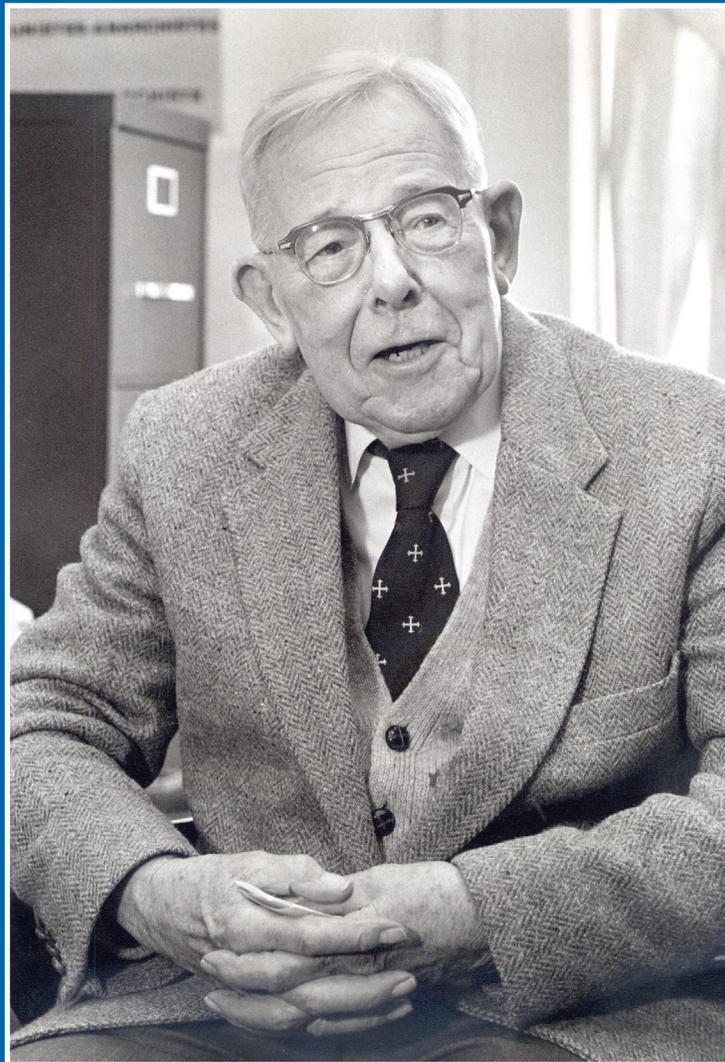


*The Papers of F. G. Marcham: I*

# On Teaching

By Frederick G. Marcham



Edited by John Marcham

The Internet-First University Press

Ithaca, New York

2006

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Ithaca NY 14853

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**Cover:** Professor Marcham in his office in McGraw Hall, March 4, 1987,  
in his 63rd year of teaching at Cornell University.

—*Charles Harrington, University Photos.*

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Printed in the United States of America

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## This Volume

*On Teaching* contains a number of essays and reflections by F. G. Marcham on the roles of teacher and student.

The bulk of these are articles written in the latter part of his seven decades as a teacher at Cornell. Nearly all were found in mimeographed form, suggesting he had shared copies with colleagues. The first two articles, however, were found in his hand and do not appear to have been shared with others, though the form of the second suggests he might have given it as a talk.

A degree of repetition exists. Where it can be determined, the approximate date is shown on the first page of an essay. An outline referred to in “The Last Lecture” was not found, but its contents can be imagined from the lengthy quotations included in the main text.

The second section of this volume includes excerpts on teaching from “Cornell Notes,” the chronological memoirs he prepared on his years in Ithaca.

The final section contains a variety of materials, letters, and the like that expand some of his views.

F.G. Marcham gives credit to a lecture he heard while at Oxford for shaping his approach to lecturing. From *Cornell Notes, 1898 to World War II*:

“One other impression the historical world made upon me. Almost all my lecturers read their lectures. They spent their vacations, it would seem, writing lectures that were in effect scholarly papers. When the appropriate bell rang in the appropriate college tower, the lecturer stepped through a door in the rear of the dining hall and read his lecture to us. Later, the bell sounded again; he closed his book and turned his back on us.”

“One term I attended a series of lectures by A.L. Smith of Balliol [College], a famous academic figure, and, as I remember, one of the Balliol dons who had taken part in the government of the City of Oxford, a fact that meant nothing to me at the time. Smith was to lecture on Aristotle’s *Politics*. He came on to the stage in a relaxed and easy manner and began to talk informally and without a text. Since he had no text he was free to walk around. He had a key on a ring and he twirled it from time to time. He was not lecturing on Aristotle’s *Politics* but talking about the book. He assumed your interest and, though he did not invite you to join him, you had the sense that this was a conversation. I vowed that if ever speaking in public became part of my life, this was the manner I would adopt.”

## Foreword

Frederick George Marcham, the Goldwin Smith professor of English history, emeritus, was a Mr. Chips for the 69 years he taught at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, between 1923 and his death in 1992.

The university asked me, his son, to assemble material that would reflect on his career as teacher, adviser to students, coach, faculty advocate, author, and mayor of Cayuga Heights for 32 years. I drew upon dozens of composition books, notes, unpublished manuscript pages, photographs, and other mementos he deposited in the Cornell archives or left me to sort, turn over to the archives, and control access to.

F. G. Marcham had already shown some of his nearly 2,000 manuscript pages of memoirs, essays, and other writing to students, colleagues, and other friends. After his death, the least complicated and expensive way to continue to make these available to people in Ithaca and at a distance was to arrange MS pages in logical volumes, xerograph, and offer them at cost or to be read in the archives in the Kroch Library at Cornell.

This year Professor J. Robert Cooke's Project for Creating an Open Access Paradigm for Scholarly Publishing began making available and online DVDs and other materials about and by notable Cornell professors, starting with the Nobel physicist Hans Bethe and President Emeritus Dale Corson.

Selections from the F. G. Marcham papers constitute six of the eleven elements of such a DVD on Professor Marcham, produced by The Internet-First University Press of Ithaca. The other five elements: A video introduction by Prof. Walter LaFeber and myself; The Photographs of Frederick G. Marcham; an audio of a talk on Job by Marcham; a video of his talk with the last meeting of a class in 1991, and an audio of his memorial service.

The pages of the six books contain the latest draft I could find among my father's papers. Little effort was made to change his occasional "English English" spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, except when needed to make a point clearer. Any changes of mine are shown by ellipses or within brackets. His own parenthetical remarks are either within parentheses or dashes.

Not among the six Internet-First University books are the following original xerographic volumes: Cromwell (six essays), Cayuga Heights Memories, and Governance at Cornell (an uncompleted MS); and two volumes, Cornell Notes 1967-1979 and Personal Memoirs, which are to be released later.

The Cornell Notes in particular are very frank descriptions of the struggles among professors, departments, college deans, and central administrators to govern a university. Why so frank? I asked a close colleague of my father's. "He wanted to leave his view of the story." Which fit with a remark that the constitutional historian in him once made, "I'd rather be secretary than chairman [of a group], to be sure the record is straight."

F. G. Marcham grew up in the slums of Reading, England, and won scholarships to a public (private secondary) school and after World War I to Oxford University.

“Last Lecture” in *On Teaching* gives a sense of his reverence for the documents that record the centuries-long movement in England toward the franchise and freedoms for the working class. His relations to working class advisees and his dogged activism on behalf of Cornell professors and in civic life attest to a concern for underdogs and with arbitrary authority.

Brief observations in the second Cornell Notes, under “His Role in the University,” express disappointment at being shunned for responsible positions by several presidents and deans. In later years he applied his administrative and persuasive energy to keeping Cayuga Heights a tight little village and chairing the History Department.

My editing draws on nearly six decades as a reporter and editor of newspapers, magazines, and books in Ithaca and elsewhere: the *Cornell Daily Sun*, *Ithaca Journal*, *Cornell Alumni News*, and a dozen previous books of Cornell and community history.

Particular thanks go to Bob Cooke and my grandson Liam Frederick Lowe of Etna for their help, especially with these newfangled computers, and to my wife, journalist Jane Haskins Marcham, for patience through the months this project has occupied.

December 2005

John Marcham

# Teaching

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A teacher is a person who helps another to learn. To help students to learn is the purpose of our schools and colleges which maintain elaborate educational programs, programs known to us from high school catalogs of courses and college "Announcements." Lectures and discussion sections, library work and laboratory work, examinations, research papers, and seminars, these are the principal devices for teaching, in high school, and undergraduate college, and graduate center. To teachers and students alike they have become a habit: this is how one lectures, this is how one learns. From time to time a reformer suggests that the pattern be modified—bigger and better libraries and laboratories, perhaps; fewer examinations and more opportunity for individual study and writing. He suggests, that is, a shift in emphasis, a variation in the pattern.

No more should be done to the pattern than to modify it. Our educational system is too vast and its teaching procedures are too deeply entwined in our intellectual as well as in our social and economic life to permit substantial change in the pattern. But if we seek not to change the pattern but to reconsider the relationship of teacher and student within the pattern, what then?

To teach is to help another to learn. A teacher not only knows the subject he teaches, he can help another to know it. What distinguishes him as a teacher of swimming, shall we say, is not that he can swim but that he can help others to learn to swim. The distinction is obvious; yet it is not always observed in academic life when the assumption sometimes is that if a man knows a subject he must also know how to teach it. One hears the argument that a graduate student or instructor in mathematics has so substantial a knowledge of the subject, in what we might call its lower and middle reaches, that he must be able to help freshmen to learn college algebra. To him the problems of college algebra are child's play. It may be so, and yet the adequacy of his knowledge is no guarantee that he can teach. Similarly a prospective teacher of American history may not only know his subject well but be an eloquent speaker and have a lively mind.

The question remains can he help the learner to learn? Has he learned to distinguish between the lecture which appears to him to be an adequate presentation of information and ideas and the lecture conceived in terms of the problem of acquiring facts and understanding ideas, as it comes to the mind of the student?

Before I go further in offering my views about teaching I wish to say that the distinction I have drawn between knowing a subject and being able to help another to know it is associated in my mind with two beliefs. The first is that no person can teach who does not know the subject he teaches; the second, that teaching is not a method, a set of rules, to be applied to any subject. Methods of teaching vary

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*Undated, handwritten. No record of a previous typescript.*

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from subject to subject because the problems of learning vary; they vary also in a lesser degree from teacher to teacher. If teaching has no method, no rules, what then do I propose to talk about? Merely this; I wish to set forth some opinions about points of view with which a teacher may take up his responsibilities. All teachers ask themselves, what are my obligations to the student? Granted that I know my subject well and can present my knowledge in a clear, orderly way, is this enough; is the rest up to the student?

In the teacher-student relationship the person to be benefited is the student; the position of the teacher is secondary—he is to help the other to learn. In another sense also the position of the student is primary; he wishes to learn, he comes to the teacher to learn, and the initiative lies with him. More than that, there is much that he can learn without the teacher; and in my opinion, at least, the best teacher is he who encourages his students to teach themselves, so far as that is possible. Certainly, only the worst of teachers would try to hinder or discourage the native curiosity of his students and their attempts to learn by themselves.

The role of the teacher is a secondary one: the field in which he operates is limited when compared to the whole range of the student's learning activity. Yet there is much that he can do to help the student. In our system of education his most obvious task is to present information and ideas to the student. This he does because of his tradition of teaching. The time available to students in their courses of study, as well as the facilities available in our libraries and laboratories, make the teacher one principal means of transmitting information and ideas. And, indeed, if the student had enough time to teach himself, as well as the necessary libraries and laboratories, the likelihood is that from time to time he would turn from his book to a person, a teacher. He would ask questions, as he has done since he stood at his mother's knee.

