Albert Camus and the Men of the Stone

As far as I'm concerned, the image I've retained of Albert Camus is that of a perfect comrade. We accepted him right from the start, something quite rare. We had many problems in Lyons. The Lyonnais, who hadn't been very cooperative in the beginning, gave the Parisians the cold shoulder. When Camus set foot in the composing room, however, right away there was a ray of sunlight. He was a real live wire, wasn't stuck-up, and fit in right from the start. We really liked that. We had the impression we'd known him for years. Always ready for a joke, he was a comedian among us. When we sang merry songs, no one had to wait for him to join in on the chorus. He had a repertory of barrack songs—not the kind you could sing around your family, of course, but very entertaining.

He really impressed us on his wedding day. I was touched by the way he got married—so simple, with three or four typographers as the wedding procession. What proof of his friendship that was for us! His wife was so unpretentious, so nice. When we left the City Hall, we all went to a café, like buddies getting together.

We knew that he loved the atmosphere of the printing plant. He liked to have the pages and galleys of type in front of him. He was literally hooked on the printer's craft. It's true that there's a kind of intoxication in it: the odor of printer's ink and damp paper—you love to smell it, the way a leather worker loves to smell the odor of leather. Camus spent more time at the composing room than in the editorial offices. . . .

A tape-recorded remembrance by Lamaître, a Linotype operator who worked with Camus in the composing room of *Combat*, the clandestine news sheet published by French Resistance elements. Camus joined the editorial staff in 1944. Excerpted with kind permission from *Albert Camus and the Men of the Stone*, English translation © and published by The Greenwood Press (300 Broadway, San Francisco, Cal. 94133), 1971.

The Orthographic Practices of Elias Molee

Henry R. Stern

In proposing an artificial language for international consideration, one must first have devised an efficient orthographic system. After a brief introduction to the concept of international languages and to Molee's background and motivation, this paper describes the orthographic techniques he employed in a series of works over a period of 25 years. Upon examination, these works show an unmistakable trend. The initial efforts are characterized by innovation and experimentation. In attempting to create an acceptable phonetic alphabet, he first employed phonetic symbols, variations of standard letters, and even letters he designed himself. Later efforts, however, remain within the framework of conventional symbols. This can be explained by the necessity of gaining the favor and support of printers. That Molee's efforts were in the long run unsuccessful is due not to any inherent weakness in his orthographic system but rather to the general failure of artificial languages themselves.

if t our thought-hiding n time-wasting greek n latin vocabulary, we add our unphonetic, expensive, misleading n time-wasting heterogeneous orthography, then we can truely exclaim: "e english language is a national misfortune."

(Elias Molee, *Nu Teutonish*, 1906)

Over the past century the idea of one language having international currency has enjoyed considerable popularity and has prompted students of language to work toward that goal. Proponents of an international language have been motivated by the desire to facilitate travel, diplomacy, scientific cooperation, or simply to contribute to better understanding among nations. Although the assumption that language is perfectable—that it can be subjected to the laws of reason and molded by external forces—seems common to most of these attempts, the actual methods used in designing languages such as Volapük, Esperanto, and Pasilingua often differ widely.[1] In some cases a national language, or a modified form thereof, is advanced as the most satisfactory solution, whereas others find *a priori* languages

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more suitable. Still others blend what they consider the best features from a group of related languages. It is this last method which Elias Molee employed. This paper will describe the orthographic techniques he developed in his work.

Molee was born in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1845. The polylingual environment in which he grew up provided background and impetus for his proposed language reforms. His native language was Norwegian; as a youth he learned English in school and German from his neighbors. In *Tutonish* (Chicago, 1902) he recalls his initial fascination with the prospect of uniting all the Germanic languages into one union tongue.[2] "How fine!" he writes, "how grand would it not be, if the good points only in English, German, Dutch, Swedish, and my Danish-Norwegian mother tongue could be united into one grand good language with a regular grammar!" (p. 36). With admirable zeal, and at considerable personal expense, he spent a half century in perfecting this Germanic union tongue designed to supplement at first and eventually to supplant the individual Germanic languages. He hoped that other language families would follow suit and thereby give the world five or six major means of communication.

