

Simplified Speling Sosiëty Pamflet Nr. 2

“I have lurnt to spel”

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When wun ov dhe pioneerz ov Simplified Speling tried to enlist dhe simpathiz ov a leeding English staetsman and man ov leterz, dhe graet man'z replie woz, “I hav lurnt to spel: I doen't wont to lurn oever agaen at mie tiem ov lief.” Dhis iz dhe aanser maed bie tuu out ov three ov dhe opoenents ov simplifikaeshon, dhe moement dhe subjekt iz menshond to dhem. Dhe thurd sez dhat he objekts to eny chaenj dhat wil obskuer dhe etimolojikal history ov wurdz - but dhat iz anudher story to be delt widh separetly.

Let us be kwiet faer, and admit dhat dhe man huu telz us “he haz lurnt to spel” jeneraly duz so semy-huemorusly. Dhe formuela iz not intended az an arguement, but az a frank evaezhon. He “smieling poots dhe kwestyon bie.”

But a jest which iz habituealy emloid az a meenz ov elueding dhe duety ov thaut and enkwieri bekumz a seeryus faktor in dhe problem, and kaulz for a seeryus aanser. Haz eny man dhe riet to poot asied widh a jest a propoezal to lieten wun ov dhe burdenz ov child lief for untoeld jeneraeshonz ov children?

If dhe opoenent ov simplifikaeshon kan konvins himself, aafter due enkwieri, dhat dhe propoezal iz vizhonary, bie aul meenz let him sae soe, and pruuw hiz kaes. But if he fiendz dhat its “vizhonarines” liez soelly in hiz oen inurshya ov miend and dhat ov hiz feloe konsurvativz, wil he faes dhe responsibility ov inflikting yeerz ov unnesesary toil on hiz desendants for ever, in order to spaer himself a litl temporary diskumfort?

“But it wood be no smaull diskumfort to hav to maaster a nue sistem ov speling!” Dhis wood be a strong, dhoe skaersly an adekwet, objekshon, if eniwun propoezd dhat a hoelly nue sistem ov orthografy shood be sudenly forst, bie sum despotik fiat, on dhe English-speaking wurd. But noe wun is liekly to poot forward eny propozishon for a reform going beyond dhe Nue Speling uezd in dhis pamflet.

U ar not aaskt to unlurn dhe jumbl ov konvenshonz in which U hav been laboryusly skuuld. U ar simply aaskt to restraien dhe instinktiv impaeshens - in sum kaesez amounting to angger - which U probably feel on enkountering for dhe furst tiem dhe Nue Speling ov wurdz widh which U ar aulredy soe familyar in dhaer oeld giez.

If, on thinking dhe mater oever, U see dhat dhe muuvment is poetently konduesiv to dhe welfaer ov dhe English-speeking peeplz, and ar impeld to ofer it uer aktiv koöperaeshon, dhe Simplified Speling Sosiëty wil welkum U az a rekrut, and sujest methodz whaerbie U mae promoet reform. We kanot, houeever, ekspekt aktiv koöperaeshon from evribody. Whot mae faerly be ekspekted ov reezonabl peepl, huu realiz dhaer duety to dhe kuming jeneraeshonz, iz dhat dhae shal soe far kombat dhaer instinktiv prejoodisez az to ofer noe aktiv opozishon to such a moderet simplifikaeshon az iz heer ilustraeted.

Dhe moest sanggwin reformer kan skaersly hoep to see widhin dhe nekst twenty yeez such a radikal chaenj az shood kauz eny praktikal difikulty to peepl braut up in dhe oeld konvenshonz. Dhus noe wun huu haz enterd on midl lief need be aprehsiv ov having hiz sensibilitiz shokt bie eny jeneral adopshon ov rashonal orthografy, or ov being rekwierd to egzurt himself in dhe slietest degree to lurn nue spelingz. Dhe yung men ov todae mae liv to see simplified speling adopted in a graet meny peeryodikalz and nue books. But befor dhe reform kan bekum kompleet and uenivursal, a nue jeneraeshon wil hav groen up which haz not been traend in reverens for konvenshonal unreezon, and konsekwently wil not sufer by its disues.