In presenting information to a student the role of the teacher is not simply that of a narrator, one who tells how things happened or why they happen. Information, factual information as we sometimes call it, overwhelms the student by its mere quantity. The student acquires, lecture by lecture, book by book, an immense amount of information and is constantly asking himself, which of these items are relevant to my purposes. The teacher therefore has the task of showing the student the conditions which govern the relevance of information in a given situation, as also the use of information to illustrate and make valid any general statement the student may wish to commit himself to. At a less significant level the teacher has the task of acquainting the student with the means of acquiring information—the catalogs, guides, and hand lists.

The role of the teacher in presenting ideas to the student is somewhat different. Let us consider a simple example. He sits face to face with the student and says to him, "Aristotle stated that man is a political animal. Discuss this statement." To the student, the statement is a vast general concept. He may see it as the sheer unscalable side of a mountain. Perhaps, merely to sit gaping at the statement teaches him something; he may regard it as one of a number he has met with, a new one, or a general observation on the nature of man and the universe. When he looks at the observation again and sees it in isolation, it appears to him to be so vast, so general, that his mind balks at the problem of discussing it. How does one begin, he asks himself. The teacher may point to the word "political" and suggest

that this must be defined before reasonable discussion can take place. He may suggest that one of Aristotle's purposes was to mark off man from animals. By such means he shows the student where to look for the mountain-climber's paths, how to shape the problem into manageable units. By so doing he has suggested one approach to the discussion of all large concepts. The teacher himself does not define "political"; he does not supply any part of an answer. He shows the student the elements of an intellectual method.

The student, faced with the task of mastering information and ideas, is, so to speak, taking in, receiving. Another form of his intellectual life is to give out, to speak, to write. When he speaks or writes his relationship to the teacher undergoes marked change. The teacher now becomes an audience, a substitute for the world at large, the world the student is addressing. He listens critically to what the student has to say, he asks questions, he seeks flaws in his argument. He passes judgment on the student's way of expressing himself—his style. As judge of style he sees the student not as a learner but as a maturing person who will put his knowledge to use, who will go out into the world to present his information and ideas to others. Left to themselves few students could learn to do this well. Most persons have their own private way of saying things. Out of a full mind they bring only some fragments of their thoughts; almost certainly what they say will falter here or there for want of the right word or the right construction. To such a student the teacher is a friendly but active and persevering critic, one who constantly informs the student that what is said to others must be said in language others understand.

One of the student's principal tasks is to learn methods of study, how to take notes, how to conduct experiments, what use to make of his notes, and how to frame his own opinions. In this the role of the teacher is an important one. He himself has traveled this road. He has learned the need for careful note taking and note keeping. He has learned that a scholar's notes are as important to him as adequate records to a businessman. He knows that notes must not only be carefully kept but regularly brought together, coordinated and digested. He knows that the student should regularly, say once a week, sit down with his notes and distill his opinions from them, that he should make them the starting point for his own musings upon the subject he is studying.

When the student begins to frame his own opinions the role of the teacher is again a paternal one. He must above all else encourage the student to frame opinions. He must beat down the tendency of the student to answer the question, "What is democracy?" by saying X or Y or Z defined it as follows. The teacher's task is to encourage the student to believe that his own opinions however faulty are worth consideration and that the intellectual development of the student largely consists in the framing and reframing of opinion as new knowledge comes to him.

Indeed, the total aim of the teacher in his relations with the student might be summed up in the phrase to help the student to go forward as a self-reliant, self-energizing inquirer. From the teacher the student should learn that the search for knowledge has its rigors but also its joy, above all the sense of the individual's own ability to appraise what others have done and add to it through the use of

his own faculties. In doing so the teacher will make a virtue of the student's immaturity by reminding him that his frailties are as yet not fully disclosed and that he should thereafter use every opportunity to open new doors to the arts and the sciences. By such means the teacher will not only have helped the student to learn. He will have encouraged him to have confidence in himself as a learner to go forward in learning, and to have a vision of the world opening out before him.

# *Teaching by Discussion*

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The purpose of teaching is to help others to learn

To acquire information

To learn the reasoning processes associated with the  
different intellectual disciplines

To form opinions and express them

Based on the belief that the learner has something to say,  
something to say that is unique, what he sees, what he  
thinks.

Teaching does not show him what to think but how to form his own opinions  
and how to utter them.

The two greatest teachers in the Western tradition approached the teaching  
problem differently.

Christ the lecturer, the preacher.

Socrates the master of discussion as a means of  
teaching.

Christ uttered thought-provoking statements and sermons.

He did not carry his exposition to the final stage.

The learner had to take the vital jump himself.

To translate the statement to his own needs.

Socrates was a questioner—he used questions to help the learner shape his  
opinions and arrange them in order.

The learner actively, physically took part in his own  
education.

Knowledge was in him. Socrates helped to draw it out.

If we accept Socrates for our model today, we have to admit  
that from the beginning we are handicapped—the size of  
our discussion groups.

And this is vital because Socrates teaches the importance of  
concern for the mental processes of the individual student.

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*A continuation from the MS, "Teaching."*

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With our minds fixed on the necessity of helping the individual student to learn we ask

What is the purpose of the discussion class?

- 1) To help the student to understand why this or that piece of information is important.
- 2) To help him refine his definitions.
- 3) To encourage him to make judgments and to express them.

So much for a general statement of purpose.

Now to apply these to the principal kinds of discussion class:

- 1) In the one, lecturing and reading, the chief forms of teaching; the discussion class supplements them.
- 2) In the other, the discussion class is a substitute for other forms of teaching.

In the first the assumption is that the lecture and reading give rise to difficulties. Discussion will help to solve them.

The teacher begins by sorting out the items in lecture and reading which he regards as difficult for the student.

He goes to class with them in mind, ready to introduce them if the student does not.

But his first approach—Does anyone have questions to ask me?

At the beginning of the term, when the class is cold, he can ease the situation by suggesting questions for consideration in the preceding week's work.

These should focus on the significance of vital information  
or alternative interpretations  
or difficulties in relating important concepts.

Where the discussion class is a substitute for teaching by other means, the procedure is different.

First plan the course so that the subjects to be taught by discussion are suitable for that purpose.

Some are not. E.g., factual information, and any topic which to succeed involves meeting a deadline.

The best are those that consider different interpretations that invite the student to express his own opinions.

The teacher should plan his teaching pattern, as carefully as for a lecture.

Break the topic down into three or four subtopics

Announce this ahead of time and assign the necessary preparation

Try to keep informed on what the student is likely to know from day to day—the news, local and general.

Use the rule that nothing relevant to the discussion should be excluded.

He should also prepare what is to be his summation  
And take the last three or four minutes to deliver it.

Now to more practical details.

Teacher and students face to face in the classroom.

First: Know your students as individuals

Their interests in class and out of class

Treat them as equals—work with them equally.

Properly encouraged all will talk.

Tailor your discussion to each individual

Some will be slower than others—be patient, never condescending—everyone in that class will know something better than you do.

While helping the student with his weaknesses, try to find his strength.

Never embarrass the student by leaving him silent; either rephrase the question or switch to another student and come back to him.

Start with what the student knows and devise parallels from that point on.

Second: Use something—a blackboard diagram, a mimeographed statement, extract from text, or a document

Work this in according to the mood of the class

Assign students roles in the discussion

As you get to know them, on the basis of their interests or strong points or, arbitrarily

Install each one in the position of a specialist

I come back to my first point about teaching.

You are there to help another person to learn

Your concern is his learning problems

The poor teacher sees teaching as a process in which he has something to say.

The good teacher is one who believes the student has something to say.

The teacher's task is to draw the student out.

For this purpose no better method than the discussion class.



# *Letter to a Freshman*

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Your college career has now begun and you are experiencing a new chapter in your life. You see around you new faces by the thousand and you are aware of having joined a vigorous community; old in its Cornell traditions, ancient in its purpose as a university, yet at this moment just as young as you are because you and your fellow freshmen have started the university on another four year cycle of teaching. What a variety of courses! What a miracle that here on this campus you can find the answer to almost any question the mind can ask.

When you looked through your college catalog you were no doubt amazed by the titles of some of the courses—a term's or a whole year's work given to subjects you had not even heard about. And, having gone to class to study a subject you thought you understood, you find it to be much more difficult than you expected—ideas you haven't met before, and a mass of reading which seems almost too much to master in the time allowed. But you say to yourself, "This is what I came to college for; I wish to learn about subjects I've never heard of; or, if I have heard of them, never understood except as mere names." And, if you are like most freshmen, you believe, and rightly believe, that you can master this new learning. But you probably understand by now that high school methods of study won't do the job. You are ready to work harder, but you wonder if that is enough; if it is merely a matter of staying with your books for longer hours. Perhaps to succeed as a university student you need to adopt a new point of view about studying and a new technique. Let us see what we can do about it.

By entering the university you have in a sense made a decision to be what we may call an intellectual; that is, a person whose happiness and success in life will come in large part from his mental qualities. You have come to the university to develop your mind. I believe that a basic mental quality is what I call alertness. To be alert you should look and listen more carefully than you have done in the past. When you walk to class in the morning, look at the sky and note the quality of the light or the formation of the clouds, look at the shape of the trees, the principal characteristics of the buildings, and the dress of the people you pass in the streets. Find things of interest in what you see. Even if you are doing no more than I am doing at the moment as I write, which is looking at the back of a chair, look at it carefully and try to see how it is constructed and distinguish the various gradations of color and form which make up the whole structure. Do the same in your listening; note how a speaker's voice rises and falls as he tries to give emphasis to his words; what words he uses in a manner strange to you, and whether he assumes that the meanings he associates with common words have the same meaning for you. In general, then, treat the sights and sounds which you experience through the day as full of life, color, and interest. Do not take

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*Likely written in the 1950's.*

them for granted. Believe with me what one of our professors used to say—that there are no uninteresting things, only uninterested people.

Believe, too, that just as there are endless opportunities for you to find interest in the simple events of your daily life, so there are endless opportunities for you to find pleasure in books, in music, and in pictures. These will not come to you, you must go to them. And when you find, as in many instances you will, that a famous poem or picture is no more striking than a radio jingle or a picture in *Life*, believe that you are in the wrong that you haven't read or looked or thought carefully enough. You may, after much looking and thinking, decide that Rembrandt was not a great painter, but do not make that decision until you have tried your best to understand him.

In your studies, and more particularly in your writing and speaking, consider your use of words. Hitherto you have been treated as a person whose words, written and spoken, were to be understood in terms of the meaning you gave to them. I can make my point best by describing a problem which often arises for the teacher of freshmen. He reads part of an essay written by a new student and finds it difficult to understand. He says to the student, "These remarks of yours don't make sense to me." The student replies, "It's all perfectly clear; I meant so and so." And he goes on to explain what he intended to say. I have sat through many such sessions in which the student's meaning has been brought out by further interpretation and questioning. My point is that you should not expect others to adapt their minds to yours. You should use language which is clear to others and, before you say or write anything of a serious nature, you should ask yourself not what it means to you, but what it means to the person you are addressing. In other words, your task now it to express your thoughts in such a way that others will readily understand them. When you leave the university, a good part of your work will be to put ideas and information into the minds of others and you can do this successfully only if you take pains to express yourself in words which they understand.

