

For more than thirty years, my father was a teacher in various grades of school and academy, and at West Point. At one time, in New Haven, he taught mathematics and navigation to fit young men to be captains and mates of ships,—for our country being then confined to the Atlantic seaboard, the sea-faring business was one of the principal trades or vocations of the people. Many of his pupils became distinguished in their profession; and years after, we had in the family handsome presents which the gratitude of those young men had given to their old teacher. This was what may be called *prima facie* evidence that his teaching was not only useful, but had touched the spirits of his pupils. At another time, he taught a classical academy, and among those taught by him were several men who came to the highest stations in the United States Government, and his influence with them was so great that he really accomplished more with the Government than the most distinguished politicians. The power of the teacher, we see in this, was not confined to the mere school, nor to the mere business of teaching, but went home to the hearts of his pupils, and remained a power in his hands when these youth became the men of station, and renown, and influence in the land.

Let us now take examples from some other early teachers. I can take no better or more striking than those who were my teachers, and they were few in number. We lived on Mill Creek just previous to the War of 1812-15, and I had just one quarter's schooling before I was eleven years of age. It was in a log school house on the banks of Mill Creek. It was a memorable time; but I shall only speak of the schoolmaster. Two things only I remember specially of him. The first was, that he was great on *spelling*. We had the modern practice of spelling fights, spelling in competition, and for the head of the class. At the end of the quarter, I was head of the class in spelling; and strange as it may seem, such was the influence of my mother and of this teacher that I have rarely since looked in an English dictionary. In thirty years, I have scarcely looked as many times in a dictionary. This, however, was the result of much reading which gave the knowledge of words. But, I think, the teacher, whose speciality was this humble part of education, had an influence which perhaps brighter and wiser people did not have. But one thing I must mention to mark the manner of the times. On quarter day we were marched (I at the head) to the neighboring tavern, and treated to cherry bounce! Now, cherry bounce is a pretty strong article, and my head rang again. I have never been treated since at school to a tavern drink; but I have no doubt the old fashioned teacher thought it was a very innocent affair. But suppose some of those boys had an aptitude for strong drink, what an influence must such an example have exerted on their after lives!

A year after this, I went to school in New Haven, to a teacher who was an intemperate man, but who was crowded with boys. He was a disciplinarian of the old school. I saw him tie up a boy and horsewhip him, and it did no good. That man struck the backs of his boys, but never struck a single idea from their minds. Again, I was at school at quite a celebrated academy—the Episcopa^l Academy at Cheshire, Connecticut. The principal of this institution was emphatically, *dum vivimus vivamus*—live whilst you live. The boys and the teacher alike agreed in taking the world easy. We had regular recitations each day, but we got over them in the most slipshod way. I was there only six months, but I am unable to recall any ideas I got there. It was spring and summer, and I spent much of my time in making hay, picking blackberries, and chasing pigs. When this got to the ears of my mother, as it did, she soon made her appearance on the stage, with my father, and the bills were paid and “her boy” taken away. I have not heard that Cheshire Academy is renowned for distinguished *alumni*. A lazy human being is a contemptible object—but a lazy teacher is worse than contemptible. He is bad. Time is the most valuable thing we have in this world. It is the only capital we have, with which to use and apply our talents. Hence a teacher had better, if he can do

nothing else, teach his pupils a single thing—such as spelling, for example,—and teach him that rightly, than to suffer him to go over every day a set of slipshod lessons, without giving him one idea to redeem time from total loss.

Another example of a totally different teacher was Professor Crozet at West Point. Claude Crozet had been educated at the Polytechnique School, and was a Captain of Engineers in the last great campaign of Napoleon. Taken prisoner by the Russians, he returned to France, and remained till Waterloo closed the brilliant career of Napoleon in 1815. The Government of this country was then attempting to remodel and revive West Point, so as to make it efficient in the education of young men for the national service. America was then young, and deficient in teachers of the exact sciences. Crozet was appointed Professor of Engineering at West Point. Engineering is the practical result of the exact sciences, and presupposes a pupil taught in these subjects. Crozet came to West Point knowing little or nothing of English, and he was astonished to find himself a teacher of pupils who had no ground work for his science. They had studied algebra, geometry, trigonometry, perhaps mechanics and philosophy; but what knew they of descriptive geometry—a perfectly unknown quantity in America; what of topographical drawing, without which we cannot teach engineering? Here was a dilemma: a Professor of Engineering without the English tongue, and pupils without the elements of engineering! But Crozet was indomitable. He had fought the Russians with Napoleon, and was not to be frightened by American boys. So he got out his Polytechnique drawings, and put a blackboard and chalk in the middle of the room. On the blackboard he drew the figures of descriptive geometry, and on the table he put the drawings of the Polytechnique. There was *not a book* in that room which could give the pupil a fact or a thought. There was no stealing; for there was nothing to steal from. In regard to what we had to do, we stood in mother's nakedness, and had nothing to rely on but ourselves. The way we looked astonished, the way the professor stood aghast, the way we laughed together, and the way we went to work, would have been perfectly astounding to some of our modern teachers who think they must have a book full of cuts and explanations, and glossaries and questions, or they can do nothing. By the way, the first cuts I ever saw were in Webster's spelling-book, which was first issued nearly sixty years ago. In the fable of the boy up the apple tree was a cut illustrating the little chap. There was another one (I forget what it was about) with a big bear in it. We had cuts enough with Professor Crozet, but they were cuts of hard mathematics—drawings of problems and fortifications. So Professor Crozet began his work at West Point—and it was a work which tells on the Nation's history. Never have better engineers or better mathematicians been educated in any nation, and never were stronger minds educated for their country's service. The mere routine of West Point I do not value very highly; but the thorough teaching and the thorough discipline are invaluable. Nothing in this country, perhaps in no country, equals it.

We can not and we ought not to educate our American youth in the manner of the Prussians. In Prussia men must pursue specific vocations. Everything runs in grooves, and everything must run in grooves. But in America every man is free to pursue any course under the sun which he chooses, and American youth must have free teachers. They must use their minds freely, and they must draw out their boys and girls in free paths, giving them general strength and freedom rather than specific vocations. The teacher who can do this becomes immortal in the immortal minds of his pupils, and honorable in the history of his country.—*Ohio Educational Monthly*.

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