

The Question of Spelling.

Spelling may be an overestimated art; and there must, in the life of every instructor in English, be moments when it seems in a fair way to become an obsolete one. Modern short cuts to reading and the disappearance of the old-time drill on the sounds of letters have been responsible for a good deal of inaccurate spelling, and the whole tendency of modern education is to lessen the amount of accuracy in detail in everything. The technical student is held to sharpness in strictly technical work, but it is at the expense of constant vigilance and much effort on the part of the instructor. Orthography is unfortunately a subject which may be constantly abused without the knowledge of any teacher. The student often produces the impression of having taken his spare hours to perfect himself in the art of misspelling, and against such constant misuse of the English language no teacher can hope to be effective.

Some misspelling is simple carelessness. Other cases seem almost to have the air of being deliberate. In a notebook the other day I found the statement: "In those days there was no copywright to protect the playwright;" in another: "It is said Shakespeare shot a deer and fled to London to escape the consequences;" in a third: "An iron pipe is lead from one boiler to the other." The first writer so ingeniously mixes his "right" and "wright," the second so improves upon the legend by making the poet guilty of manslaughter, and the third presents so pretty a paradox by having his pipe of two metals, that one might almost suspect intention. Second thought, of course, dissipates such an idea, and abundant examples prove that it is apparently as difficult for many students to spell as it is for them to refrain from laughter if a lecturer trips in a sentence.

The worst of the whole business is, that while correct spelling may not count for much in a man's favor, being taken for granted, errors in orthography are sure to tell so heavily against him. I was told recently of a case in which the choice between two engineers for a post with a large salary was decided against one of them — and he, my informant asserted, the better engineer of the two — by the fact that he had misspelled certain words in his letter of application. It sometimes seems as if the power of

putting letters together according to rule was made to bear the whole burden as a criterion of a man's intellectual accomplishments. Often it is so hard to judge a man's powers that this is used as the test in cases where such a method is conspicuously unfair. For this the graduate, facing life and obliged to take the world as it is, must be prepared. He may have any opinion he pleases about the justice of his being cast aside as an engineer because he cannot spell, but the fact remains that of this direful possibility he is in danger. Not every misspeller comes to grief in this way, it is true, but to the danger every one is exposed; and in a time when competition is so fierce as it is to-day, no student can afford to handicap himself with such a weakness.

The Mohammedans have a fable to the effect that a soul judged to eternal flame protested bitterly against the injustice of holding him responsible for things which he never dreamed would have serious consequences. "Did not you hear the preachers in the mosque every Friday telling you so?" he was asked. "Oh, yes, I heard them," was his answer; "but I thought they just said so in the way of their business." "They did," he was told; "and it was in the way of your business to heed what they said." The moral of which here is, that even a professional instructor in English, preaching the need of spelling correctly, is worthy of attention.

ARLO BATES.

The Civil Engineering Society.

The Civil Engineering Society was organized Feb. 13, 1889, for the purpose of bringing the students together, and of giving a clearer conception of what is expected of them in their future career.

From the very beginning the Society experienced a rapid and healthy growth, and has always received the hearty support of the entire Civil Engineering Department, as well as that of other departments. Membership is open to all men of both Courses I. and XI. after the Freshman year, and at present includes practically all the men eligible.

The meetings are generally held in Room 11, Engineering B, at 4.15 P.M., on Mondays. They are held as regularly as possible every three weeks. The lectures are not strictly technical, but treat of a very large variety of engineering projects, which appeal to the interest of all those who intend to