A simple way to make a beginning in adapting what you say to the mental habits of others is to commence any statement, answer, or essay with an explanation of what you intend to do. "I am asked," you might say, "to consider such and such a subject and I intend to do so by discussing the following points." You give your reader an outline he can follow and at the same time you help yourself by having a program which will make your answer an orderly one. Also, you should describe at an early point in your answer what the key words which you intend to use mean to you. To put it the other way round, don't assume that general words, such as "democracy," "liberal," or "family" mean the same thing to all people. When your professor has defined a word or phrase and has stated that the definition given is the standard one or the only one acceptable to him, there is no need to define it again. But where this has not been done, you are likely to come to cross purposes with your professor if you act on the assumption that your own meaning of, say, the word "socialist" is the only one, and expect him to accept it without further definition.

Finding definitions of important words and ideas should be a part of your college education. The further you go in your education, the deeper and more exact your understanding of these should be. Don't be satisfied with a vague

definition which you carry, as it were, in your head. And the more simple the word may seem, the more suspicious you should be of it. For example, you know in a general way what the word “cause” means, and you have used it for many years without a second thought. You should now try to write down what the word means to you. And so with other words and terms as you find occasion to think about them.

Your study in most courses will involve reading, listening to lectures, and, perhaps, doing work in the laboratory. You should regard all of these activities as part of a single attempt to learn, and should recognize that your object is to obtain a coherent knowledge of the topic as it is presented in these different ways.

In reading, the first rule is to get a general notion of what it is you are about to read. Thumb through the assignment rapidly, and then shut the book and ask yourself what some of the subsidiary subjects are likely to be. Let us suppose you are reading in the field I teach; namely, English history. The assignment covers the Norman conquest of England. When you have learned this by thumbing through the chapter, close the book and sit quietly for a while, turning over in your mind some such thoughts as the following. “I am going to read about the successful conquest of one people by another. The conquerors must have been in some respect superior to the conquered. Was it in military skill, in numbers, or in the total pattern of their civilization? Were the conquered in a condition of weakness which had gradually developed or was it a temporary weakness which led to their defeat? Once the conquest had taken place, what was the political relationship of the two parties and what was the relationship of their respective cultures? Did the new one completely eclipse the old or did some parts of the old survive? If so, what parts and why?” With thoughts like these to guide you, you should then open the book and begin to read carefully. What you read should then become more interesting, more easily understood, and more readily remembered. As a beginner, you will find it difficult to frame your thoughts during the period before you do your careful reading; but with experience you will improve. And at first, however incompetent you may think yourself, you will be better equipped to understand what you are reading than if you had simply opened the book at the first assigned page and plunged right into it.

When you are reading do not depend on underlining significant passages in the textbook. Write down in your notebooks in your own words the information and ideas which you regard as important. When you attend lectures and discussions do not spend your time trying to keep notes of everything that is said. Spend most of your time in listening, keep your notes to a minimum, and take time when the lectures or discussion is over to look at your notes; and, if possible, write them up again in more exact and orderly form.

Careful notes, your own notes, well organized, and above all, kept up to date, will be your best aid to study. You should keep all your notes on a single course in one book or folder. Use a stapler or some scotch tape to insert at the appropriate place the themes or exams which you have written in the course. Treat your notes with respect. They are your business records. One student in

a million has the mental ability to carry all he has learned in his head without notes. Don't suppose that you are that rare exception.

But surely, you will say, there is more to success in college than using these few study techniques. Indeed, there is. There is one more item which is the necessary foundation for all the rest. Let me tell a story.

General Wavell, in his book called *Generals and Generalship*, says that when an inventor brings a new mountain gun for testing to the ordnance department of the British Army, the first thing they do is to take it to the top of a high tower and push it off. They then take it to the range to see if it works. Similarly, if someone brings them a new rifle they bury it in wet sand for twenty-four hours and then test it. In other words, they have no use for a weapon which is efficient only in ideal conditions. What counts for them is whether it works in the conditions which are likely to arise on the field of battle. The same is true, Wavell says, of generals. The great general is not the man who can plan brilliant schemes on paper, but the one who is still doing a workmanlike job after he has been without sleep for forty-eight hours and is not sure if the lines of communication are open to all parts of his army. With variations, this applies to students.

University life, as you know by now, is full of distractions, delightful distractions. You will learn that, in addition, there are occasional interruptions which cannot be avoided—trips away from the campus for the athlete, the debater and others, a day or two's illness now and then, some problem in your family which worries you or calls you home. There will be difficulties which will arise in your courses—exams which come too close together for comfort, a professor who is not a good lecturer, a text book which is dull or difficult. Happenings such as these, pleasant and unpleasant, are the lot of every student. Accept them; adapt yourself to them; don't waste your time in believing that you could do a better job or be happier if they didn't exist, for you will never find yourself in a situation where all the conditions are in your favor all the time.

In brief, keep your poise, and go on with your studies week by week as though you were sure of your ability to master them despite occasional interruptions. You will help yourself to maintain this attitude if, in your dealings with your professors, you are straightforward and show by your conduct that you have respect for the rights of others. I will mention one point only.

You are expected to get to class on time, to do your assignments on time, and, in general, to keep to a time schedule set up by your professor. He uses this schedule because it is the only way he can do his work efficiently. There will be occasions when for good reasons and for bad you cannot conform to this schedule. You should then do what you would do when dealing with a friend at home; that is, offer apologies and give an explanation. You may need to do this to the same professor more than once in a term. In most circumstances—though not in all, because all professors do not use the same standards of conduct—the professor will accept the explanation. But no matter what he does, you have followed the rules of common courtesy; which is another way of saying that you have recognized that your lateness or absence has put him to trouble and has broken an informal agreement between you and him. Never act as though the professor had a duty to alter the time schedule to suit your convenience. Plan your time

ahead. Whenever you can do so, try to anticipate situations which may throw you off schedule; anticipate them in terms of doing your reading ahead of time and in terms of considering how they will affect other people. A professor knows that there is a world of difference between the student who tells him why he is going to be absent from class and the student who tells him why he has been absent from class.

To summarize then, there are two things you can do to improve your work as a student and to get the fullest pleasure out of your life at Cornell: first, arrange your study methods so that they keep you alert, thoughtful and efficient; second, recognize that what counts in the long run is not the ups and downs you experience from day to day but your poise and steadiness through the weeks and months. To be a student is a great joy, a joy worth all the sacrifice and the occasional setbacks which go with it. Believe with me that it was a wise decision which brought you to Cornell. You are now part of the university and share with the rest of us the stimulus and the hard work which go with studying. Be prepared for periods of doubt and self-criticism, and when they come remind yourself that it cannot be otherwise because you have before you so many opportunities for choice and decision. The greater the university the greater the variety of choices it offers. The greater the university the higher the standards it sets. From time to time you will wonder if you are making wise decisions and if you can meet the academic standards of Cornell. Do not allow these periods of doubt, and perhaps of depression, to worry you.

After more than thirty years of lecturing at Cornell, I always feel uncertain and nervous when I face my audience, even though the subject I am going to discuss is one I have lectured on a great many times. And at the end of each year's work I find it easier to convince myself that I have done a poor job of teaching than a good one. But on second thoughts I am encouraged by my lack of confidence. I say to myself that it will be a sad day for me—and my students—when I no longer feel nervous and concerned as I mount the lecture platform; and sadder yet when, at the end of a year's teaching, I no longer have the wish to do a better job in the following year. For me uncertainty and self-criticism are part of the stir and stimulus of university life, signs that the mind is still growing. Take in stride your own periods of doubt, and even of depression; they are one proof that you are a healthy, vigorous and normal person.



# The Lecture

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Who would walk unarmed into the lion's den? Who would be foolish enough to appear before his colleagues, men and women of academic experience, and try to talk to them about teaching? I wonder when I accepted this appointment whether age has dulled my senses and sensitivity. I asked myself whether I would have done this twenty years ago. The answer is "yes," I did it. About twenty years ago I agreed to take part in a program that the University put on that was intended to help the young teachers and I was assigned the task of giving a lecture on lecturing. There were some twelve of us drawn from different colleges around the University and as I took on that task I thought of myself as being concerned to instruct the persons who listened to me. I see my present assignment in an entirely different light. I see myself as a person called on the scene to begin discussion. I think of myself, as it were, sitting around a coffee table in Statler Hall talking to some friends, rather than standing as I did last time on the platform at Bailey Hall.

Now I must change my key a little and talk about an experience that I had just a few weeks ago when I read in the *Cornell Alumni News* a letter from a distinguished retired member of this faculty, Dr. Dukes. This letter woke memories and it said in part the following: Dr. [H. Hugh] Dukes is speaking: "I came to Cornell in 1932 as Professor and Head of Veterinary Physiology. By 1937 I had produced a textbook, *The Physiology of Domestic Animals*, that was fairly adequate for my lecture courses, certainly better than dictated lectures. It then became desirable to change my method of lecture room teaching. Having had considerable experience with laboratory demonstrations, some experience with lecture demonstrations in physiology—physiology is a wonderful subject to teach and lends itself readily to the lecture demonstration—I decided to try this method on a larger scale than previously. Immediately I ran into the problem of visibility. The demonstrations worked well enough but the students couldn't see many of them adequately. About this time I heard about the projection methods in use in lecture demonstration in elementary physics on the Cornell Campus."

"In the fall of 1941 I made arrangements to audit Prof. Hardy Howe's lectures. I saw at once that much of what he was doing could be adapted to my work and this I quickly proceeded to do. At the end of the fall term I had to switch to Prof. [Guy] Grantham for scheduling reasons. I thought no one could equal Hardy Howe as a lecturer, and hated to make the change. I was soon surprised and delighted to find that Grantham was Howe's equal in practically all respects. I continued with him throughout the spring term, again adapting and changing

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*Delivered 27 October 1979 to the faculty, New York State  
College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell.*

his methods to my needs. I owe both of these men a great debt and learned a lot from them.”

This evoked memories for me for the following reason. At about the year 1940, three of my colleagues and I agreed to have another look at our methods of teaching. We were all, by this time, fairly well-established teachers on the Cornell Campus and we thought it was about time, after ten or fifteen years, to sit down together and see what was right and what was wrong with what we were doing. And so, from week to week, over the period of a term, we met and we began by exchanging course materials, lecture outlines, examinations, syllabi, and reading lists. Then we passed on from that to attending one another’s lectures and one another’s discussions, meeting again to talk the whole thing out, and at a point we decided that we would leave our own little circle and wander around the campus and try to find out which of the lecturers on the campus were regarded as good, and which was not so good, and so try to learn something from both.

I recall this experience of going through the campus and listening to lecturers. Only one has remained vividly in my mind, and that was the lectures by Dr. Dukes. And one of them in particular, in which he was talking about the form and function of muscle tissue.

The three of us were not scientists or, at least, we were certainly not physiologists. There was Lauren Petrie who was professor of botany; there was Slade Kendrick who was professor of agricultural economics; Richard Robinson, who was professor of philosophy; and myself, and we went, ignorant, to hear Professor Dukes. And, we came out—at least we thought we came out—informed on his subject. I remember saying, as I strolled across the campus, that a child of 6 could have followed him. We began to ask ourselves what there was in what he did that made it possible for us to understand him. And so we separated out his style of lecturing, essentially into two parts. First of all, we thought about the pieces of which the lecture was constructed. It was constructed out of a statement of facts and out of a commentary on those facts. It included a statement or description of certain basic principles. These, for the most part, were illustrated by his demonstrations. I remember something that always concerns me—he was an active lecturer. He moved about. Towards the end of one lecture, for example, he took off his jacket and had something attached to his arm. He then tightened up his muscle which was tied to some sort of audio device, and so we got an audio effect of the muscle action. These were the parts of the lecture and, as I thought about the whole, it seemed to me that it demonstrated a careful coordination of material, a variety in the presentation of this material, a change of pace, as he went from one subject to another, and then what I think is most important, he had mastered the art of engaging the students’ interest from time to time in different ways. At times the student was scribbling in his notes, and at other times his attention was fastened on Dukes.

