

the other the teacher, that the scholar was making proper progress. This method, however, of conducting school exercises is now nearly or quite obsolete. And instead thereof, the teacher sits in his chair, and the scholars, not one by one, but in classes pass in review before him.

Now how shall this exercise be conducted? Beyond doubt there is a Scylla as well as a Charybdis to shun here, and the careful conscientious teacher will pause long and ponder carefully before he adopts any plan, the influence of which is to toll with such power upon the present and future welfare of his pupils. If the teacher regards the recitation *simply*, or even *mainly*, as the means by which he is to ascertain the pupil's knowledge of the subject, the pupil, as *certainly* will come to look upon the recitation as the great end of all study. Indeed the relation existing between the object the teacher has in view in *hearing* a recitation, and the object the scholar has in view in preparing for it, is that of cause and effect. Now if this be so the question proposed at the head of this article becomes an all important one. The method justly characterized as the "drawing out process" has been sufficiently ridiculed; no teacher who cares for a reputation, will, knowingly, adopt it for an instant. Another equally fatal mistake, as it appears to me, is to require pupils to memorize the words of the author, and invariably give them at the recitation. Of the two errors, both radical in their effect upon character, I deem the former least objectionable. There is, however, I am confident a more excellent way. Suppose we have a class before us: the subject for examination is "The Cause of the Tides."

A member of the class is called upon to commence the recitation; he takes his position before his classmates, and for the time being becomes teacher; taking up his topic in clear and careful language, he unfolds his subject step by step, all the while looking at, and talking to the class, talking to them, too, as though this were the first time their attention had been called to the matter—in short, manifesting all the life and animation that an earnest teacher would, under like circumstances—repeating, or perhaps reviewing the subject from another stand point, if he finds he is not understood, the teacher meanwhile remaining a silent listener, noticing his mistakes, and correcting them himself, if they are not first corrected by some member of the class. After this pupil has occupied his share of the time, he should be asked to sit, and another called to begin the discussion just where he left off; and go on in the same way until the entire class has been called. By such a course the scholar feels, not that he is simply telling his teacher what he knows, but that he is really imparting *instruction*, and the observant teacher is able to judge not only of the pupil's knowledge of the subject, but also of the power of mind he is acquiring, his mental discipline without which all the knowledge he may gain will be of little worth. By pursuing such a plan, the fundamental principles of Grammar will become so wrought into the very texture of their conversation, even while attending to their studies, that they become part and parcel of their nature. Does some one say, the subject selected as a model is a peculiar one, all topics may not be treated in a like manner? I answer not so, the whole range of mathematics, history, the natural sciences, and I think, many of the studies belonging to the department of Belles-Lettres may be treated in the same way. The great point to be gained is to induce the scholar to talk, not to the teacher, but to his classmates.

If this is not the way, will some one point out a more excellent way?—(New York Teacher.)

Mr. Prescott's Method of Literary Labor.

Everything that relates to the historical labors of the late William H. Prescott is of general interest. We have, therefore, prepared a somewhat minute sketch of the method of preparation and composition adopted by the deceased, by which he was enabled to overcome his impaired vision, and to place his name among historians of the very first rank. Mr. Prescott, it is well known, though not blind, was affected with a disorder of the nerve of the eye, so that he was wholly incapacitated for reading and writing in the ordinary ways. He was exceedingly systematic in his mode of life, and devoted five hours out of the twenty-four to his historical labors. After breakfast he listened an hour or two to some light reading, a novel, poem, or other entertaining book. He then walked for an hour. At half-past ten o'clock his secretary came to his study and remained till twelve o'clock. Another walk of an hour was then taken, after which he went to his study and remained another hour and a half with his secretary. After dinner light reading was again resorted to, and at six o'clock the secretary returned and remained

until eight. This routine of work and leisure was very rigidly observed throughout the season, during the years devoted to the preparation of his elaborate volumes.

Mr. Prescott's mode of writing history was this: we will take for example, his last work, "Philip the Second." He arranged in his study all books and manuscripts relating to that monarch, which he had been years in collecting, at an expense of many thousand dollars. They numbered three or four hundred printed volumes of all sizes. There were also some twenty thick folios of manuscripts, richly-bound, which probably cost more than all the rest of the collection, though some of the printed works are exceedingly rare and valuable—the libraries and bookstores of all Western Europe, from Cadiz to Amsterdam, having been ransacked by agents in search of everything that could throw light on the history of Philip the Second. Except dictionaries and other works of reference, books not specially relating to the subject in hand were excluded from the study.

With his material thus gathered about him, the Historian commenced his work. The secretary first read the only English history of the King and his reign. Notes and observations were dictated as they were suggested by the book. Having freshened his recollections by hearing this volume read, Mr. Prescott proceeded to examine the treasures he had collected. Each book was taken from the shelf in turns by the secretary, who read aloud its title, its table of contents, and a few pages by way of specimen of its style and character. Notes were taken while this examination was going on which were preserved for future reference. Of the three or four hundred volumes, a great majority of course proved worthless, being either merely repetitions or compilations or translation of preceding authors, or else, if original, without authority. The number of books of real value would thus be reduced down perhaps to a hundred.

The huge MSS. were next attacked. These had been examined by a competent person, who prepared a careful digest and table of contents. The secretary read this, and notes were dictated. Having thus as it were taken an account of stock, and ascertained the general character of his materials, they were next inspected in detail in the following manner: The first chapter of Philip the Second contains an account of the abdication and last days of his father and predecessor, Charles the Fifth. The secretary gathered around him every volume, printed or MSS., which contained anything about the last named monarch. The books are in the English, French, Spanish, Italian and Latin languages. One by one they were read along and copious notes were dictated. When everything that related to Charles the Fifth had thus been perused and noted, the historian began to compose this work, or, more properly speaking, to write it—for the process of composition had of course been going on in his mind during these preparatory labors.

The apparatus used by Mr. Prescott consisted of a frame the size of a common sheet of letter paper, with brass wires inserted to correspond with the number of lines marked. Thin carbonated paper was used, and instead of a pen the writer employed a stylus with an agate point. The great difficulty in the way of a person's writing in the ordinary manner, whose vision is impaired, arises from not knowing when the ink is exhausted, and moreover the lines will be run into one another. Both difficulties are obviated by the simple arrangement just described. The pages thus written by Mr. Prescott were copied by the Secretary, and read, that such interlinations, alterations and amendments might be made, as were needed. The materials for the second chapter, on the early life of Philip, were next taken up, and the same process repeated, until the volume is ready for the printer. About six years were devoted to the first two volumes of Philip the Second, including the preparatory studies. These volumes appeared in 1855, the third of the series was issued within a few weeks, and it is understood that the fourth is considerably advanced.

The Hon. George Bancroft, in an eloquent tribute to his friend, before the New York Historical Society, thus referred to the studious and systematic habits of Mr. Prescott: "His habits were methodically exact; retiring early and ever at the same hour, he arose early alike in winter and summer at the appointed moment, rousing himself instantly, though in the soundest sleep, at the first note of his alarm bell; never giving indulgence to lassitude or delay. To the hours which he gave to this pursuit he adhered as scrupulously as possible, never lightly suffering them to be interfered with; now listening to his reader; now dictating what was to be written; now using his own eyes sparingly for reading; now writing by the aid of simple machinery devised for those who are in darkness; now passing time in thoughtfully revolving his great theme.

"The excellence of his productions is, in part, transparent to every reader. Compare what he has written with the most of what others have left upon the same subjects, and Prescott's superiority