It iz kwiet posibl dhat, apart from dhe prezent muuvment for a jeneral simplifikaeshon ov speling, dhe sistem ov teeching children to reed by dhe aed ov a siëntifik fonetik alfabet wil suun be wiedly adopted in elementary skuulz. Dhe tuu propoezalz ar hoelly distinkt, dhoe dhae boeth ariez from dhe deplorabl kondishon ov our kurrent speling. It iz found bie teecherz dhat it taeks les tiem and laebor to let a chield lurn furst bie meenz ov a rashonal sistem ov simbolz, and dhen paas on to dhe irashonal, dhan to dril dhe irashonal sistem into hiz miend from dhe outset. Dhis iz an aulmoest inkredibl koment on dhe absurdity ov our speling, but dhe testimony ov eduekaeshonists iz not to be gaensed. Dhae deklaer dhat “transizhon (from dhe rashonal to dhe irashonal sistem), if not tuu urly, iz eezy, and konvenshonal speling iz lurnt mor thurroly bie kontraast, and bekauz dhe intelektueal fakultiz hav been developt bie dhe traening persued. Dhe dubl proeses taeks les tiem dhan dhe singgl proeses, and givz a mor satisfactory rezult; for dhe chield taut dhus boeth speeks and spelz beter.”

Children huu ar taut to reed bie dhis method wil kount rashonal wurd-formz amung dhaer urlyest impreshonz, and wil ekspeeryens noe shok when such formz ar graduealy introduet into kurrent literatuer. Dhus simplifikaeshon wil meet widh les and les opozishon az tiem goez on, until at laast such an aproksimaeshon to reezon iz reecht dhat dhaer wil be noe need for tuu proesesez in teeching a chield to reed and spel.

“Dhen wil aul our literatuer hav to be reespelt and reprinted? Wil dhe jeneraeshon braut up under dhe nue sistem be entierly kut of from dhoez books ov dhe paast which it iz not wurth whiel to transliteract and reepublish?”

If dhis feer wer wel-founded, whot a satier it wood be on our present sistem! It impliez dhat our speling iz soe irashonal dhat it wood be inkomprehensibl to eniwun akustomd to see dhe langgwej spelt aproksimetly az it iz pronounst.

But dhe kurrent speling iz not soe bad az aul dhat. Reezonably intelijent peepl - such peepl az ar at aul liekly to wish to reed literatuer in dhe oeld speling - wil be aebl to duu soe without eny difikulty. It wil be a mater ov a fue ourz' praktis. A boi or gurl ov fifteen or dhaerabouts, taeking up for dhe furst tiem a book in dhe oeld speling, mae perhaps stumbl nou and dhen in geting thruu dhe furst twenty paejez; but dhe sens ov straenjnes wil very suun waer of. And hou dhae wil pity dhaer grandfaadherz and grandmudherz huu had to komit to memory aul dheez klumzy and inkonsistent misreprezentaeshonz ov sound!

Dhaer wil be meny peepl, however, huu wil deliet in dhe kwaent oeld speling ov dhe Viktoryan aej, and wil deklie to reed Dickens or Thackeray, Ruskin or Tennyson, in eny udher form.

It need skaersly be pointed out dhat in order to reed dhe oeld speling it wil bie noe meenz be nesesary to memoriez aul dhe formz, so az to be aebl to riet "korekty" akording to present standardz. It iz wun thing to rekogniez a wurd, and kwiet anudher thing to be aebl to rekaul, when dhe book iz kloezd, egzaktly hou it woz spelt. We hav noe difikulty in reeding dhe Furst Foelyoe Shakespeare; but which ov us kood, from memory, riet doun a singl speech in dhe egzakt speling ov dhe printerz ov 1623? In furdher ilustraeshon ov dhis point, let us taek dhe foloing pasej from Caxton'z "Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye" -

Whan Saturne sawe his palays Florysse & shyne of gold, and sawe hys peple obeye hym, sawe hys goldsmythes and werkers breke the montaignes with her pikois & instruments, sawe hys maryners cutte the wawes of the see wyth theyr oores, sawe hys dyscyples lerne and laboure the erthe, sawe hys archers shote wyth her arowes & smote and toke the byrdes dwellyng in the hye trees and fleyng by the ayer, he myght enbrace grete glorye and enhaunse in hye hys trone and hys felicyte.

We kan reed dhis widh very litl trubl; but it wood kost us a long tiem to memoriez dhe presies speling eeven ov dheez forskor wurdz. Egzaktly similar, and egzaktly az fuetiel, iz dhe laebor which our present speling inflikts upon children. But when dhae hav akwierd a rashonal sistem ov orthografy - rietly soe kauld - dhae wil be aebl widh very litl difikulty to understand dhe irashonal sistem, whiel rejoising in dhe fakt dhat dhae hav noe longger to komit its absurditiz to memory.

Dhe reeder, dhen, mae rest ashurd dhat in oepening hiz miend to realiez dhe oeverwhelming advaantejez ov Simplified Speling, he iz not inkuring eny risk ov pursonal laebor or inkonveenyens. Bie meerly adopting an atitued ov frendly nuetrality, he wil help to releev hiz desendants ov a stuupid and opresiv klog upon dhaer mental development, and to enhaans dhe efishensy ov Inglish az a wurd-speech.