We did not know at this time, of course, of the years in which Dukes had worked to make himself a first-class lecturer. We saw the finished product and we were satisfied with what we saw, to commit ourselves to the idea that this was the kind of thing that we wanted to do. We came to understand, through him, that first-class teaching was a challenge to the best of minds.

Looking at his letter, there is something here that needs to be remembered also. He is a man who is probably older than I am. Yet here's a man who is writing about teaching in September of 1979 and who obviously is still stirred by the whole process of teaching and thinking about teaching. There are two or three phrases in his letter that catch my eye. I notice for example, that he is surprised and delighted, he says, to find that Grantham is as good a teacher as Howe. He refers, as I mentioned now, to the fact that physiology was a wonderful subject to teach and the whole letter exudes a sense of satisfaction and joy in the whole business of teaching and lecturing.

We could praise him as a dedicated lecturer but that is far too somber a term for a man like Dukes. We need to think of him as an adventurous person, somebody who enjoyed what he was doing, and a person who seems almost to experience, as I read his letter, a lifting of his spirits as he becomes involved in planning and delivering lectures. My visual memory of him confirms this notion. I see him as a man who is lively and vigorous and, I would say above all, he exuded the notion of being happy in the work that he was doing. I learned from Dukes, what Dukes had learned from Howe and Grantham, and so I place myself in this tradition and I pay my respects to him.

The first quality of a good teacher is this quality that I mention in connection with Dukes, that is, a sense of joy and satisfaction in what he is doing. The knowledge that what he is doing calls upon his own knowledge of the subject he is teaching, calls upon the powers of his mind to reason, calls upon his imagination. Teaching as he saw it, and as I see it, is one of the great modes of self-expression. What does this mean in more specific terms? What does teaching mean in terms of lecturing? What it means first of all, of course, is that the lecturer must know his subject; it means that he must have the art to make what he knows understandable to others; it means that he must be constantly aware of the audience that he is addressing and adapt what he has to say to that audience; it means that he must be able to speak well, and it means that he must be able to use demonstrations effectively. If we had laid this list before Dukes, he would have agreed that it was something like this and would have said that one or two of these topics are self-evident. Of course the man needs to know his subject and, of course, he needs to know how to use demonstrations.

The question arises next, what about other aspects of the art of teaching at this level? We come first to perhaps the most difficult. That is, what do we mean by saying that we need to make the subject understandable to others? We are transmitting information to other persons. The question we put to ourselves is how to do it best and, when we say that, we don't mean how shall we make it entertaining to students? We mean in what way shall we shape it and deliver it so that we put into the mind of the person we are addressing the information that we think is appropriate to our lecture. And, as we look at it in this way, it becomes clear that there are essentially three steps that we need to take.

We need first of all to define the topic. We need next to assemble and present the appropriate facts. And, then, we need somehow or other to bring onto the scene the basic principles and concepts with which our topic is associated. Let me try an example. I can't do it in your field, but let me try in a field which won't be too distant from you. Let us suppose that I had to give a lecture on Puritan

settlements in the 17th century in New England. I have to assemble some facts, dates, names and places. I have to contemplate some basic principles. Why did these settlements take place? What patterns emerged among the settlements in terms of goals of the settlers? Their religious ideals? Their economic purposes? Their political interests, etc.? What questions arose about dealing with the native inhabitants? Is there anything here to be done by way of comparing the settlements of the Puritans in New England with other settlements in Central America, or the Caribbean, or South America? How shall I interrelate the facts that I think it necessary to present and those concepts that go with them? Shall I begin by talking about why the settlements took place, and somehow drag the facts in later, or shall I begin by saying that in the year so-and-so, such-and-such persons landed on such-and-such a place? Well this part of my little discussion constitutes what I would call stage one of the planning of the lecture. And I will now proceed to what I call stage two.

There is another way to view the construction of a lecture and that is something like this. It is to go back to Dukes whose lecture was superbly planned as to the interrelationship of the facts and concepts within the total structure. Let me try again to explain in terms of this Puritan settlement.

When I think about putting a lecture together about the Puritan settlements I realize that part of what I will be doing will be presenting a narrative, which I will construct. Part of what I will be doing will relate to some people who have written on the subject, the so-called authorities. Part of what I do will involve quotations from letters, diaries, official documents. And finally perhaps I shall be required to offer some interpretations of my own. The ideal lecture is one that displays a frequent shift or flow from one kind of materials to another. From this point of view I regard the lecture as an art form, essentially. Like a picture or piece of music. One sits down and arranges and rearranges it until one has created the perfect composition. I hate in a way to confess it, but having worked on this little lecture for the better part of a month, pretty much day by day, and having looked at it again last night, instead of looking at some of my favorite television programs, I decided last night that it had to be reconstructed entirely and so I did that last night. In getting up this morning and looking at it again, I thought well here and there we need to shift the emphasis a little bit and so at 7:15 you would have found me sitting at my desk at home rearranging these few words I am saying to you. So, I've talked now a little bit about what I would call planning the lecture and I would then like to talk about something about which I feel a lot more nervous and that is the question of delivering the lecture. How does one deliver the lecture?

Well, first of all, one needs to remember the necessity of speaking well, with great care, with great concern for what goes into good speaking. And here it seems to me that we at the present moment have an incredible opportunity to study the art of speaking. The radio and television blare out at us day by day. I exercise every morning from 10 minutes of 7 until 7:30, listening to the news, in other words, listening to lectures, and I spend the time comparing the quality of the delivery of the persons who appear to speak. To mention just a few, there is one named Carter, and there is one named Kennedy, there is one named Cronkite and there is one named Cosell. I regard them as the proper objects for study. I'm

not concerned at this particular time with what they say; I'm concerned rather with how they say it. Each of them has a clear voice. I ask myself, "What kind of language do they use?" One might say that, for the most part certainly, [Walter] Cronkite is a professional. [Presidents] Carter and Kennedy use the language they think is appropriate to their audience, which is usually very simple and direct. The same could not be said of Mr. [Howard] Cosell, of course, who loves nothing more than dredging out all kinds of fancy, literary terms and using them to remind people of the fact, can you believe it, that he was once a lecturer at Yale. But let us pass that by in a hurry. So the language is important. One needs to think about simple words. One needs to remember how much more effective monosyllabic words are than polysyllabic words.

One needs to remember something about another subject which I hesitate to present, in fact I hesitate to present any of this really, the question of the pitch of one's voice. At 8 o'clock this morning, eating my breakfast, after having rearranged the lecture, I heard a man named Neil Strausser offer the first news of the morning from CBS, and he said, "The news from Seoul is grim—Park is dead." He went on through a series of short sentences, each one of which began at one level and dipped down at the end. Listen to him, listen to these people carefully, and think that sometimes perhaps you yourselves get into this situation. I call it the verbal roller coaster, where you go from sentence to sentence and where if you only knew it, if you thought of it in terms of your audience, you would know that this is the way to put them to sleep. So one has to work hard, from sentence to sentence, as I am trying to do now, to make one's voice move up and down. If I may say so, it is something worth your consideration.

Then, there is the question of hesitation. I'm not talking here about "ers" and "ahrs" which we have all heard about. I do wish, especially for beginners, to emphasize the fact that the delivery of a lecture, however well prepared it is, is inevitably an act that evolves a certain amount of tension. It is an act of creation. You're looking, you're thinking, you're searching for words to say what you want to say. And that necessarily causes you to hesitate. Don't worry about hesitating. Don't worry about that five or ten seconds of hesitation. It's often a stimulus to the student who knows where you're going and who tries to find a word that you are looking for.

Last of all in this little category is the question of emphasis. I play a little trick with my students on this because I make my students read aloud at every class I give. I take them back to another radio program—or television program, for that matter. At 10 o'clock every night on station or Channel 7 or some such, a person, an actor or public figure appears and utters the following, shattering, sentence. "It's 10 p.m. Do you know where your children are?" And I take it around the class and I make each student put the emphasis on a different word. "Do you know where your children are? "Do you know," and so on and so on. This is something worth remembering. When one speaks, one must have in mind those particular points, those words, which call for emphasis. All this as I say, you learn from day to day, one doesn't need to take courses in public speaking to learn it.

I was reminded of all of it about two weeks ago when, on television, I heard a distinguished professor from Stanford deliver a lecture. I don't know what it was about but that will be explained when I tell you how he did it. He came

obviously, tightly up to the lectern and immediately seized it as though he was, you know, leaping off a drowning ship or about to drown. He seized it and he stayed there with his hands on it like this, rigid, except for those times when he turned pages of the lecture that he was reading. His body was rigid. His voice was a monotone. He was reading and so his head was down like this; he was lecturing to the lectern and not to an audience. And then, worst of all, the subject that he was delivering, was—I won't say monotonous, that is not quite the point I want to make—it was cut out of one single piece of cloth. And as soon as he uttered the first few words, you knew what point number two was going to be, a little bit different from point number one, but the same sort of stuff and so on down to the very end. He was bound to fail. He failed so completely that I can't even remember what it was about. I stayed all the way through because I wanted to see if he would at some point, change some part of his delivery.

After listening to him I began to think about another aspect of lecturing and that is the physical presence of the lecturer before an audience. Certainly, from what the Stanford professor did, he shouldn't stand still, he shouldn't be a stick. On the other hand, as all of you know, he certainly shouldn't move back and forth restively up and down the platform. He should contemplate as he lectures the fact that people are watching him. He should be aware that if he does anything eccentric it will distract their attention from what he is saying. This doesn't mean that he shouldn't make any bodily movements at all, but I think it is the case that persons who lecture frequently adopt a set mode of trying to emphasize a point by shaking their fists or doing something else which involve themselves in some kinds of jerky movements. It would be good to have a friend come in and watch your lecture once in a while and ask if anything that you do in the course of lecturing, any physical action of yours, proves to be a distraction.

There is another kind of presence which I will refer to only briefly, though I think it worth remembering. I have known many lecturers who thought it was appropriate somehow or other to impress upon their audience the fact that they were persons of distinction, importance, maybe even of eccentricity. I am sure it wouldn't happen in this College, but there are colleges in this University where someone who looks like a shaggy dog sometimes appears on the platform and of course proceeds to lecture. And often such persons are concerned—not so much to present to you the subject matter of the lecture—but here and there to insinuate notions about themselves. A lecturer on Shakespeare's tragedies will often take a little time out to tell you what he thinks about the nuclear arms race, or abortion, or something of that sort. I abhor any kind of attempt on the part of the lecturer to establish with his audience a kind of position of importance on any other basis than the fact that he can give a good lecture. My rule for that is, that the lecture comes first and the lecturer should be a distant second. He should withdraw himself as much as possible from the minds of the students as a person.