One can discern three basic principles underlying Molee's efforts. First of all, the grammar of the union tongue should be simple and avoid, for example, the bewildering system of inflections which characterizes German. Secondly, the vocabulary should be "expressive" and self-explaining, its words formed from native roots rather than borrowed from Latin or Greek. Why, Molee asks, do we not say *fishlore* and *birdlore* instead of *ichthyology* and *ornithology*? Heterogeneous languages are viewed as "essentially inferior, patched up, spotted jargons" which needlessly impede intellectual growth. Molee's third principle is that spelling should be phonetic. He cites the orthographic vagaries of English, a language in which, he argues, only 60 words are spelled as they are pronounced.[3] He agrees with those friends of spelling reform who estimate that the English system of spelling costs the American public $150 million a year in additional school taxes and absorbs from three to five years of a pupil's total school time.[4] By blending the Germanic languages into one union tongue Molee hoped to eliminate what he considered to be shortcomings in these areas of grammar, vocabulary, and spelling.

In his *Plea for an American Language* (Chicago, 1888) Molee writes

that "the only true mode of spelling words and the system easiest to learn by children of all nationalities and stations is to have '*one letter for one sound, and only one sound for one letter*' " (p. 33). In designing the union tongue, however, he recognizes the impracticality of a purely phonetic alphabet which would represent every shade of sound with its own symbol. In such a system individual idiosyncrasies could lead to widely divergent spellings of even the most common words. Thus instead of a complete phonetic alphabet Molee proposes a rather broad and simple system in which a given sound, and any phonetic variations thereof, can be represented by only one symbol. Such a system accepts pecularities in pronunciation and does not attempt to regulate them, while at the same time insuring uniformity in spelling.

This is not to say, however, that allowances are made for the natural process of change in language. Molee is quite clearly a child of eighteenth-century linguistic thought—he particularly admires the work of the French Academy—and, in addition, is dealing here with a controlled and artificial means of communication. Accordingly, change in the union tongue could not be spontaneous nor could it result from the whims of language, but would have to come about through the efforts of external forces—commissions, scholarly study groups and the like.

The purpose of Molee's spelling system is to combat the unfortunate tendency in English to represent one sound by any of a number of symbols and, conversely, to let one symbol assume several discrete phonetic values.[5] As an example of the former, one could cite words such as "aims," "day," "they," and "break" in which one sound, namely [ei], is represented in four different ways; an example of the latter is the a-vowel in "ale," "at," and "all." In the Germanic union tongue each symbol is assigned only one phonetic value and so it would be more difficult to misspell a word than to spell it correctly.

In his early works Molee shows a preference for experimentation with new letters or modifications of standard letters. He limits himself to approximately forty sounds, all of course drawn from the various Germanic languages. The following table compares the vowel systems in *Plea for an American Language* (*PAL*) and *Germanik English* (*GE*). The reader will note that words in the column "Key Word" obtain for both works; where the symbols used in both *PAL* and *GE* coincide, a dash is placed in the *GE* column.

Vowel Systems Compared

PAL (1888)	*Key Word*	*GE* (1889)
[2]*	arm	q
a	at	—
e	let	—
i	it	—
ɪ	eel	—
o	or	—
[10]	old	ɔ (inverted c)
[14]	look	u
u	but	u or v
[9]	rule	ɯ (inverted m)
ü	für (Ger.)	ü or ɥ (inverted h)
ö	earn	ö or ə (inverted e)
[1]	nay	ai
[6]	oil	oi
[7]	ice	ei
[8]	owl	au

* Numerals in brackets refer to numbered vowels and consonants shown in Figure 1 (opposite) from *PAL*, pp. 224–225.

