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**SOCIETY HAS A NEW FAD**  
UPPER TENDOM ADOPTS THE "SPELLING DOWN" AMUSEMENT.  
And Gets as Much Fun Out of It as Do the Boys and Girls Who Fight for Orthographic Honors in the "Little Red School House."



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I Frits were not so frita a comparison I would liken fashion to an eccentric comet that returns on its orbit in a certain lapse of years, or to a tide measureless like that of the Mediterranean, which nevertheless in the course of 1 (1) reaches the highest rocks it washed a hundred years ago. This simile is trite when applied to the fashions of dress, but it is less so when turned upon those of manner, as it may be with equal truth. Instances are continually cropping up to show that what we used to laugh at our grandparents for doing we now do ourselves with a comical assumption of originality.  
One may read these things as one runs, and without multiplying instances we can refer to the latest development of this revival of antique customs, the spelling school. "The spelling school!" some one exclaims with an incredulous laugh; but we answer him with one of good natured superiority, for it is evident by this that he lives out of the world. In a certain grave circle of New York society, one neither young nor old, neither foggy nor fast, a great deal of genuine amusement is being culled this winter by leasing new life to an old custom. The fad, if it must have a modern and slangy denomination, was started by a Boston lady who is passing the winter here, and with so fitting an initiate and with so many prominent people deriving pleasure from it the fashion will doubtless become general.  
"Judging by recent experience," remarked Cornelius Van Cott, postmaster of the city of New York, "spelling needed this flippant badly. Whatever the cause may be—whether the introduction of newly coined words, or the prevalence of foreign words in our literature, or the invention of spelling by sound—the fact remains that the younger generation is always spelled down by the elder, and the elder cannot make as good a record as it did years ago."



"IN A CERTAIN GRAVE CIRCLE."  
Mr. Van Cott is an enthusiast in this new-old fashion, and he is said to be a champion speller. At a "bee" held recently he spelled down a party of forty on a remarkably simple word, "daggor," everybody else planning their faith to two a's. But the simple words were over the hump of the infancy of the spelling school. It was "rhemoid," "phthisic," "pharmacopoeia," "caoutchouc" and others even more difficult and unusual that everybody learned to spell and could not be caught on. It was on such words as "lily," "pony," "poison," and "poniard" that the line of spellers used to go down like a house of cards. This is general of all spellers today as it was many years since, and in the latest revival of the fashion in 1875. In that year there was a perfect craze for it in the west. Schools, churches, societies and private houses were all the scenes of this rivalry of vowels and consonants. The young man, then, who refused to spell on any ground whatever was, if not ostracized, at least subjected to a severe letting alone. There were a few cases of stubborn objection to revealing weakness in that line among the young men, but never among the maidens. They were always ready to spell—the dear creatures are generally ready for every form of mild dissipation—and they never seemed to mind whether they spelled well or badly. It was sport all the same.  
Not that I wish to say that the girls of that generation—now our gentle young matrons—spelled very badly. On the contrary, they were famous for proficiency. Yet it sometimes occurred, in a moment of absent-mindedness, in a moment of absent-mindedness, in a moment of absent-mindedness, that "she" missed a word and "he" spelled it correct.



THE APOTHEOSIS OF THE SCHOOL.  
ly. True love carried out the school then in every sense. How could he explain and how could she admit her grievance? Oh, it was all due to that detestable spelling school, and the poor inanimate thing received a sufficient amount of abuse from lover and sweetheart.  
Yet, after all that may be said of its successful revival in '75 and its certain popularity in '91, the apotheosis of the spelling school occurred in our grandfathers' day—in the day of stage coaches and pilonies—the day of high boots and mulcaped coats, in the day of poke bonnets and puce colored silks.  
Dr. Eggleston has written of the custom in his excellent "History of the Colonies," but he might have told a still more adri-

table and amusing story—and who so fitted as he to tell it—of the spirit of the craze in the log cabin epoch of the history of Indiana. Then in a back county of that remote reserve, the girls, healthy and rosy cheeked, rode "double back" for miles to the Friday night spelling school.  
It was usually held in the poor building full of shacks, through which the bitter wind whistled, that served as a school house on week days and meeting house on Sundays. Around a great stove, glowing red, they formed in a circle, every girl and every "fellow" with mittens on, and the girls with shawls and even comforters around them, and in the face of physical difficulties—for it was hot in front and very cold behind—these pioneers, those citizens in embryo, pursued their course into the dictionary manfully and "manfully."  
The result has been in many individuals the inheritance of the ability to keep words in mind, clothed in the complete armor of Webster. Now you know what to reply when next that boastful individual who has corrected a word for you says with false candor, "I don't know how it is, but I can spell—it comes naturally." You may tell him to give all the credit of it to his mother, or you may relate the anecdote in its two hundredth edition of Gen. Jackson, who, as he corrected a misspelled word in an important state document to which his secretary had timidly called his attention, growled out, "I'll fix it your way this time, but I wouldn't give a cent for a man who can't spell a word but one way."  
What memories are associated with those old time spelling schools! The excitement



THE FRIDAY NIGHT SPELLING SCHOOL, which ran high as one after another went down on a knotty word, until only two, perhaps, were left of a long line of spellers; the feast of apples and nuts after the bee was over—the nuts cracked on a flat iron between the knees of the boys—the big, choice goodies being slyly reserved for some favorite maid! This humble amusement supplied the place of theatre, opera and ball to these simple folk. Then the ride home in the frosty moonlight, the merry laughter of the crowds of young people, or the soft love words of some couple, lagging far in the rear, who were "keeping company."

These are memories which last through life with many who were actors in that rustic drama. A man of wealth and position in New York, who is particularly liable to lapses of memory in regard to the spelling of words, recently told me that there was one word over which he never hesitated—the word "separate." He never wrote it without recalling the time when, forty years ago, in a western country school house, he had "downed" the best man in the spelling school on that word, and, flushed and triumphant, had on the homeward ride received a kiss from the beauty of the county, the girl he afterward married.  
FRANCIS M. LIVINGSTON.

A French Breach of Promise Case.  
At last the hard commercial spirit of the Nineteenth century seems to have spread to the sentimental land of France. For the first time in the history of the country a French deceiver has been sued in a French court for breach of promise of marriage, and had a verdict for damages of \$1,000 returned against him. It is interesting however, to note the sharp line of demarcation drawn by the bench between the material and the merely romantic aspects of the case. That pecuniary compensation could make amends for the trampling with the plaintiff's affections does not seem to have occurred to the tribunal. But inasmuch as the plaintiff's family had provided a trousseau, which, through the faithlessness of the bridegroom, is left upon their hands, they are to be indemnified by the gentleman who loved and rode away. It is a decision full of interest, and shows that the French nation, however sentimental it may talk, is at bottom quite as practical as other nations.

A Valuable Indian Curiosity.  
A totem pole, recently received in America from the Queen Charlotte Islands, is said by West Shore to be the largest ever yet procured of the Indians, it being forty feet in length by five feet in diameter. The carving on it is grotesque and strange in the extreme and of a kind rarely met with. Mr. Hart, who was for nearly thirty-four years with the Indians, says that never before could a similar totem pole be procured by white men, although efforts were made to do so. This one was left at a deserted village by one of the Skillegate tribe, and fell into the hands of Hart's agent. It was brought down intact. Its age is considered by experts to be close upon 800 years. The wood forming it is cedar, which, when above ground, is practically non-decaying, and although weatherbeaten and scarred the relic still preserves its form and design well.

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