

**WORD EXPOSITOR
AND SPELLING GUIDE:
A SCHOOL MANUAL**

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Word Expositor and Spelling Guide: A School Manual by George Coutie

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GEORGE COUTIE

**WORD EXPOSITOR
AND SPELLING GUIDE:
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WORD EXPOSITOR

AND

SPELLING GUIDE:

S School Manual,

EXHIBITING THE SPELLING, PRONUNCIATION, MEANING, AND DERIVATION OF ALL THE IMPORTANT AND PECULIAR WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

WITH COPIOUS EXERCISES FOR EXAMINATION AND DICTATION.

BY

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Preface.

THE object of Part I. of this volume is to supply such exercises on the orthography of peculiar and difficult words as are adapted for training up the pupil to spell correctly in writing; which every teacher knows is a very different acquirement from spelling accurately in *viva voce* examinations.

Verbal distinctions are illustrated, by the application of the words liable to be confounded, in simple and concise sentences; which is believed to be a more effectual way of making this class of words intelligible to young persons than by definitions. These sentences may be very profitably used as dictation exercises.

It is hoped that Part II., embracing Derivation, will be found sufficiently comprehensive for a work of this character. The exercises in it carry the learner forward in the art of spelling, while they lay the foundation of an etymological knowledge which will enable him to prosecute successfully the study of more extensive treatises on the subject.

In Part III. is presented an entirely new classification of several thousands of the most important words in the language. The principle of association is the basis of this arrangement. Terms of specific signification are grouped under, as it were, generic heads, with a view to simplify examinations on the meaning of important words, especially such as are of relative signification; and also to assist the

memory, as well as to excite the curiosity of the pupil. With all its imperfections it will be found an improvement upon the usual arrangements according to the initial letters or the number of syllables; neither of which can, in any conceivable manner, afford artificial assistance to the memory or the understanding.

The exercises to be prepared in writing, present facilities to the teacher of prescribing lessons on sections that have been previously gone over; which may be executed privately, and, at the same time, secure all the advantages of writing from his immediate dictation.

Numerous directions are given as to the best methods of teaching particular sections. For the experienced and intelligent teacher these were not required;—to others, of more limited acquaintance with the improved modes of tuition, it is hoped they will prove of important service.

It is by no means necessary that teachers confine their instructions to the order in which the parts, or even the sections of the parts, are arranged. It will, indeed, be desirable to give lessons, to the more advanced classes, in all three parts at the same time.

G. C.

October, 1861.

SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE BEST MODES OF TEACHING THE SPELLING AND MEANING OF WORDS.

In the local examinations of the Oxford and Cambridge Universities, almost as many candidates fail to satisfy the examiners in Orthography as in any other of those subjects that come under the head of their preliminary examinations. The evil, too, appears to be on the increase. In the Oxford examination of 1859, fifty-eight were returned as having failed in this subject alone; whereas in 1860, out of a similar number of candidates, there were no fewer than one hundred and four. If the returns of these examiners may be taken as a fair criterion of the state of education in our middle-class schools, we must conclude that either a sufficient amount of attention is not given to this subject, or that the methods generally adopted of teaching it are so defective as to fail to produce results that are easily attainable by an average amount of time and care systematically devoted to its study. In fact, in most schools, orthography gets more than its due share of time in the division of the school business; but the modes of teaching it are perhaps more desultory and ill-devised than those employed for any other equally important subject. It is too often handed over by the head teacher to his assistants, as not requiring his immediate oversight. The futile custom, also, of giving as lessons, from day to day, long lists of unconnected words, accompanied with, to a school child, almost unintelligible definitions, has not yet disappeared in many quarters, as is evident from the multitudes of books designed for this mode of instruction that are continually issuing from the press. It is surprising that a practice which so rarely produces satisfactory results, should be carried on for a length of time in any school without its serious imperfections becoming apparent to the most lukewarm teacher. It wants even the usual recommendation to old and established customs, that it is a pleasing task to the pupils, and an easy and convenient method of conveying instruction for the teacher. Children have their favourite lessons, and it is of the utmost importance to turn their predilections to account. Almost every school child will admit a preference for some particular subject of study. Geography, arithmetic, languages will be mentioned; but seldom, if ever, his lessons in spelling. Nor can a teacher ever feel satisfaction in trying to force the attention of his pupils to a lesson disliked by them. Their

restless behaviour, and their neglect of the preparation of exercises which he has prescribed, joined to the tedious labour which the repetition of every word spelled by them entails upon him, must prove a severe trial to his temper and patience, and operate prejudicially against the amount of attention which he knows well the subject requires. Looked at from all points of view, it is of the greatest importance that the practical teaching of this subject should be as agreeable to the pupil and as free from unnecessary labour to the teacher as possible; although we are as sensible as the best friends of education can be of the danger of countenancing indolent methods of instructing young persons, whose progress may be said to depend upon their interest being constantly excited, and their minds kept in thinking activity by the unremitting attention of the teacher.