Two of the vowel symbols employed in *PAL*, i.e. [10 & 8],* are found exclusively in phonetic writing, although the values Molee assigns to them differ from their values in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).[6] Use of the [2]-symbol conforms to IPA practice. Both ü and ö are borrowed from German, but Molee mistakenly equates the German ö-vowel with the sound in English "earn"—the latter sound is unrounded and more central than the former. [9, 6, & 7] are modifications of u, o, and i. ɪ is the only vowel symbol which he claims as his own invention, although the practice of inverting already existing symbols was and is quite common as a device for expanding the phonetic range of an alphabet without adding new symbols. Origin of [14 & 1] is uncertain, but it is probable that they were borrowed from some unnamed source.

The chief characteristic of *GE* is that, in contrast to *PAL*, it makes fuller use of available types. The traditional spelling of diphthongs is

PART SECOND.

ʃɪ* amerikaʃ[1] sprɑklœr[2]
mit[3] rɪdl[4] and wördaʃɑts.[5]

stɑblist.[6]

§ þ. dɪ[7] selflɤsta.[8]

zɑl.[9]	stɑb.	kɪwördɑ.
1	ɑ	ale, nay—ɑl, nɑ.
2	ɑ	arm, far—ɑrm, fɑr.
3	a	at, man, and.
4	o	or, on, ball—bol.
5	ö	earn, word—örn, wörd.
6	œ	oil, boy—œl, bœ.
7	ị	ice, high—ịs, hị.
8	ɤ	owl, cow—ɤl, kɤ.
9	ü	rule, moon—rül, mün.
10	ɔ	old, know—ɔld, nɔ.
11	ɪ	eel, seal—ɪl, sɪl.
12	ü	für (see jörman and skandinavian.)
13	u	but, hut.
14	ʉ	look, full—lʉk, fʉl.
15	i	it, hit, mit.
16	e	let; before "r" "e" is like "a."

* rɪd ch. þk on "Gram. of the Am. Lang."

§ ƀ. dɪ mɪtlɤsta.[10]

zɑl.	stɑb.	nɑm.	kɪwördɑ.
1	p	pɪ	pail, push—pɑl, puʃ.
2	b	bɪ	be, bought—bɪ, bot.
3	t	tɪ	tree, tight—trɪ, tịt.
4	d	dɪ	dough, down—dɔ, dɤn.
5	k	kɪ	kite, care—kịt, kɑr.
6	g	gɪ	go, group—gɔ, grüp.
7	f	fɪ	full, fear—fʉl, fɪr.
8	v	vɪ	vine, verse—vịn, vörs.
9	r	rɪ	right, wring—rịt, riŋ.
10	l	lɪ	line, learn—lịn, lörn.
11	m	mɪ	moon, much—mün, muʃ.
12	n	nɪ	next, nigh—nekst, nị.
13	s	sɪ	soap, soup—sœp, süp.
14	ʃ	shɪ	ship, should—ʃip, ʃud.
15	z	tsɪ	zɑl,[11] (hard as in jörm. tsɑl.)
16	j	jɪ	john, george—jon, jorj.
17	ʃ	chɪ	church, cheap—ʃörʃ, ʃɪp.
18	ʃ	thɪ	ʃɪ (sɪ iŋliʃspɪkɑnda.[12])
19	ɦ	whɪ	ɦer (lörn from dɪm iŋliʃa).
20	h	hɪ	hymn, who—him, hü.
21	w	wɪ	wound, wound—wünd, wɤnd.
22	y	yɪ	yard, year—yɑrd, yɪr.
23	ɥ	yoo	you, your—ɥ, ɥr.
24	ŋ	ang	sing, wing—siŋ, wiŋ.

restored and inversions are increased from one to five.[7] q, a letter omitted from *PAL*, replaces a phonetic symbol for the a-vowel. o and ɔ, in contrast to common usage, designate the open and closed o-vowel, respectively. Molee suggests that, for the time being, v could be used for the vowel sound in "but" and "hut," but expresses the hope that later authority will eliminate what he describes as an unmusical sound.

