

**THE DICTATION  
SPELLING  
BOOK: PART I**

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The Dictation Spelling Book: Part I by Mary B. Rossman & Mary W. Mills

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**MARY B. ROSSMAN & MARY W. MILLS**

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THE  
DICTATION  
SPELLING BOOK

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PART I.

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PART I., 1907.

## PREFACE.

This book is the result of a plan successfully worked out in the class-room by the compilers, and is therefore the direct outcome of practical experience. The chief object of the dictations is the teaching of correct spelling, but there are other distinct and definite aims.

The two books constituting the series are intended to cover the spelling work of four or five years, beginning with the fourth year. The first few dictations present little difficulty except that of paragraph form; but as the work advances, beside words which already form part of the child's speaking vocabulary, and are therefore valuable only as words to be correctly spelled, each selection also presents certain entirely new words with which the child has no acquaintance, and which are valuable not only as spelling material, but also as they serve to enrich his vocabulary.

In teaching such words, it seems most essential that they be presented in their proper relation,

as used by the best authors, and not as isolated words, totally unrelated, as is the case with the ordinary spelling list.

The average child has not sufficient experience or judgment to guide him in the choice of dictionary definitions, and is, moreover, confused by the number of definitions given of a single word. In studying these dictation exercises, he does not need to consult the dictionary for the meanings of all the new words he meets, but is, in many cases, led to the meaning by the context. If, however, he must resort to the dictionary, he is certainly helped to a right choice of definition by the fact that the unfamiliar word forms part of a connected thought; and so the word itself becomes more surely his.

Not only is the child's vocabulary increased by these single new words, but as he constantly meets with phrases and sentences which accurately and beautifully convey some thought familiar to him, but for which he has no adequate expression, his power to put his own thoughts into clear and pertinent language is thereby increased.

The discussion and frequent writing and re-writing of selections from our best authors necessarily leads the child to some appreciation and taste for good English, and tends to arouse an interest in the authors themselves as well as in their works.



The child's mental growth is, in the nature of things, an extremely gradual process; it is necessary, therefore, that the same subject be repeatedly presented, though in a slightly varied form, before he becomes master of it. The selections in this book are very carefully graded, from the simple to the comparatively difficult, and many of the difficult words occur again and again.

As children acquire knowledge only through a presentation that appears to them sensible, no selection has been chosen which does not contain a completely unified thought.

As to punctuation: after five or six fundamental rules have been mastered, the best results are obtained when the child is led to realize from observation and imitation, that punctuation is a simple and sensible matter, rather than the complicated and arbitrary process that it too frequently appears to him.

A few suggestions as to the use of the book are offered. First of all, *it is expected that no exercise be assigned for preparation until the teacher has carefully discussed it with the class*; this gives an opportunity to teach experimentally the use of words, marks of punctuation, the name and somewhat of the personality of the author, and to consider any literary or historical allusion that may require explanation. After the exercise has thus been made comprehensible to the class, it

should be assigned as a lesson, to be carefully studied. The children should then be required to reproduce it exactly from the teacher's dictation. Without such rigid exaction, the whole system will prove valueless.

In a few instances, slight verbal changes have been made in the standard texts of the authors chosen; but this has been done only when it seemed necessary to make the detached selection more easily comprehensible, and in no case has the essential meaning of a passage been altered.

1.

The flax was in full bloom. It had pretty little blue flowers, as delicate as the wings of a moth. The sun shone, and the showers watered it, and this was just as good for the flax as it is for little children to be washed and kissed by their mothers.

*Hans Andersen.*

2.

My little sister Lucy and I have good times together. There is a shady tree in our yard, and under it father has built us a playhouse. Yesterday we had a tea-party for our dolls. Lucy's doll is named Helen for me, and my doll is named Lucy for her.

3.

Anne, get your hat, and let us go for a walk. The sun shines bright, and the dew sparkles on the grass. Look at the two squirrels chasing each other up and down that tall maple tree! They seem to be having a game of tag.

4.

Out in the woods stood such a nice little Pine-tree. He had a good place. The sun could get at him. There was fresh air enough, and round him grew many big comrades, both pines and firs.