Spelling from dictation is now generally allowed to be much better adapted for affording a practical knowledge of orthography than the mere oral rehearsal of the letters of the words; but as it requires the uninterrupted attention of the teacher, its place may, in a great measure, be supplied by other exercises and examinations,—such as the composition of short sentences containing words of difficult orthography, the correction of false spelling, the formation of derivative from primitive words, the examination in writing of spelling lessons after preparation, copying pieces occasionally from good authors, and scrupulous accuracy in the performance of all written exercises. By giving such exercises to his classes, the teacher would not only be able to choose his own time for examining them, but he would soon discover that his pupils would derive more benefit from them than from the ordinary routine of oral examinations. They would acquire the habit of spelling correctly in writing,—which is far from being a necessary consequence of spelling well in *visu voce* examinations. By the constant practice of spelling correctly in careful writing, the eye becomes familiar with the appearance of the words, and can eventually detect, with considerable certainty, the alteration of a letter. In *visu voce* spelling, however, the memory has only the assistance of the ear; which cannot, of course, be always used with the same facility as the eye, and is, besides, far more liable to mislead. The general accuracy which people attain in spelling the words of Latin, or any other acquired language, by the eye and the simple use of the pen, without any special exercises for the purpose of mastering its orthography, is a proof of what is here stated, that will commend itself to every one conversant with the acquisition of languages. It may be said, however, that this is a slow process for acquiring a knowledge of orthography. This objection is not substantiated by experience. If a teacher regularly and systematically employs written exercises for teaching orthography, especially in the more advanced classes, he will find that they are not only more effectual, but speedier in their results than the most approved of oral methods. So much ground may not be gone over—so many classified

words may not be overtaken in each lesson, but what is done the pupil understands and is likely to remember; which is of more value than many times the quantity being made to pass through the mind without leaving an adequate impression upon it.

If spelling orally is a different thing from writing orthographically, it is no less true that defining a word in the language of an Expositor or Dictionary, is very different from using it properly in conversation or composition. A boy at school may sometimes be able to give the explanation of a word in the language of the Spelling-Book a month after he has committed it to memory in a prescribed lesson; but this is so rarely the case, that those teachers who have been accustomed to give such exercises will readily grant that their labour in this respect, after hours spent every day for years, must often appear to have been expended almost to no purpose; for their pupils will appear, after all, to have a clear conception of the meaning of those words only which had been explained to them in their reading lesson, or had in some other way been brought in a particular manner under their notice. The reason is obvious. The words, as arranged in the Spelling-Book or Expositor, have not the most remote connection with each other, excepting, perhaps, in the number of syllables, position of the accent, or in alphabetical arrangement. The definitions are likewise usually given, for the sake of brevity, in language even more obscure to a young mind than the words themselves,* and thus are devoid of all the properties which are calculated to make a lasting impression on the youthful mind—such as dependence on the principle of analogy or association, resemblance in sound, or something curious or striking in their signification.

Nor is it to be supposed that a boy who has committed to memory long columns of abstract definitions will be able to command any word for the expression of his ideas in conversation or composition at the moment he requires it, although he might be able to rehearse his Spelling-Book explanation of it if the word were put into his mouth. Who has not met with persons remarkable for their attainments in general scholarship, sometimes even for a comprehensive acquaintance with the idioms of their own tongue, very far from being ready with the

* The following words, with their definitions, taken from *one page* of a popular "Expositor," are a fair specimen of the verbiage which thousands of children are required, in their daily tasks, to commit to memory:—"Read, to peruse, to learn from characters; *rhumb*, a spiral line on the globe crossing all meridians at the same angle; *rice*, an esculent grain; *raeesm*, a thin, serous humour; *scree*, expressed by letters, indited; *ruff*, a puckered linen ornament; *rye*, an esculent grain; *sams*, identical; *scrow*, representation of objects; *siz*, comparative magnitude, a viscous substance; *siz*, a geometrical line." It is not difficult to say whether the words defined or the definitions, in these examples, stand most in need of explanation to the child spelling his way through words of *one syllable!*