In both *PAL* and *GE* the following consonants are retained and pronounced as in English: p, t, k, b, d, g, f, v, r, l, m, n, s, j, h, w, and y. As in German the symbol z functions as an affricate in order to distinguish it from the spirant s. Symbol [23] is introduced in *PAL* with phonetic value [ju:], but it does not appear in any other work. q, x and c do not occur as consonants in either work.[8] Whereas the consonant system in *PAL* includes two phonetic symbols [14c & 24] and three new symbols [17, 18, & 19], all five are supplanted in

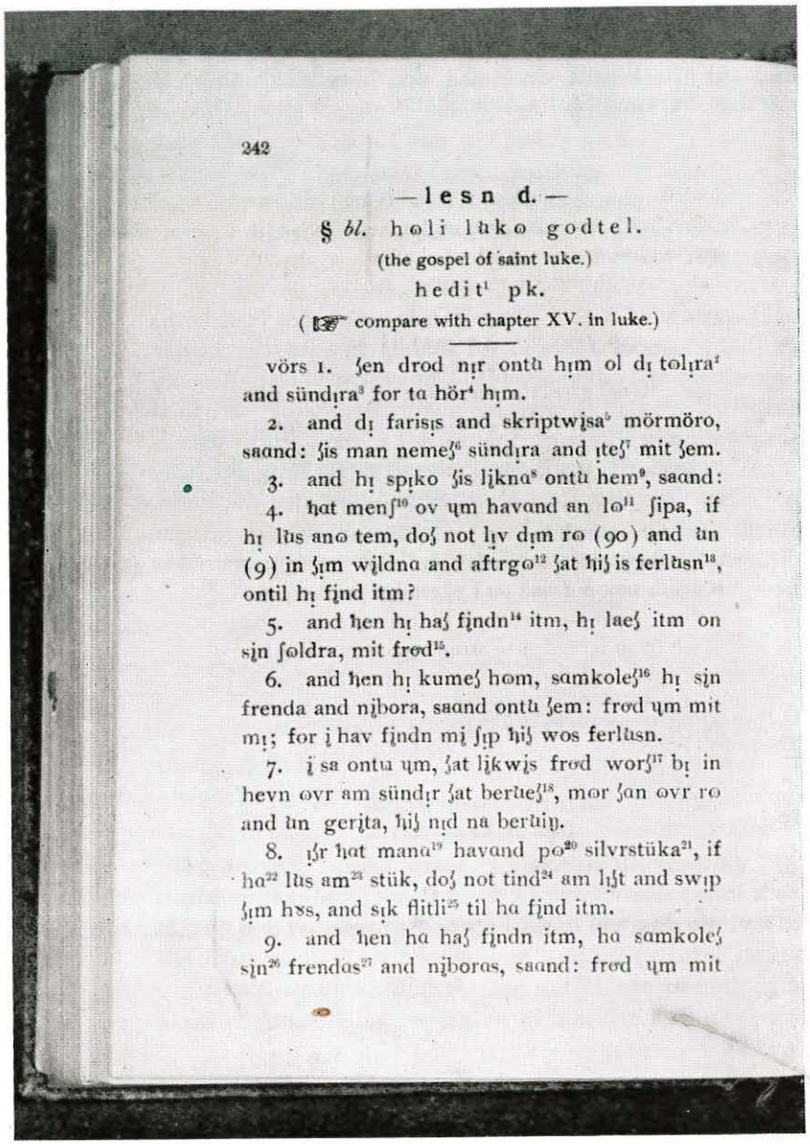
GE by traditional consonant combinations—sh, ng, ch, th, and wh.[9] This trend has already become evident in the case of the diphthongal sounds for which separate symbols were designed in *PAL* but which subsequently were expressed in traditional vowel combinations in *GE*.

