

AN ADVANCED RATIONAL SPELLER

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An Advanced Rational Speller by Ida M. Daly

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**AN ADVANCED
RATIONAL SPELLER**

AN ADVANCED RATIONAL SPELLER

*FOR THE HIGHEST GRAMMAR CLASSES
AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS*

BY

IDA M. DALY

HEAD TEACHER OF ENGLISH, MCKINLEY MANUAL TRAINING SCHOOL,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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PREFACE.

THE only excuse for imposing another speller upon the public is its *necessity*. Spelling-books as a rule deal with words that pupils *might* misspell, or perhaps *should* misspell, but which in fact they do not. A few words taken at random from the second lesson of a very good speller will serve to illustrate the point. Chirography, chirurgery (marked obsolete in Webster's International), chirology, chiromancy, crinoid, crinal, primordial, climatology, are all very good words in their way, but unfortunately they are used by few pupils, who, if they use them intelligently, generally know how to spell them; meanwhile the rank and file are misspelling, *description*, *separate*, *stratagem*, *enemies*, *to*, *too*, *benefiting*, *privilege*, thus violating well known rules of spelling and derivation.

The necessity of the use of a speller containing words frequently misspelled, supplemental to the regular text book, has called into existence The Advanced Rational Speller. The Advanced Rational Speller is a three years' record of the misspelled words in all subjects pursued at the Eastern High School, Washington, D.C. The book is designed for use in the high school and the grades immediately below it. As may be seen at a glance, the words are simple, from the vocabulary of

the pupils in the grades below the high school, and are those for the most part that may be spelled in conformity with simple rules of spelling and philology. The record develops the fact that pupils enter the high school misspelling such words as description, separate, enemies, countries, too, two, turns, employ, until, truly, losing, seize, receive, believe, friend and scores of similar ones, which have been in their vocabulary for a long time previous to admission to the high school. A similar investigation of spelling in the colleges would produce somewhat similar results. High schools and colleges have a way of thinking that spelling is not in the curriculum. Many college graduates have been heard to say that they have never known a rule for spelling. The record of misspelled words referred to above shows little knowledge of spelling rules. Some spellers contain rules at the end of the book, a fact that may explain the lack of knowledge of rules; for the end of the book, as is well known, is seldom reached. The Advanced Rational Speller places the rules in the order of greatest need, as developed by the record of words misspelled during the first term after admission to the high school. The results are surprising: the average teacher would not say *a priori* that the spelling rules most often violated are the obviously simple ones for doubling the final consonant, dropping the final *e* and changing the final *y* into *ies* for the plural; but such are the facts as developed by the record referred to above. By placing the rule in the middle of a group of words an attempt has been made to develop the rules

inductively, then to have them applied deductively. A grave error in all inductive development work is that it ends usually with the generalization, without supplementing the inductive work by hard and fast deductive clinching in the application of the rules.

Only those rules and exceptions are given that the record shows to be necessary. In event of an exception affecting only a few words, it has been thought best to learn the words individually: for one of the objections to the learning of spelling rules is that the rule with its many exceptions, instead of aiding the pupil, serves only to confuse him.

In addition to the help of the spelling rule, the assistance of derivation is called in. The word is analyzed whenever analysis helps; many derivatives from the same root are grouped, as are many words with similar prefixes or suffixes; the foreign root is given when a help; when all philological association fails the system of mnemonics is appealed to. In fact, all known practical aids resorted to in the schoolroom in the struggle for correct spelling are called into requisition.

The spelling record having been made up by the diligent search for misspelled words on pupils' papers by the teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry, botany, zoölogy, foreign languages and English, these words, comprising a wide range of commonplace vocabulary, will be grouped under their respective heads.

The necessity for drill in spelling is seen in the fact that certain words, i.e., description, separate, privilege, principal, principle, benefit, are misspelled term after

term, year after year, by the same pupil, after special individual practice, philological appeal and even severe discipline. It has been the privilege of the writer to follow one pupil through the four years' course of English with the one word *benefiting*, only to be compelled to explain the derivation and the rule for doubling ten times to the same individual during the fourth year. This is not exaggeration, but a recorded fact, which is told only to illustrate the fact that if there is a royal road to spelling except through the old grist-mill, the writer has yet to learn it.

Correct spelling cannot be gained through the spelling-book alone. The dictionary habit must be cultivated. The Advanced Rational Speller aims to present only commonly misspelled words. No spelling-book can contain all the words of special vocabularies, the special vocabulary of one year differing from that of the next. The change in the English course from De Quincey's "Revolt of the Tartars" to Parkman's "Braddock's Defeat" necessitates a change of the spelling from "Koulagina" to "Monongahela." In addition to the spelling text book in the hands of the pupils every teacher should make a progressive spelling-book of his own. All words misspelled should be written correctly by the pupils misspelling them, upon a spelling-board reserved for the purpose, and should be copied by the pupils in a spelling note-book, from which special spelling lessons should be given from time to time.

Eternal vigilance is the secret of good spelling as it

is of good discipline, for spelling, after all, is mainly a matter of discipline. There should be such a scrutiny of written matter that every pupil is called to account for every word that is misspelled. He should be compelled to look for it in the dictionary, put it on the spelling-board, record it in his note-book, practice it a number of times, write the rule involved, derive it, write it in sentences and above all should feel the seriousness of the offense so as to wish to avoid it in the future by frequent consultations of the dictionary. When pupils leave college, misspelling such words as coming, siege, transferred, it means a lack of such individual criticism throughout the grades, the high school and the college.

There have been no words introduced in *The Advanced Rational Speller* that have not been found on pupils' papers, it being thought wiser to concentrate efforts upon words really misspelled, inasmuch as the record shows over two thousand of these. Human nature runs in grooves. It insists upon misspelling the same words in very much the same way, — separate, sepearate; description, discription; benefit, benifit; though all reason be lined up on the other side. These words that, despite drill, appear again and again on the record are made to appear again and again in the reviews of *The Advanced Rational Speller*.

Thanks are due the Principal and Faculty of the Eastern High School, through whose painstaking efforts in this research such a record of words as this has been made possible, and whose united battling in the cause