

**ORTHOEPEY AND ORTHOGRAPHY  
OF THE ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE: A COURSE OF  
READINGS WITH PRIVATE PUPILS**

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Orthoepy and Orthography of the English Language: A Course of Readings with Private Pupils  
by E. R. de Levante

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**E. R. DE LEVANTE**

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# ORTHOEPY AND ORTHOGRAPHY

OF THE

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE;

### COURSE OF READINGS

WITH PRIVATE PUPILS.



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BY THE

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## P R E F A C E .

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THERE is a disposition in the present day to undervalue works on English Orthoepy and Orthography. One writer says that we must learn to pronounce words "as birds learn to sing;" another affirms that "the right pronunciation of *every* language must depend more upon habit and example than upon anything else, and hardly requires to be inculcated theoretically." These are the sentiments of men interested in the work of education,—sentiments in which thousands of well-educated Englishmen share. Fully aware, then, of the deep-rooted and wide-spread prejudice which exists against the subject, the author has, nevertheless, ventured to submit to public criticism the views contained in this book.

For several years it has fallen to the author's lot to be occupied in private tuition. Amongst the pupils committed to his charge, there have been a few foreign, and many English youths. Of these pupils, not a few, owing to some native

infirmity, or to some defect in early education, had to struggle against an imperfect acquaintance with the first principles of the English language ;—English youths, who from days of childhood had been accustomed to speak and to hear their mother-tongue, and had yet grown up in ignorance of its orthography ; foreigners, who had mastered the orthography, but who had hitherto failed in the orthoepy of the language.

It occurred to the author that the wants of each of these, while differing widely in appearance, were in reality the same ; that in each case the connection of the written word with the spoken had to be established, in order that the English youth might be enabled to write what he could pronounce, the foreigner to pronounce what he could write, and both of them to write and to pronounce correctly. To attain this end, the method contained in the following pages was devised—a method which has already proved efficacious in a few cases, and which will possibly prove efficacious in many more.

Admitting that habit and example are of



great weight in the pronunciation of words, it may be doubted whether they are of sufficient weight to take the place of solid rules. Habit and example may be *bad* as well as good ; and if a right pronunciation depend upon these, so does a *wrong* pronunciation. A child brought up under the surveillance of well-educated parents, will naturally acquire a good style of pronunciation ; but a child brought up by illiterate parents will acquire a bad style. To trust to habit and example is to trust to chance ; it is to condemn nine-tenths of the people to hopeless ignorance ; it is to render it impossible for any one but a resident in a country where English is spoken, to learn to pronounce the English language. *Custom* must be the guide, not *habit* ; and as in law, those long-established, reasonable and consistent customs, which are called the *Leges non scriptæ*, are actually committed to writing, and formed into laws ; so in language, the long-established, reasonable and consistent custom of spelling and pronouncing words must be committed to writing, and formed into settled rules. The plan of the

present work, which is simple, will be best understood by a perusal of the table of contents. The whole of the sentences of the second set of exercises are gathered from Shakespeare; and it is hoped that while they illustrate these remarks on Orthoepy and Orthography, they will also enrich the vocabulary, and elevate the ideas of the young student.

LONDON, *September*, 1869.

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