It is apparent that the dramatic orthographic innovations introduced in *PAL* yield to a considerably more conservative approach in *GE*. In fact, only the use of q and v as vowels and the five inverted letters in the latter work strike the reader's eye. The explanation for this abrupt return to accepted practices is offered in *Pure Saxon English* (Chicago, 1890) where Molee writes: "One thing has done more to retard spelling reform than anything else, and that is *new types*! I know this from experience in a printing-office. The newspapers must spread and popularize spelling reform. Millions of dollars are invested in cases and a hundred different fonts of type. New letters come into the printing-office as very expensive disturbers. The thousands of cases must be rearranged; and to be obliged to obtain new letters to adjust with the heading-type, the advertising types, the job types, etc., will cause the new arrangement to be looked upon as the printer's enemy, and without his good-will the reform can hardly be carried" (p. 33).

Practical considerations led Molee to simplify his methods. To gain popular approval was, after all, the goal of his efforts and, without the support of printers and typesetters, he saw little chance of success. In reading through his first two works one is struck by the exceptionally poor quality of the printing, a factor which made him willing to strike compromises. And so, beginning with *Pure Saxon English*, Molee directs his further efforts toward achieving a phonetic system of spelling by assigning fixed values to already existing letters. In doing so he makes broad use of vowel combinations to indicate diphthongal sounds and double vowels to show length. And so, within the framework of traditional orthographic symbols, the various versions of the union tongue establish a one-to-one ratio between sound and symbol. Such an approach would afford the possibility of spelling reform without jeopardizing the sympathy and support of printers and others interested in such reforms.

The following specimen passages illustrate the various stages in the development of Molee's orthographic technique. They are presented in chronological order.

A. Specimen passage from *Plea for an American Language* (1888), p. 242. Gospel of St. Luke.



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— l e s n d. —

§ *bl.* h ɷ l i l ŭ k ɷ g o d t e l.

(the gospel of saint luke.)

h e d i t[1] p k.

(☞ compare with chapter XV. in luke.)

vörs 1. ʃen drod nɪr ontŭ hɪm ol dɪ tolɪra[2] and sündɪra[3] for tɑ hör[4] hɪm.

2. and dɪ farisɪs and skriptwɪsa[5] mörmöro, saand: ʃis man neme ʃ[6] sündɪra and ɪte ʃ[7] mit ʃem.

3. and hɪ spɪko ʃis lɪkna[8] ontŭ hem[9], saand:

4. ħat men ʃ[10] ov ɥm havand an lɷ[11] ʃipa, if hɪ lŭs anɷ tem, do ʃ not lɪv dɪm rɷ (90) and ŭn (9) in ʃɪm wɪldna and aftrgɷ[12] ʃat ħiʃ is ferlŭsn[13], ontil hɪ fɪnd itm?

5. and ħen hɪ haʃ fɪndn[14] itm, hɪ laeʃ itm on sɪn ʃoldra, mit frɷd[15].

6. and ħen hɪ kume ʃ hom, samkole ʃ[16] hɪ sɪn frenda and nɪbora, saand ontŭ ʃem: frɷd ɥm mit mɪ; for ɪ hav fɪndn mɪ ʃɪp ħiʃ wos ferlŭsn.

7. ɪ sa ontŭ ɥm, ʃat lɪkwɪs frɷd wor ʃ[17] bɪ in hevn ɷvr am sündɪr ʃat berŭe ʃ[18], mor ʃan ɷvr rɷ and ŭn gerɪta, ħiʃ nɪd na berŭɪŋ.

8. ɪʃr ħat manɑ[19] havand pɷ[20] silvrstüka[21], if hɑ[22] lŭs am[23] stük, do ʃ not tind[24] am lɪʃt and swɪp ʃɪm hɷs, and sɪk flitli[25] til hɑ fɪnd itm.