Now, what needs to be said about lecturers also needs to be said up to a point about their consideration of their audience. It is, I think, unwise to have your audience fixed, or frozen, in a position, to have them for example spend their time with their eyes on their notebooks scribbling down the information that you are passing out. It's wrong to have them sitting and simply focusing their

attention on you—I'm not talking about an audience like this—I'm talking about an audience of students, of people who need to have their relationship with the lecturer change from time to time, intervals of five minutes or so, by one device or another. The device I have always used is to distribute before the lecture begins a sheet of mimeograph paper on which I have put down the title of the lecture, then in about fifty words answered the question, or continue the statement "the purpose of this lecture is," then I present definitions of certain key terms. Then, perhaps, comments by two or three leading authorities in the field. I use this as a simple device. I refer to it from time to time. I say let's go back and look at what professor so-and-so said. I use it in the most elementary way to prevent the student sitting there and continuously looking at his book, or sitting there and continuously looking at me.

So, I come then to the conclusion of these few remarks, saying something like this—that in designing lectures, and in delivering lectures, the key rules to follow have to do with variety, with change of pace. These objectives should be constantly in the mind of the person who is lecturing and I would go on to say that what I have said about the individual lecture applies equally to a course of lectures. I think of the individual lecture as a piece of music, a single piece of music, a symphony shall we say, in which there is a theme and in which there are variations on the theme in which the composer has gone to great lengths to derive a maximum of joy out of the way in which he has handled and developed the theme. I think of a course of lectures as a concert, a concert that begins shall we say with overture, and then produces a series of dances, and then goes on until the finale.

One final word, especially to the young, are you nervous about lecturing? I hope you are, it would be your salvation. I have been nervous about delivering this lecture. I have fussed over it and as I came up here this morning, I said to myself, "But this surely is inevitably so, you are going to be involved in an act of creation there, and an act of creation inevitably leads to tension." So be happy if you are nervous. Just let it carry you along, hope that it stays with you a long time. The day when you stand up before an audience and think that you are lord of all you survey, you are within a single step, of retiring.

I know that what I have said in some respects is not appropriate to what you do. Looking out and seeing the smiling face of my old boxing pupil, professor of veterinary pathology, I wondered what passed through his mind when I spoke of the lecture as a piece of music and he thought about the mechanisms of disease. Not very appropriate perhaps you will say. Well I came here today to start discussion and I came here also out of another purpose, which I have explained already, my sense of a debt to Dr. Dukes. In conclusion, it is my opinion that lecturing is a vital element in any teaching program. This college has a great tradition and teaching, and lecturing in particular, provides a vital link in the relationship between the faculty and the student body. To a high degree the health of this college, I believe, rests upon the quality of the lecturing and the relationship that lecturing establishes between the student body and the faculty. Therefore, in my view, lecturing is worthy of continuing discussion and scrutiny in this

college. It deserves the devotion from those who teach, and the encouragement of the administration.

I will conclude with a quotation from Cardinal Newman's essay "What Is a University?" He said the following: "The general principles of any study you may learn by books at home, but the detail, the color, the tone, the air, the life that makes it live in us, you must catch all these from those in whom it lives already."

# *The Student in a More Active Role*

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[We have been considering] the student as [a] receiver [of information.] What happens if we cast him in a more active role?

First let us notice that while, in the circumstances we have been considering, the student takes in and stores information, this act itself is not automatic. The information the student receives on a given day he must fit into the patterns of information he has already received. The teacher will perhaps offer him some suggestions on this but in general the student himself will make the connection between new information items and a host of other items he has previously received. He will do it in his mind; he will do it in his notebook. And similarly when the student prepares for an examination or takes an examination, he must on his own do some rearranging of the information he has gathered.

But this rearranging is only a mild form of intellectual activity. Our concern is with the notion of the student as a full, contributing participant in the learning process. One way to accomplish this is to go back to the suggestion made [before] that the lecturer include in his lecture discussion of a short, classic passage dealing with the subject matter of his lecture. Each student has a copy of this in his lecture outline. The procedure might be as follows.

When the lecturer reaches the appropriate point in his lecture, and this should not be at the very beginning, he will ask a student to stand up and read the passage to the class. If he is not satisfied with the reading, perhaps because the reader has misplaced emphasis or mispronounced a word or in some other way failed to convey the force and clarity of the statement in the passage, the lecturer may ask another student to read part or all of the passage though he will manage this in such a way as not to give offense to the first reader.

The lecturer will then raise questions regarding the coherence of the argument in the passage and call on students to stand up and discuss this topic. By the time this discussion has ended the students will have helped to put together an analysis of the passage. Later in the lecture, when the lecturer is summarizing his own total presentation, he may break off again and raise questions regarding the relevance of the classic passage to the lecture as a whole. During these periods, when he involves students in active participation, the lecturer will leave the rostrum and walk about in the middle of the classroom.

These procedures apply easily to classes of forty and less: with experience the lecturer may use them with larger groups.

To use the lecture in this way is to involve the student in an elementary manner, to make him contribute on the spot and unrehearsed to the development

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*From a paper on teaching written July 2, 1979.*

of the lecture topic. A more advanced method, and one commonly used in undergraduate and graduate teaching, is the so-called case method. Here the lecturer uses, either continuously or from time to time, carefully prepared statements bearing upon his lecture topic. These contain all the basic information that is necessary for discussion of the topic, together with some statements that offer interpretations of that information. In most instances these interpretations vary. The teacher requires the student to come to the class period well prepared in the study of the various statements and then calls on individual students to offer their own interpretations. By carefully managing the discussion of the basic information and the interpretations, the teacher carries through a treatment of the topic as effective as if he used the lecture. Here his role is that of coach or stage director. The students carry the main burden of the action.

These techniques for giving the student an active role in the lecture room may be used with more ease in conducting the seminar. Here the student group will be relatively small and opportunities for interchange between teacher and student will present less obstacle for the student than if he is called on to perform before a larger body in the formal setting of a lecture room. Students who take part in seminars will at the beginning of the term be called on to give oral reports on some aspects of the topic under consideration. Later they will be required to make short, 500-word written reports as a preliminary to discussion in seminar. Later still they will present longer reports, 1,000 to 1,200 words, and these will be mimeographed and distributed to all students before the seminar meets.

The purpose of involving the student in these ways is to give him a sense of his importance; he is contributing to his own learning. To carry this process to a final stage we need to take a further step. We wish to encourage the student to believe that he has a good mind and is capable of making sound observations and judgments. When he leaves college he should have confidence in his intellectual powers and in the fruits of his experience; that is what he has gained from work he has done independently in the classroom, the laboratory, and the library. As a beginning professional he should have not only the basic knowledge necessary for his professional work but the appropriate intellectual qualities; such as the power to analyze statements, to balance one piece of evidence against another, to know when he can rely on his own judgment and when he should consult others. He should be able to speak in public and write clearly. These and similar gifts of the mind will make it possible for him to apply his knowledge to the whole range of professional problems that will confront him.

How does he gain these qualities? He must undertake study that will give him opportunity to work independently on projects that are, in some degree however small, original. While he works within the normal range of the subject he is studying, and uses traditional techniques of studying, he must investigate a problem that will allow him to make an original, personal observation.

If this form of teaching and learning is to succeed it will call on the teacher to use great knowledge and ingenuity. He it is who must know the subject matter well enough to be able to say that here is some small research problem that the student can handle. How small, indeed minute, it is does not matter. The main consideration is that the student shall know that he has a chance to do a small piece of original study. In the humanities it is possible to do this, beginning with

freshmen and going on throughout the undergraduate years. How the practice may be adapted to the sciences I do not know, but I believe that it can be done, perhaps with modifications. Perhaps in the sciences there is more opportunity to experiment with techniques of study than in the humanities. In any case, means must be found for treating the student as a mature responsible person and for giving him the sure knowledge that he is valued and should value himself for his own special qualities of mind.

To summarize, successful teaching of sciences, as of other university fields of study, rests on two characteristics. On the one side the teacher must enjoy teaching fully and be prepared to experiment with his methods. On the other side the student must gain from the beginning of his career an awareness that he is a person with his own intellectual gifts, his own strength and his own dignity.



# *The Recitation Section*

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The recitation section is a meeting of students who come together, in the company of a teacher, to enlarge their knowledge of history through discussion of an assigned topic. This is the formal and official purpose of the meeting. How knowledge may be enlarged will vary from week to week according to the subject under discussion; perhaps a more complete and vivid view will emerge if the characteristics of a person or an institution, or an idea will take on new significance. The enlargement will proceed outwards from the book or document studied. The pattern of discussion will have full explanation of the topic as its first consideration and will as well, but to a lesser degree, bring out the relation between the topic and the more general issues presented in lectures and general reading.

The recitation section is in a sense a stage and those who are there, primarily the students, are like actors with the script of a play who have gathered together to establish the full, true meaning of the text. The basic question to be solved at this point is, What does the writer say? The student has perhaps read over the text rapidly and silently in his own room. He now has an audience and will give a reading of this passage or that, presenting his interpretation of the writer's meaning by emphasizing a word here, a phrase there. As one interpretation is challenged and another substituted for it, or as a nuance of meaning is examined, the richness of the text emerges.

In due course discussion of what the text means gives way to discussion of the significance of the ideas it presents and the associations it suggests with other patterns of ideas and events that have come under consideration in the course. As a place for discussion of matters of this kind the recitation section is to the student a place for self-education. Discussion, whatever its general nature, will revolve around the definition of terms, the possible meanings of words, and the logical structure or coherence of groups of ideas. Here the student is both critic and creator; he challenges or seeks to rephrase the statements of his fellows in the group and he tries to find words and patterns of ideas of his own that can find general acceptance in the group. To the fullest possible extent the interchanges will be among students.

In brief, the recitation section is for the student a learning experience that combines opportunity for self-expression, for the refining and reordering of thought and for cultivating in a mature manner the exchange of ideas on matters

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*Undated*

of substance.

The teacher presides over the recitation section, using a light hand. He will read the assigned text three or four times in the week before the section's meeting and during his last readings he will seek phrases and passages that express what he judges to be essential features of the writer's ideas, his mood, his style and his purpose. The teacher's final act of preparation will be to study the extracts he has chosen and decide in what pattern to arrange them. In making this decision he will be free to weigh many alternatives. One pattern he may judge best for the first two or three meetings of the section, another for the later meetings.

He may use as a stock pattern one that illustrates the style of the document, its mood, its scope and content, and its purpose. The weight he will give to these items and the order in which he will place them will vary from one document to the next. What would suit St. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* would need rearranging for a recitation section on More's *Utopia*.

Like a public speaker, the teacher will have made a firm decision about where the section discussion will begin and where it will end; he will hold in the front of his mind the passage that precisely opens up the point with which he intends to begin and the passage that is the perfect ending. What happens in between will depend on the range of discussion that develops. He will have in reserve, so to speak, some ten or fifteen passages that he judges to be the appropriate intermediate structure between beginning and end. Some or all of them he will be put up for discussion as occasion offers.

I have said that the teacher presides over the section and uses a light hand. He will initiate discussion by asking first one student, then another and another to comment on a passage from the text, using the same passage in each instance. He may ask two or three other students to choose words that might have been substituted for a key word in the passage; how would the substitute alter the meaning? Or he will ask the always illuminating question—say of Pericles *Funeral Oration* or the *Declaration of the Rights of Man & the Citizen*—what isn't there? He will constantly throw one student's interpretation to another for comment. He is presiding over a debate, a public meeting.

Let us suppose the text for discussion is Marlon's *Dr. Faustus*. He will have spoken briefly—three or four minutes—about the play at the end of the preceding meeting of the section, describing its nature, its relation to earlier readings and to ideas developed in lectures. He will have suggested three or four major items that the student might have in mind when reading the play.

