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My Dear Doctor:-

Dr. Carrington Bolton has just sent me your recent letter to him regarding the work of the Committee of the A.A.A.S. on the Spelling and Pronunciation of Chemical Terms, requesting that I who have to some extent acted as a sort of Secretary of the Committee, should reply. It gives me great pleasure if I can in any way assist in the great work of rendering uniform any portions of the language of Science. At the New York meeting (87 I think it was) of the Association the great variation in pronunciation in the chemical section led to the appointment of a committee to consider the whole subject of the spelling and pronunciation of chemical terms. Prof. Norton, Prof Hunt, and Dr. Bolton constituted the committee and the following year Prof Norton asked to have my name added as I had helped him to some extent in the work of the committee. A list of the more common chemical terms, taken largely from Appleton's Laboratory Manual, was printed with the spelling and pronunciation as given by Prof Appleton, and this was mailed to all the members of the Chemical Section, and to all the teachers of chemistry whose addresses could be obtained, and also to quite a considerable number of technical chemists. They were asked to criticise these lists and to give their reasons for so doing. In the meantime all the chemical words given in the chief dictionaries, English and American, (Webster, ^{see} Foster, Imperial, and several others) were collated. Here while comparatively few chemical terms were found, there was the most marvelous inconsistency and great differences. It was truly discouraging to see how much lexicographers were at sea in the matter. A careful study was then made of the principles of the language, and finally all these results were collated, the aim being to harmonize as far as possible usage, consistency, and utility. These results were presented to the Chemical Section and after thorough discussion by the Section, a new report made up in view of the new light received. This report was again widely distributed and the returns again collated and prescribed to the Section for discussion. By this time the discussion had come to centre around a few salient points, so that the third published and final report was much briefer than its predecessor, inasmuch as large classes of words could be ^{grouped} ~~grouped~~ together. Nevertheless we feel that this final report is to a certain extent tentative and after several years trial may need further revision, still it is encouraging to see how favorably it has been received. It has been widely circulated and reprinted, and the Board of Education now has in press a chart-form of the report which will soon be distributed to every higher institution of learning and laboratory in the country. The new Standard Dictionary of Funk and Wagnalls has adopted the recommendations and several journals have also adopted them. These of the changes deserve notice--(1) the dropping of the final e in

words in in and ine and pronouncing the syllable in. (2) more radical the same treatment of id and ide giving id as oxid, sulfid, &c., and (3) the most radical, the replacing ph by f in sulfur and all its derivatives. It was noticable at the last meeting of the A.A.A.S. how many of the speakers had already conformed to the new pronunciation. Though myself inclined to be conservative, I should have felt almost no sacrifice too great to secure uniformity and I confess I am surprised to find so many likeminded. It is particularly pleasing to the committee to find that in almost every instance their recommended actions were adopted, they themselves being in most instances unanimous in their opinion. Two exceptions were (1) the Section was more radical than the Committee in changing the ph to f, the Committee favoring the change but being too conservative to recommend it, and (2) the adoption of Aluminum in the place of Aluminium which three of the Committee preferred.

In Dental Science I am sure no greater difficulty would be met with than in the chemical, but I should esteem the greatest essential to have a committee, thoroughly interested in securing uniformity, willing to work, fairly conservative and practical (not "spelling reformers" in the extreme sense) and men of considerable knowledge of the English language.

I trust that you may not find this letter too lengthy. The story could hardly be told in fewer words.

Wishing you every success in the effort Dr. Bolton tells me you are about to undertake, I am,

Very truly yours,

Jas. Lewis Howe.

It occurs to me that through your journal you have an invaluable medium for reaching most of the profession, whose co-operation you would seek. Our replies were few in comparison with the responses we desired. You will doubtless succeed far better in this respect by utilizing the COSMOS.