9. and ħen hɑ haʃ fɪndn itm, hɑ samkole ʃ sɪn[26] frendɑs[27] and nɪborɑs, saand: frɷd ɥm mit

B. Specimen passage from *Germanik English* (1889), p. 55.
Preamble to the United States Constitution.

Wɪ the Folk dəno Feranen Staita, iu order to form am məɾ fulkomen Foraning, aufrikt reitferdikeit insicher inlqndik rǫikeit forsɾ for thim gemein ferteiding, beforder thim qlgemein welfar, anƶ tusicher dəm blesinga frthudə tu usselfa and aur afterkomra, du quord and aufrikt this Graundlo foɾ dəm Feranen Staita Amerikano.

C. Specimen passage from *Pure Saxon English* (1890), p. 42.
Gospel of St. Matthew.

MATTHEW II.—1. "Nau when Jesus birthos (was born) in Bethlehemem Judeano (of Judea) in dqsa (the neuter objective plural) daisema (days, objective plural) Herodo, dai (the, masculine singular nominative) king, beholdai (imperative or optative), ther komono (come, third person plural, past tense) weisa (weis, plural) mana from dqs (the, objective singular neuter) ɪstem tu Jerusalemem," etc. Agen: "Nau when Jesus birthos in Bethlehemem Judeano in dqsa daisema Herodo, dai king, beholdai, ther komono weisa mana from dqs ɪstem tu Jerusalemem."

D. Specimen passage from *Nu Teutonish* (1906), p. 61.
The Lord's Prayer.

du heer'on beed.
(the lord's prayer).

vio fadr hu is in himl; heilig vorde din nam; din reik kom; din vil vorde dun an erd, als et is in himl; giv vi dis dag vio dagli broed; en fergiv vi vio shuld, als vi fergiv vio shuldos; en leed vi nit into fersoeking, men erloes vi fan evl; fyr din is du reik, en du kraft en du herliheid in evigu — amen. [matheus 6. 9–13].

E. Specimen passage from *Nu Teutonish*, p. 100. Molee writes that he is hesitant to discuss his own life and work.

m (mi) is beina bang, vn m begin t shriv om min eign vandrings. dar is mr (meer) gefar af saging smtng (somting) toorish, vn mn (man) shriv om sg selv, dan vn mn shriv om andr persons. men m ms dok vaag et, vegn een ursaak; namli, dar is meni tngs in min vandrings, vlk h hd een grt influs an ds fereensprak. min selvlivbeshrivl (autobiografie) vl; darfyr, ferklar meni dunkl punkts, n ok openbar een gevis heimli hop.

The last two specimen passages, both taken from *Nu Teutonish*, illustrate the final stage of Molee's efforts. The concepts and techniques underlying his early works are no longer in evidence, but in their place two new aspects command one's attention. Most striking is the absence of capital letters, a practice first introduced to the reader in *Tutonish* and still found in Molee's last publication, *Alteutonish* (Tacoma, 1912).[10] This followed after Molee had carried on his private correspondence for several years without the benefit of capital letters. In announcing his intention subsequently to dispense with them, he advances several reasons for this decision. Capitals, he maintains, tend to obscure the close association between symbol and idea, a requisite for rapid learning. In addition, 13 rules of grammar must be mastered in order to capitalize correctly. Capitals, he claims, take longer to write, are more difficult to read (with their many configurations small letters are supposedly set off more clearly), and inconvenience typesetters. Molee rejects the assertion that capital letters improve the page aesthetically.

More significant than the rejection of capital letters is the introduction of numerous abbreviations. In the Introduction to *Tutonish* one finds the following:

e(the) b(be) hd(had) o(of) bn(been)

n(and) h(have) t(to, too) nsf.(etc.)