At the beginning of the discussion he may point to the speech of the Good Angel early in the play: "Read, read the Scriptures." What, he may ask, is the significance of this; how does it relate to the description by Faustus, in the opening scene, of the spheres of learning he has mastered? Then he may turn to the speech by Faustus when he is contemplating the new fields of knowledge that may be available to him. He will ask a student to read the speech out loud. He will ask another to read the passage of the speech which says:

*Oh, what a world of profit and delight  
Awaits the studious artisan,*

“Awaits,” the teacher may repeat; then ask “What happens to the rhythm if you substitute ‘beckons.’ What happens to the meaning if you substitute ‘invites?’ How does ‘awaits’ help to characterize the action Faustus undertook?” Coming to the end of the play in due course, he may ask a student to read aloud the concluding lines that begin with the words, “Faustus is gone.” “Faustus is gone. Regard his hellish fall. Whose friendly fortune may exhort the wise. Only to wonder at unlawful things. Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits. To practice more than heavenly power permits.” What does the word “wonder” imply? In these few lines does Marlowe summarize the total lesson of the play?

If a teacher adopts this view of the purposes of the recitation section in [the Cornell course] *The History of Western Civilization* or if he follows these procedures, what is he helping the student to learn? First, I suppose, the meaning of words and the significance of their placement, one alongside the other. His attention to words will help him to understand with what precision the writer has shaped his thought and found the words to express them. The more he understands each individual statement of ideas in a book, the more exactly he can analyze the whole structure of the writer’s thought, its coherence, its beauty. The student learns the art of reading, of meditating over what he has read—there’s much more in the passage than he first supposed. These arts he will gradually acquire through his experience in recitation section. In addition, the give and take of discussion and the demand made to him each week that he read aloud to the group will give him confidence and skill in stating his own ideas, as well as a fuller understanding of some principal creations of Western Man.



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# Teaching Assistants

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Each professor knows how to teach and how to use teaching assistants by giving general directions to them, by attending their classes, by recording their classes and by discussing their performance with them.

As teaching assistants you will do what your professor wishes you to do.

What I have to say to you now is no more than my view of what I have learned from teaching undergraduates at Cornell. I came to Cornell from Oxford in 1923 and was a teaching assistant. From 1930 to 1970 I continued to teach in lectures and seminars and in my class sections. After my retirement in 1970 I became a teaching assistant in Western Civilization and served there until 1980. Today my own work is to teach five small classes of undergraduates.

I will explain my view of myself as a teacher and in doing so I am aware that what I say may not and probably will not suit your personalities and your views.

In teaching I regard the student as the chief figure and I see myself as the secondary figure in my relation to him and her.

When I put before students information and ideas my success as a teacher comes not from what I say but from the students' understanding and use of what I say.

To teach my section as an assistant I present a historical idea or event or person to the students. I put this presentation into shape in three or four hours of work and in doing so I create as a beginning pattern some names and dates and statements that establish and make clear the subject for our discussion.

In conducting the larger part of this discussion I use the notion that students have in this class and in others, opportunity to listen to lectures, to read, to make notes, and to write papers. When they read classroom materials they have so much reading to do that they may have the habit of taking in no more than basic information. They may not consider the fundamental ideas out of which the reading comes or the challenge to the imagination that it gives rise to. I think it part of my duty as a teacher to present at each class quotations from the period under discussion and to make these quotations a principal part of the classes.

I will ask a student to read the first lines.

“Take up the White Man’s burden.” The class itself may consider the word “burden.” What makes a thing a burden? Who imposes it? Religion, Nature. “The White Man” implies “The Black man.” A century earlier the poet William Blake wrote of the boy who said,

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*Undated*

*My mother bore me in the southern wild.  
And I am black, but O my soul is white.*

What are the qualities of the black man and the white? What will be the results of those who take up the burden?

The purpose of this discussion is to put into the hands of students the direct management of part of the class.

What can you and I do with the class here today. Suppose I am presenting the role of Pericles in Athens in the 5th Century B.C. I will first distribute to the class sheets of paper on which the first items will be 5th Century dates in the history of Athens, the dates of Pericles' life, and items associated with his political career. A half dozen names, a half dozen dates. The class and I will spend a quarter of an hour studying these items.

We will spend the rest of the hour on Pericles' *Funeral Oration*, as reported by Thucydides. I will arrange that each student read aloud to the class a sentence or two from the speech. If the opportunity allows I will have asked each student to prepare and bring to class today an outline of a funeral speech the student might have given at the supposed death of a classmate in high school, and I ask the student to think about the beginning paragraph and the end and to show how the flow of emotion moves through the speech.

With notions about the beginning, the middle, and the end of a speech, and the use of emotion in it, let us see what we can do with the speech itself.

(Distribute to the class copies of Pericles' Speech.)

The purpose of the discussion we have had is to bring students actively into the conduct of the class. In doing this I have in mind another interest: to give attention to the language that is used in the quotation. In teaching history I give attention to the meaning of words in terms of what they are intended to do and to the relation of word and word in the use of language as a thing of beauty. I ask the student to read out loud and I ask more than one student to read the same passage.

In presenting these statements about myself as a teacher I speak of methods that are essentially my own. My object in using them is the maturing mind of the student and the need, by drawing him into discussion, to encourage him to extend and to enrich his ideas about human affairs.

As teaching assistants you have a long way to go in this profession. Work and work again on your skills as a teacher and remember that to teach is not to tell the student something but to have him understand and use what you tell him.

# *How I Teach*

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When I wake in the morning and my mind begins to think, a first thought is likely to be what kinds of teaching is my work for today. I am a professor emeritus in my ninety-first year and I teach at Cornell University where I have been continuously a teacher since 1923. I teach English History and also some part of English literature that is the companion to history, and my present pattern for teaching covers every relationship with undergraduate students except the large lecture course. I have a lecture class of fifteen students, a small discussion group and I meet day by day individual students as they come to me for what the University program calls “supervision.”

If my first morning thought says I must lecture I begin to recall what I have prepared for today. If the lecture is on the role of Parliament in Elizabeth I’s reign I’ll remember that as the years go by I have lectured on this subject some sixty-six times before, but for today I have written out the outlines of another lecture. I will have looked at my notes for my last two or three lectures and these I have studied as a way to prepare for today, but for today’s lecture a slightly different arrangement came to my mind and the new pages of notes I wrote gave here and there new information or new interpretation. It is a new lecture thought through and made ready for today.

For this lecture I shall give the students copies of the original record of Parliament on Elizabeth I’s opening of Parliament in 1559 and a copy of Peter Wentworth’s speech in the House of Commons in 1576. During the lecture time each student will read aloud to the class a section from the Parliamentary record which I shall assign.

Peter Wentworth began his speech by saying “Mr. Speaker, I find written in a little volume these words in effect, ‘Sweet is the name of liberty but the thing itself a value beyond all inestimable treasure.’” It will take reading by two or three students to find the force of Wentworth’s words. But in the course of the lecture the students will ask me questions and they will speak among themselves about the readings they have made.

In any lecture course, large or small, I arrange that each student has in hand a copy of a document or a book that I shall refer to and use in the lecture. By doing this it is possible for me to make changes in the relation between the student and me. He does not see me as a person, a physical object, who speaks to him for fifty minutes but he sees me as a person who speaks but who asks him questions and who has conversations with him at different points in the lecture.

This pattern is not possible in a large lecture course, but even there each student should have in his hand a document or book. The lecturer should break

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*Written in 1989.*

the delivery of his speech by referring to a quotation or statement of interpretation in the passage the student has, the lecturer reading it out to the class, giving the reason for the use of important words in it and making his own comments on the whole statement. He might present, for the reign of Henry VII in 1489, words from the Act concerning Justices of the Peace. "His said Highness shall not let for any favour, affection, cost, charge, nor any other cause but that he shall see his laws to have plain and due execution, and his subjects to live in surety of their lands, bodies, and goods according to his said laws...that his subjects may increase in wealth and prosperity to the pleasure of God." "Let," I shall explain means "hinder." What will the class say about the use of the word "his," as in "his laws?"

With a lecturer who speaks for fifty minutes the student will, of course, make notes and move his eyes from his note pad to the lecturer. For the student to have complete attention to the lecturer he needs more than this. As a lecturer I affirm my active role as a teacher by changes in the tones of my voice and the movements of my body as well as by my calling upon the student to speak.

The lecture I shall give today on the role of Parliament in the reign of Elizabeth I is part of a series of lectures I shall give this term in the course entitled "English Public Life and Literature in the Tudor Period." The lecture will be one of twenty-eight lectures for the term. The subject itself will call for explanations and discussions that deal with constitutional topics. With other topics the treatment will be different. One lecture might be a narrative account of a war in Ireland, a biographical study, or some aspect of religious change; the program of lectures will have variety of this kind from week to week.

At each lecture the student will have in hand a 16th century statement or a law or a poem which is part of the topic. The item I shall have chosen for the reading presents difficulties of interpretation or understanding or of spirit which become clear as they are read out:

*The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.*

Often when a student reads part of a statute or sonnet, and the class and I have spoken about it, I shall ask another student to read it again. The reading out loud is for me a great part of knowing the qualities of what has been written; it gives the student a new sense of his relation to what has been written, and once he has read it, it becomes part of him.

I have spoken of lecturing and have shown how it may be organized and conducted so as to give effective relation of one lecture topic to others in the same course and to call on the student to take an active role in this kind of

teaching program. In another kind, that is, when I carry on teaching in discussion groups, my procedure is the same except that in discussions the student has a more active part. The topic for the whole discussion program has its own form and those students who take part have academic interests of their own outside the discussion group which will define what it is they wish to learn. Or it may be that in their advanced academic training there is on a particular subject a lack of knowledge which they hope to fulfill by discussion. These circumstances will make it possible for the teacher to arrange the total discussion program around papers which he will, with the aid of individual students, adapt to their needs. An introductory lecture or two and, at the end of the course, a statement will be his duty; for the rest the students will take charge of the discussion periods, with comments among the students and the teacher.

The other part of my teaching, perhaps a third of it, comes from work with individual undergraduate students, about five of them a term, who come to me for study in what is officially known as "supervision." The situations that arise are mostly like this. A student I have not seen before comes to me, usually from a College other than Arts and Sciences, a man or a woman. I begin by asking, shall we say of him, simple direct questions about his academic program, about the school he attended, asking also what his non-academic interests are and finally what he hoped that working with me will give him.

The student's answers show that he believes that the work at Cornell he has done or is doing fails to give a sense that in the fuller significance of the term he is well-educated. If I ask him has he read the Bible he says "No, never carefully." About Shakespeare, No, not since his middle school days. "Have you ever made a well organized public speech" and he says no.

What shall I do? I cannot add to the student's knowledge of Dickens but I can do something more important. For countless terms I have followed the same policy of using my own course of study. The student will read with me some part of the Bible and of Shakespeare and a speech by Pericles, but my point in taking him to these works is not that he may know what they contain but to try to stir in him the love of a true reader in what is before him.

With the Bible before us I shall say let us go over the words piece by piece, you read them out loud to me. We are looking at the first chapter of the book of Job, Verse 9, "Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Doth Job fear God for nought.'" The next verse tells us what Satan means. But look again at the words, six one-syllable words. Do they carry force? How would you read them? Or, if we are to read Pericles' Funeral Speech before the people of Athens, I ask the student, as a preliminary to reading the speech, to write a three-page funeral oration such as he might have written on the death of a high school friend. I'll suggest he should consider what should go into the speech as information, what emotional levels the speech should express, and how, in delivering his own speech he will vary the tones of his voice from the opening sentence through the middle and to the end.

