERICAN TONGUE? . . . The advantages to be derived from these alterations are numerous, great, and permanent. . . . A capital advantage of this reform in these States would be, that it would make a difference between the English orthography and the American. This will startle those who have not attended to the subject; but I am confident that such an event is an object of vast political consequence. For the alteration, however small, would encourage the publication of books in our own country. It would render it, in some measure, necessary that all books should be printed in America. The English would never copy our orthography for their own use; and consequently the same impression of books would not answer for both countries. The inhabitants of the present generation would read the English impressions; but posterity, being taught a different spelling, would prefer the American orthography. Besides this, a *national language* is a band of *national union*. Every engine should be employed to render the people of this country *national*; to call their attachments home to their own country; and to inspire them with the pride of national character. However they may boast of independence, and the freedom of their government, yet their *opinions* are not sufficiently independent; an astonishing respect for the arts and literature of their

parent country, and a blind imitation of its manners, are still prevalent among the Americans. . . . Let us, then, seize the present moment and establish a *national language* as well as a national government."

Benjamin Franklin, when he was sent to France in 1778, was instructed to use "the language of the United States." And in 1783 Webster had urged: "America must be as independent in literature as she is in politics, as famous for arts as for arms." A little later, when General Washington was planning to bring from England a person to serve as his secretary and as instructor to Mrs. Washington's grandchildren, Webster had dissuaded him. "What," Webster wrote, "would be thought of this country by European nations if, after the achievements in the War of Independence, we should send to Europe for secretaries, and for men to teach the rudiments of learning?"

Webster's proposed changes in American orthography had the support of Benjamin Franklin, although he recognized the difficulties of establishing a phonetic alphabet, and was aware of the fruitless attempts earlier made in England. "I conceive they failed through some defect in the plans proposed, or for reasons that do not exist in this country," he wrote. In America "the minds of the people are in a ferment, and consequently disposed to receive improvements." He is therefore led to hope that "most of the Americans may be detached from an implicit adherence to the language and manners of the British nation." At the height of his optimism Webster wrote from New York that the "Chairman of Congress, many other members, and about a hundred of the first ladies and gentlemen in the city . . . fall in with my plan, and there is no longer a doubt that I shall be able to effect a uniformity of language and education throughout this continent."

From General Washington Webster says he received "the warmest wishes for the success of my undertaking to refine the language." After such approval Webster recommended to Franklin that he present his phonetic alphabet to Congress for action by that body. But this attempt at a fiat language failed, as did Webster's experimental use of simplified spelling.

It is true that Noah Webster encouraged and accomplished the omission of silent letters in some words, but such spellings as *abuw, waz, wil, reezon*, etc., did not appeal to his contemporaries. He began to realize that spelling was not merely a rational matter, but emotional as well, and he showed the shrewd business sense to drop an unpopular movement which would affect the sale of his books.

What, then, are some of the characteristic changes which Webster stimulated in American English? In his *American Dictionary of the English Language* he abandoned some of the most radical changes recommended by Benjamin Franklin, but he did accept *honor* instead of *honour*, *mold* instead of *mould*, *center* instead of *centre*, and the single final consonant instead of the double in such words as *travel* and *worship*.

His dictionary is responsible for our spelling *public, logic, music*, etc., without a final *k*—a practice now adopted in English usage as well as American. His approval supported *mask* instead of *masque*, *check* instead of *cheque*. The American practice of spelling *traveler* with one *l* and *benefited* with one *t* is traceable to Webster; the double consonant remains common in England. To Webster also goes the responsibility for the American spelling *-ize* rather than *-ise* in such words as *civilize, organize*. The *c* in *defence, offence, pretence*, Webster changed to an *s*. The spelling of *connexion*, etc., still common in British use, Webster changed to *connection*. He strove—it now seems with little success—to omit the silent final *e* in such words as *ax, doc-*

trin, famin, granit, opposit, etc. Earlier, he had urged, then dropped, *e* for *ea* in the short vowel sound of *leather, feather, weather*; *ee* for the vowels in *mean, speak, grieve, key*; *k* for *ch* in such words as *chorus* and *character*.

Webster favored the pronunciation of *leisure* to rime with *pleasure*, which had been the common English pronunciation since Milton's time. He opposed the pronunciation of *Euro péan* then becoming popular, and urged that the word, by analogy, should be pronounced *Európean* to accord with *Mediterranean, Herculean, subterranean*. He opposed the then current pronunciation of *Rome* as *room*.

Benjamin Franklin, too, was given to setting down his ideas about pronunciation, although he was no professional lexicographer. Professor Malone calls him "the first American to tackle English phonetics scientifically." From his *Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling; with Remarks and Examples*, published in 1768, we learn that Franklin's own pronunciation included the following: *James* to rime with *seems*, *father* to rime with *gather*, *leisure* to rime with *pleasure, get* and *friend* as if they were spelled *git* and *frind*. And of course, these pronunciations were the ones employed by Franklin's contemporaries.

In *A New Critical Pronouncing Dictionary*, by Richard S. Coxe, published in 1813, one finds another record of pronunciations current just after the Revolution. *Carriage* was pronounced *kur'ridge*, *oblige* was *obleege*, *cucumber* sounded like *cowcumber*, and *housewife* was pronounced *huzzwif*.

Coxe advised the sound of *a* in *dark* in the pronunciation of these words: *clerk, sergeant, service, servant, merchant*. Of these only *sargent* has survived as a standard pronunciation in America—but of course *clark* is still standard in England.

Lieutenant, another word pronounced differently in England and America today, drew this comment in 1813 from Coxe: "The word is frequently pronounced by good speakers *liv-tenant*. The pronunciation which seems from my own experience to prevail most generally is *lef-tenant*, but the regular sound as if written *lew-tenant* appears to be becoming more popular and will in all probability obtain in time nearly universal adoption."

Yes was pronounced *yis* and *engine injine*; *daughter* was generally *darter*, *gold* was *goold*, *sauce* was *sarce*, and *sausage* *sassage*.

Sensible and *visible* were sounded *sen-subble* and *visubble*—just as to this day in some sections of Virginia one hears *vegetubble* and *comfor-tubble*.

And finally, let me speak of one sound that Noah Webster gave much study to—the fine syllable *-ture*. It appears that the word *nature* was commonly pronounced *nater* in this country in 1776, although in London at that time it received the full *u* sound. In 1807, however, a correspondent wrote Webster from London to say that the pronunciation of *t* as *ch* was being adopted "by actors, young barristers, and members of parliament." By 1829 Webster admitted that the sound *iu* was changing *t* into *ch* in such words as *nature*, and *d* into *dj* in such words as *gradual*, although he still regarded these pronunciations as an affectation. Now, after a hundred years, words falling in this group are still pronounced both ways, although the charge of affectation is more likely to be brought against *natiure* than *nacher*. And, of course, the same thing is true of *temperatiure* rather than *temperacher*, *pictiure* for *pikcher*, and *literatiure* for *literacher*.

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