In *Nu Teutonish*, z(as) and hs(has) are added and v(of) replaces o. Molee reasons that as long as arbitrary letters—and not one of the alphabets he had earlier devised—must be used, then it would be advisable to employ as few of them as possible. Such a system would supposedly offer several advantages, among them smaller and therefore less expensive books, a spelling system easier to master, and a printed page easier on the eyes.

The proposed union tongue expands considerably the modest number of abbreviations contained in the introductory portions. *Nu Teutonish*, for example, has approximately 60 abbreviations, called "ferkortels." They are for the most part auxiliary verbs, pronouns, and adverbs of frequent occurrence, although it seems doubtful that they were chosen on the basis of statistical evidence. Abbreviations are generally formed by dropping one or more vowels from a word, particularly in the vicinity of a liquid or nasal. Some examples in the specimen passage are mn(man), m(mi), mr(meer), and smtng(somting). Molee hoped ultimately to incorporate 1,000 abbreviations into the union tongue and have every school child memorize them, a task he estimated would require three to six months. Initially, the abbreviations could be appended to every book printed in the union tongue. In addition to the advantages of abbreviations already cited, Molee believed, rather naively, that the memorization and drilling of these abbreviations "would cause a uniformity o pronunciation over e world, which could probably not b secured so well in any other way."[11]

Since Molee's proposals were never realized on a large scale, the orthographic techniques described in this paper are of interest principally from a historical viewpoint as well as from that of methodology and inner development within successive works. Within the context of an artificial language—that is, if one accepts the questionable thesis that languages can be formed and regulated externally—Molee's methods can be assessed positively. They are, to be sure, frequently impressionistic, vague, and based upon highly romantic and subjective considerations, but that is not to say that they would be unable to perform the functions required of them. On the contrary, it is clear that the various elements of Molee's union tongue could perform quite well within the framework of an artificial language. With few exceptions, however—one thinks of the durable

Esperanto—artificial languages have not gained long-term acceptance. For this reason one can most profitably focus attention upon the workings of the individual elements within such a system rather than upon the system as a whole. It is to be hoped that further research in this area will yield noteworthy comparisons between the orthographic systems of various artificial languages.

1. For a discussion of international languages see Mario Pei, *One Language for the World* (New York, 1958).
2. The term "union tongue," as used by Molee, designates the artificial language based on elements derived from the various Germanic languages.
3. Examples: so, go, old, bold, mind, and kind.
4. Extimates, which varied from $100 to $150 million annually, were drawn on the basis of a projected excess expense of $10/pupil/year.
5. The following sentence, spelled by analogy, demonstrates the unsystematic nature of English spelling: Igh cee a phat chat awn thea chere. *PAL*, p. 32.
6. It is uncertain whether Molee was familiar with the work of the International Phonetic Association, which had been founded in 1886. He does make frequent mention of such scholars as Grimm and Rask as well as his prominent contemporaries, Whitney and Lounsbury. Furthermore, it is unlikely that his choice of symbols is entirely fortuitous. In general, one might best describe Molee as a learned dilettante.
7. Capitals for the inverted letters could not be inverted due to the shoulder of the type. For this reason Molee devised a combination of regular capitals plus inverted small letters. Thus, the capitals for ɔ, ɪ, and ɯ would appear as O·ɔ, I·ɪ and U·ɯ respectively.
8. q, of course, functions as an a-vowel, x and c appear sporadically in Molee's works as consonants. They are, however, more the remnants of an accepted alphabet than symbols which Molee felt could be usefully incorporated into the union tongue.
9. Key words: ship, sing, church, thee, and whir. The wh is to be pronounced with aspiration, as it is in some parts of the United States.
10. *Alteutonish* appeared in 1912 when Molee was 67 years old. To my knowledge this was his last effort.
11. *Tutonish*, p. 80.

OVERLEAF: The title page from Elias Molee's *Plea for an American Language*, 1888.