

MARK TWAIN ON SPELLING

A Humorous Monolog

by
Mark Twain



Wetmore Declamation Bureau

**Box 2695
Sioux City, IA 51106**

**www.wetmoredeclamation.com
Email: speeches@wetmoredeclamation.com**

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Ladies and Gentlemen: I don't see any use in spelling a word right and never did. I mean I don't see any use in having a uniform and arbitrary way of spelling words. We might as well make all clothes alike and cook all dishes alike. Sameness is tiresome; variety is pleasing. I have a correspondent whose letters are always a refreshment to me, there is such a breezy, unfettered originality about his orthography. He always spells Kow with a large K. Now that is just as good as to spell it with c. It is better. It gives the imagination a broader field, a wider scope. It suggests to the mind a grand, vague, impressive new kind of a cow.

Superb effects can be produced by variegated spelling. Now there is Blind Tom, the musical prodigy. He always spells a word according to the sound that is carried to his ear. And he is an enthusiast in orthography. When you give him a word, he shouts it out--puts all his soul into it. I once heard him called upon to spell orangoutang before an audience. He said,--"o, r-a-n-g, orang, g-e-r, ger, oranger, t-a-n-g, tang, oranggertang!" Now a body can respect an orang-outang that spells his name in a vigorous way like that. But the feeble dictionary makes a mere kitten of him.

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