My emphasis in the first four weeks of our meetings is on the language used and on the patterns of information, emotion, and statement or delivery that occur in the works we read together. Ours has been not a study of what was said but

of how it was said. I encourage each student to believe that there are all around him now, and will be around him for ever, works of the kind we have studied and he can use them in the same way; that is, with close attention and with his own standards of values. He is on the way to becoming his own guide to what is good.

The student will also work with me for nine or ten weeks before the term ends and for this period my problem becomes difficult. He should spend part of a week in the Library, some hours in the Reference Room to have a notion of how wide the collection is, a visit to the stacks, and a knowledge of the computer system for listing books that are available to him. The rest of his work under my supervision I will plan according to his own special interests. How do I find what they are?

I learn what they are from our first preliminary meeting when he tells me about his background and what he hopes to get from working with me. I listen all the while from our first meeting through the next few weeks for a phrase or a reference that may present some special association of his. In the back of my mind is my knowledge of British politics, government, the economy, society and academic affairs, and what I hope to find is a statement by him that I can tie into one or another of the things I know.

At school, I learned, he had a small stage appearance in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. What could be better? I ask him to go to the library and get a copy of Gilbert and Sullivan's works. I ask him to read through *The Mikado* again. I say, "Suppose you try to find out why they used a Japanese story for the plot and to find what the reviews said of the first performance in England." He will say "Where do I begin," and I tell him you can do research of this kind so long as you keep at it; first go to the library and hunt around the Reference Room and ask all the questions you wish from the officials there. I say to him you don't need at this point final answers but you do need to find out where you must look for them. With my directions, and assurance that the student can do the work, four out of five of them prepare for and write their essay.

The rest of the story is simple, with one or two conditions. The student must be rigorously held to keeping his notes and to going through the process of bringing his thoughts into order and recording them in the outline of his essay. I will in the academic orderly part of his work treat him as though he is a graduate student but I tell him that I will help him in thinking through his outline and I will work with him on some limited composition, even to the point of writing a sentence or two or a paragraph, here or there. He and I must be satisfied that what he says and the way he says it will meet the standards of a high senior in history or a graduate student in his first year.

So what has happened is that he knows he has done a piece of academic work of high order. What he writes about and how that fits into his other undergraduate training is for this purpose not important. The student has learned how to look in this field for problems that can be solved, how to put a library to this use, and also how to approach and deal with persons who may be of use to him.

A final and all embracing quality that the teacher brings to his work is what I will call immediacy. I mean by this the knowledge that what he is saying and

doing comes from his own immediate experience of the subject he is teaching. He has just studied it and has thought through the problems he is describing; the information he uses, the quotations he asks the students to read, these are, so to speak, part of a dramatic act which he directs. In this sense the process of teaching has support in the direct, personal action of the teacher, the immediacy of his presence.

Immediacy comes in another way. I ask each student during a term to write two short essays to show his response to two pieces of literature we are studying, usually a poem and a page or two of prose. I ask him to say in 750 words what his opinion is of the passage in its language, rhythm, mood, emotional expression, intellectual range and narrative story. He may write on one or more of these qualities.

As I read the student papers I make suggestions and corrections; you need here a quotation from the original text to make your argument more exact; you need there another word or two to make your statement more precise. When I return the papers I give them my own essay on the subject. I work hard to make what I write as clear as I can make it, usually six or seven hours to form its final shape.

I say that my age and experience give what I say a view that comes from another stage than theirs. But I am, with them, in the course immediately.



# *The Last Lecture*

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Just over a year ago I gave my last, formal, teaching lecture at Cornell and I did so in a room in Goldwin Smith Hall identical in size and appearance to the one in which I held my first recitation section in the fall of 1923. That room was at the north end on the first floor, this at the south end on the first floor, looking out on the sundial.

As I prepared for this lecture I had two concerns. One was that the emotion of this last formal appearance might overpower me. Should I, as some of my friends have done on similar occasions, simply announce that there would be no lecture on that final Saturday? The other concern arose from the fact that Walter La Feber and others had from time to time said, at the retirement of our friends and in connection with the prospects of my earlier supposed retirements, that the tradition was for one's colleagues to attend the last lecture, to make it so to speak, a departmental farewell. Before this story appeared—say five or six years ago—I had never heard of the tradition.

The prospect of lecturing before my colleagues did not disturb me, except that the appearance of half a dozen or ten of them in the classroom would alter the scene, the mood, the tone of the occasion. My class had only nine students and with these I had adopted a simple informal relationship which would have to be changed, however slightly, if my colleagues were present. The more I thought about the possibility of their attending the more I disliked it. I saw it as forcing me into a style of lecturing that would be artificial, or at least out of harmony with the manner of my earlier lectures.

I soon committed myself to the notion of giving the final lecture and as I prepared for it I decided that come what may I would give the lecture and use the style that seemed fitting to me. I would forget my colleagues, and in a sense I would forget my students. I would follow only the notion: what did I wish to say, what would I most enjoy doing.

The answer soon became clear. A final lecture in this particular course had to contain certain elements—a glance backward over the subject matter, a rehearsal of our expectations as we began the course, and consideration in general terms of what we might have learned. More and more the thought pressed upon me that this would be my last formal opportunity to read in public some passages from English Constitutional documents that almost were engraved on my heart. They had echoed through me scores of times, as items in earlier lectures. They had for me a certain majesty. So the way was clear: incorporate them one by one into the backward glance; let them stand as enunciating principles or points of view that we had used as building blocks in our homemade version of modern English Constitutional history. But there was a further question. Since these passages

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*Written in 1972*

meant so much to me would it be wise to read them in the emotion charged atmosphere of the final lecture? Dare I expose these jewels to my colleagues who might regard them as commonplace historical tags; should I risk stumbling over them in the presence of my students? In my many years of lecturing I had been emotionally seized by the beauty of a passage I was reading only once or twice, and then, with luck, no one had known the cause of my stumbling. But could I hold firm in this last lecture? I would try.

According to my usual practice I prepared the lecture the night before it was to be given, say from 7:30-10. When I appeared in the classroom the next morning none of my colleagues were there—good omen number one. I started easily and with confidence.

I eased myself into the lecture with some general comments and spent about ten minutes on these. I approached the first quotations. These were from a Statute of Henry VII concerning Justices of the Peace and I had used them to show how Henry's government began to use statutes as instruments of propaganda. The statute said:

“The laws and ordinances made for the politic weal, peace and good rule of the [realm] and for perfect security, and restful living of his subjects of the same be not duly executed according to the tenor and effect that they were made and ordained for; wherefore his subjects be grievously hurt and out of surety for their bodies and goods, to his great displeasure, for to him is nothing more joyous than to know his subjects to live peaceably under his laws and to increase in wealth and prosperity.... And his grace considereth that a great part of the wealth and prosperity of this land standeth in that, that his subjects may live in surety and in his peace.... He chargeth and commandeth all manner of men, as well the poor as the rich (which be to him all one in due ministration of justice)...that is hurt or grieved [that he may] come to the king's highness or chancellor...and show his grief.”

I hesitated for a moment after the first line, but then got caught up in the task of adapting my mind to the early Tudor phrase and sentence structure. This calmed me and from that point on I had no difficulty.

I passed from Henry's honeyed words—the recently crowned king trying to sell himself by making the laws “his” laws and promoting the monarchy and the laws as the bedrock of his subjects' peace and security—to something much more meek in its language, though constitution-shaking in its intent. This is the opening to the speech of Peter Wentworth in Elizabeth's Parliament in 1576. Elizabeth had been playing cat and mouse with the House of Commons on free speech, sometimes denying the privilege altogether, at others allowing that members might speak “to as they be neither unmindful nor uncareful of their duties, reverence and obedience to their sovereign,” matters on which she held the last word.

Wentworth, the two Wentworths, Peter and Paul, had made quick and firm their opposition to Elizabeth's policy, they would remain so. In this instance Peter began in peace:

“Mr. Speaker, I find written in a little volume these words in effect: ‘Sweet is the name of liberty, but the thing itself a value beyond all inestimable treasure.’ So much the more it behooveth us to take care lest we, contenting ourselves with the sweetness of the name, lose and forego the thing, being of greatest value that can come unto this noble realm. The inestimable treasure is the use of it in this house.”

As he went forward with his argument Wentworth spoke more strongly and presented a case that was more extreme in the principles he advocated. He ended in full voice:

“The queen’s majesty is the head of the law and must of necessity maintain the law; for by the law her majesty is made justly our queen and by it she is most chiefly maintained. Here unto agreeth the most excellent words of Bracton who saith, ‘The king hath no peer or equal in his kingdom.’ He hath no equal for otherwise he might lose his authority of commanding, since that an equal hath no rule of commandment over his equal. The king ought not to be under man but under God and under the law, because the law maketh him a king. Let the king therefore attribute that to the law which the law attributeth unto him; that is dominion and power. For he is not a king in whom will and not the law doth rule. And therefore he ought to be under the law.”

The record continues:

“Upon this speech, the house, out of a reverend regard of her majesty’s honour, stopped his further proceeding before he had fully finished his speech.”

Elizabeth herself must appear in the gallery, as when she spoke to members of Parliament in 1601:

“I do assure you that there is no prince that loveth his subjects better, or whose love can countervail our love. There is no jewel, be it of never so rich a price, which I prefer before this jewel; I mean your love. For I do more esteem it than any treasure or riches; for that we know how to prize, but love and thanks I count inestimable. And though God hath raised me high, yet this I count the glory of my crown, that I have reigned with your loves. This makes me that I do not so much rejoice that God hath made me to be a queen, as to be a queen over so thankful a people.”

Members of the House of Commons spoke next to James I in *The Apology of 1604*:

“We the knights, citizens and burgesses in the house of Commons assembled in parliament and in the name of the whole commons of the realm of England, with uniform consent for ourselves and our posterities do expressly protest against assertions...tending directly and apparently to the utter overthrow of the very fundamental privileges of our house—and therein of the rights and liberties of the whole commons of your realm of England. Contrariwise we most truly avouch that our privileges and liberties are our rights and due inheritance no less than our very lands and goods; that they cannot be withheld from us, denied or impaired, but with apparent wrong to the whole state of the realm.”

Of the house itself they said:

“The sole persons of the higher nobility excepted, they contain the whole flower and power of your kingdom; with their bodies your wars, with their purses your treasures, are upheld and supplied. Their hearts are the strength and stability of your royal seat. All these, amounting to many millions of people, are representatively present in us of the House of Commons.”

When John Hampden challenged the right of Charles I to collect ship money in 1638 justice Berkeley spoke firmly on the authority of the king.

“I never read nor heard that *Lex was Rex*, but it is common and most true that *Rex is Lex*, for he is a living, a speaking, an acting law.”

How much further the Lord Keeper went, when he addressed the members of parliament at the opening of the Short Parliament in April 1640!

“My lords, and you, the knights, citizens, and burgesses of the House of Commons: ...I doubt not but you rejoice at this day’s meeting...; and good reason you have so to do, and with all humbleness of heart to acknowledge the great goodness of his majesty who, sequestering the memory of all former discouragements in preceding assemblies, is now, out of a fatherly affection to his people and a confidence that they will not be failing in their duty to him, pleased graciously to invite you and all his loving subjects to a sacred unity of hearts and affection in the service of him and of the commonwealth, and in execution of those counsels that tend only to the honour of his majesty and to the good preservation of you all. His majesty’s kingly resolutions are seated in the ark of his sacred breast, and it was a presumption of too high a nature for any Uzzah, uncalled, to touch it. Yet his majesty is now pleased to lay by the shining beams of majesty ..., that the distance between sovereignty and subjection should not bar you of that filial freedom of access to his person and counsel. Only let us... ever remember that, though the king sometimes lays by the beams and rays of majesty, he never lays by majesty itself.”

