

# The Dyook's English

By Mini

THE recent report about the Duke of Edinburgh's plea for simplifying the English language by 'going phonetic' made me sit up. It was a bolt from blue-blooded royalty.

The English language has been known as much for its bewildering syntax as for its erratic rules of pronunciation and spelling. However, to us Indians nurtured in the English medium, the language has an irresistible fascination and mystique. Beginning with the "Songs the Letters Sing," through Aesop's fables and Grimms' Fairy Tales and Goldsmith, Dickens, Thackeray, Shakespeare and Bernard Shaw, the journey has been an exciting one. Now, if someone asks me to spell the Duke as Dyook, I am not going to yield without resistance. I am prepared to organise a revolt, even if it be against the English Royalty. After all, we Indians have done it before.

It was George Bernard Shaw who started this racket. At least, it was he who got all the publicity for conceiving this sacrilegious movement of phonetic spelling. It is readily conceded that he has done his bit to popularise the English language (if this sounds like measly praise, try to understand my present mood!), but he has done untold harm to

generations of English-speaking people by planting the germ of a diabolical idea into the minds of a few, however few (phew!) they may be. Shaw was a cunning old man who knew that his name will remain practically unaffected, even if phoneticised. But the unsuspecting Duke has fallen for it, hook, line and sinker.

Now, with Royalty lending its orbited hand to an insidious idea which should be buried 20,000 leagues under the sea, we should pause to consider what is in store for the English language.

## A problem for the teacher

'The songs the letters sing' which has been the beginning of the English pilgrimage for generations will have to be revised. This vandalism, if perpetrated, will surely raise the hornets' nest. And how do you rank the students of English in first form if all of them spell the words correctly? The poor schoolmaster, with Wren's English Grammar in hand, will shed tears of blood if he has to impart the Duke's English. If he does (the mercenary!), he will be throwing artificial pearls before genuine swine. I

would consider myself one if, even at the point of a gun, I consent to spell the word swyne.

What happens to Chamber's Twentieth? All the elaborate instructions of pronunciation have to be thrown to the four winds and we will have to call a spade a spade! What a dull adventure education would be without the delectable pitfalls of spelling! And, for the sake of the new generations, all the classics will have to be rewritten in obnoxious phonetic English. There may be a boom in the book-printing industry, but I am prepared to hazard the bet that in 2010 A.D. the soiled books of the 20th century will have a bigger boom. And if the phonetic fanatics should proscribe them, the boom will be bigger still.

Try to pronounce 'boom' as you would the word 'book' and I'll have one more to champion the cause I am propounding. For us in India, the 'Save English' campaign is bound to be an uphill task. It is a burning problem already and there are many waiting to give this glorious language the final push, down the deep. And what do we see? A blue-blooded Englishman furiously supplying nails for its coffin. I feel akin to the old-world Englishman who kept shaking his

head and repeating, "The word is going to dogs."

The campaign to save English should be easy if a fool-proof plan is carefully thought out. I start with, we have to study the Duke's family tree and prove that he has his roots other than in England. We shall then have the whole English nation rising as one man to reject his 'foreign' notions. A battery of lawyers should be engaged to invalidate Bernard Shaw's will, under which he has left a considerable fortune to propagate his idea of phonetic spelling.

Next, we should bombard the Queen with letters addressed to the Dyook of Edinburrow. The Queen is the queen, and not the kween, and it is a safe bet that she will not be a party to an move aimed at sullyng Queen English.

It will then be only a question of time before the Duke realises his folly. Perhaps, he will himself start a movement to prove that Shaw was neither English nor even Irish!

The last arrow in our quiver should be to get Prince Charles on our side. We can then dismiss the whole thing as a family quarrel and get back to reading the unphoneticised version of the complete works of Bernard Shaw