Two years later the Commons and the Lords were no less extreme.

“The high court of parliament is not only a court of judicature, enabled by the laws to adjudge and determine the rights and liberties of the kingdom against such patents and grants of his majesty as are prejudicial thereunto, although strengthened both by his personal command and by his proclamation under the great seal; but it is likewise a council to provide for the necessities, prevent the imminent dangers, and preserve the public peace and safety of the kingdom, and to declare the king’s pleasure in those things as are requisite thereunto. And what they do herein hath the stamp of the royal authority although his majesty, seduced by evil counsel do in his own person oppose or interrupt the same; for the king’s supreme and royal pleasure is exercised and declared in this high court of law and council, after a more eminent and obligatory manner than it can be by personal act or resolution of his own.”

In the ensuing struggle and attempts at negotiated settlements the antagonists and other political and religious enthusiasts endorsed scores of plans for reconstructing English public life. “An Agreement of the People” of 1649, one of the proposals offered by spokesmen for an army group, affirmed the commitment to the creation of a new form of government.

“Having by our late labours and hazards made it appear to the world at how high a rate we value our just freedom, and God having so far owned our cause as to deliver the enemies thereof into our hands, we do now hold ourselves bound, in mutual duty to each other, to take the best care we can for the future to avoid both the danger of returning into a slavish condition and the chargeable remedy of another war.”

In an elaborate description of the secular government, they put control in the hands of elected representatives who were to have “the supreme trust in order to the preservation and government of the whole.”

Of religion they said:

“It is intended that the Christian religion be held forth and recommended as the public profession in this nation which we desire may, by the grace of God, be reformed to the greatest purity in doctrine, worship, and discipline, according to the word of God. The instructing thereunto in a public way, so it be not compulsive...is allowed to be provided for by our representatives ...provided that popery or prelacy be not held forth as the public way or profession in this notion.”

They added:

“That such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ, however differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth, as aforesaid, shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected in, the profession of their faith and exercise of religion according to their consciences. So as they abuse not this liberty to the civil injury of others or to actual disturbance of the public peace on their parts,”

Within a month or two the revolutionaries launched their new government.

“Be it declared and enacted by this present parliament and by the authority of the same that the people of England, and of all the dominions and territories thereunto belonging, are and shall be and are hereby constituted, made, established, and confirmed to be a commonwealth and free state, and shall from henceforth be governed as a commonwealth and free state by the supreme authority of this nation—the representatives of the people in parliament, and by such as they shall appoint and constitute as officers and ministers under them for the good of the people, and that without any king or house of lords.”

When the revolutionary experiment had failed, Charles Stuart tried to affirm his right to the throne and impose his own concept of the relation between crown and law. In his Declaration of Breda (1660), he said:

“Charles, by the grace of God, king of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, etc., to all our loving subjects, of what degree or quality soever, greeting. If the general distraction and confusion which is spread over the whole kingdom doth not awaken all men to a desire and longing that those wounds which have so many years together been kept bleeding, may be bound up, all we can say will be to no purpose. However, after this long silence, we have thought it our duty to declare how much we desire to contribute thereunto; and that, as we can never give over the hope in good time to obtain possession of that right

which God and nature hath made our due, so we do make it our daily suit to the Divine Providence that He will, in compassion to us and our subjects after so long misery and sufferings, remit and put us into a quiet and peaceable possession of that our right, with as little blood and damage to our people as is possible. Nor do we desire more to enjoy what is ours than that all our subjects may enjoy what by law is theirs by a full and entire administration of justice throughout the land, and by extending our mercy where it is wanted and deserved.”

But those to whom he addressed himself had learned a thing or two about monarchy and the law. They replied:

“We, the lords and commons now assembled in parliament, together with the lord mayor, aldermen, and commons of the city of London and other freemen of this kingdom now present, do according to our duty and allegiance, heartily, joyfully and unanimously acknowledge and proclaim that immediately upon the decease of our late sovereign Lord King Charles the imperial crown of the realm of England and of all the kingdoms, dominions and rights belonging to the same, did by inheritance, birthright and lawful and undoubted succession descend and come to his most excellent majesty Charles the Second, as being lineally, justly and lawfully next heir of the blood royal of the realm.”

Judges of the king’s courts sent words echoing down the ages. In 1670, in *Bushell’s case*, Chief Justice Vaughan said:

“In the present case it is returned that the prisoner, being a juryman among others charged at the sessions court of the Old Bailey to try the issue between the king and Penn and Mead upon an indictment for assembling unlawfully and tumultuously, ‘did contra plenam et manifestam evidentiā openly given in court acquit the prisoners indicted, in contempt of the king,’ etc.

“The court hath no knowledge, by this return, whether the evidence given was full and manifest or doubtful, lame, and dark, or indeed evidence at all material to the issue; because it is not returned what evidence in particular...was given.... Another fault in the return is that the jurors are not said to have acquitted the persons indicted against full and manifest evidence corruptly and knowing the said evidence to be full and manifest against the persons indicted; for, how manifest soever the evidence was, if it were not manifest to them..., it was not a finable fault, nor deserving imprisonment—upon which difference the law of punishing jurors for false verdicts principally depends....

“I would know whether anything be more common than for two men—students, barristers or judges—to deduce contrary and opposite conclusions out of case in law. And is there any difference that two men should infer distinct conclusions from the same testimony? And this often is the case of the judge and jury.

“I conclude, therefore, that this return, charging the prisoners to have acquitted Penn and Mead against full and manifest evidence..., without saying that they did know and believe that evidence to be full and manifest against the indicted persons, is no cause of fine or imprisonment....”

In the late 18th century Lord Mansfield affirmed the citizen's rights as against the claim of the administration to search for and seize his papers by means of a general warrant.

“The messenger, under this warrant, is commanded to seize the person described and to bring him with his papers to be examined before the secretary of state. In consequence of this, the house must be searched; the lock and doors of every room, box, or trunk must be broken open; all the papers and books without exception, if the warrant be executed according to its tenor, must be seized and carried away. For it is observable that nothing is left either to the discretion or to the humanity of the officer...”

“This power, so claimed by the secretary of state, is not supported by one single citation from any law book extant. It is claimed by no other magistrate in this kingdom but himself... The arguments which the defendant's counsels have thought fit to urge in support of this practice are of this kind: that such warrants have issued frequently since the Revolution...; that the case of the warrants bears a resemblance to the case of search for stolen goods. They say too that they have been executed without resistance upon many printers, booksellers, and authors, who have quietly submitted to the authority; that no action hath hitherto been brought to try the right; and that, although they have been often read upon the returns of habeas corpus, yet no court of justice has ever declared them illegal. And it is further insisted that this power is essential to government and the only means of quieting clamours and sedition.

“Such is the power, and therefore one should naturally expect that the law to warrant it should be clear in proportion as the power is exorbitant. If it is law, it will be found in our books. If it is not to be found there, it is not law. The great end for which men entered into society was to secure their property. That right is preserved sacred and incommunicable in all instances where it has not been taken away or abridged by some public law for the good of the whole. The cases where this right of property is set aside by positive law are various. Distresses, executions, forfeitures, taxes, etc., are all of this description; wherein every man by common consent gives up that right for the sake of justice and the general good. By the laws of England every invasion of private property, be it ever so minute, is a trespass. No man can set his foot upon my ground without my license but he is liable to an action, though the damage be nothing; which is proved by every declaration in trespass where the defendant is called upon to answer for bruising the grass and even treading upon the soil. If he admits the fact, he is bound to show by way of justification that some positive law has empowered or excused him. The justification is submitted to the judges, who are to look into the books and [find] if such a justification can be maintained by the text of the statute law or by the principles of common law. If no such excuse can be found or produced, the silence of the books is an authority against the defendant, and the plaintiff must have judgment.”

He was just as firm in *Somerset's case* (1772) when the owner of a slave tried to reassert his right to the slave who had fled into England.

“So high an act of dominion must be recognized by the law of the country where it is used. The power of a master over his slave has been extremely different

in different countries. The state of slavery is of such a nature that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political, but only by positive law, which preserves its force long after the reasons, occasion, and time itself from whence it was created is erased from memory. It is so odious that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive law. Whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and therefore the black must be discharged.”

The cause of reform, central to constitutional action in the 19th century, spoke in a quiet voice when it gave effect to the notion that, in dealing with the concerns of the citizen, the state would go beyond its accustomed role of setting standards, as in housing and public health and working conditions. In its first offer to use local taxes to support public education parliament spoke as follows in the Education Act of 1870:

“The education department shall publish a notice of their decision as to the public school accommodation for any school district.... If any persons being either ratepayers of the district...or the managers of any elementary school in the district, feel aggrieved by such decision, such persons may...apply in writing to the education department for, and the education department shall direct the holding of, a public inquiry.... If no public inquiry is directed, or after the receipt of the report made after such inquiry..., the education department may, if they think that the amount of public school accommodation for the district is insufficient, publish a final notice...directing that the public accommodation therein mentioned...be supplied. If after the expiration of a time not exceeding six months...the education department are satisfied that all the public school accommodation required by the final notice has not been so supplied, nor is in course of being supplied ... the education department shall cause a school board to be formed for the district, as provided in this act.”

Much of the constitutional history of England in the 20th century has concerned the mighty growth of the executive departments of government. Parliament, largely occupied in passing the executive’s legislation or voting it the necessary taxes, began to wonder if there were a distinctive role for parliament in modern England. In 1963 Mrs. Barbara Castle expressed a general concern.

“We come here this afternoon against the background of the very unhappy knowledge that Parliamentary institutions are under attack everywhere in the world. They are under attack not merely in the immature countries but also in some of the most familiar centres of long-established democracy. When we say that, do not let us think with complacency of how much better we do things here than they do in France under General de Gaulle. We should make a very great mistake if we did not realize that the same creeping apathy towards Parliamentary institutions and Parliamentarians which is invading the French public could not also invade the British public, to the detriment of all the things in which we believe. Indeed, I was interested to see the other day a quotation from a Frenchman, M. Jouvenal, ...In 1961, in a treatise on Parliamentary Government, he said:

“Parliamentary Government has vanished in England quite as much as in France though in quite another way.... In the House of Commons the minority can do nothing because it is a minority, and the majority can do nothing because it

has to keep faith with the Government. Though in theory the House of Commons can do anything, in practice it can do nothing. Its power is a myth.”

“He went on to argue that the same process of the strengthening of the Executive’s role in representative Government was going on here, and that even here we had our monarchisation of government which can take place just as much under a Prime Minister as it can under a President...”

In a long series of judgments the great central courts interpreted freely the right of the executive to act, especially in the judicial reading of phrases such as “if the minister is satisfied” or “if the minister has reasonable cause to believe”. Conservative judges occasionally spoke against this latitude, as did Lord Atkin in 1942:

“... It is surely incapable of dispute that the words ‘if A. has X’ constitute a condition the essence of which is the existence of X and the having of it by A. If it is a condition to a right (including a power) granted to A, whenever the right comes into dispute the tribunal whatever it may be that is charged with determining the dispute must ascertain whether the condition is fulfilled. In some cases the issue is one of fact, in others of both fact and law, but in all cases the words indicate an existing something the having of which can be ascertained. And the words do not mean and cannot mean ‘if A thinks he has.’ ‘If A has a broken ankle’ does not mean and cannot mean ‘if A thinks that he has a broken ankle.’ ‘If A has a right of way’ does not mean and cannot mean ‘if A thinks that he has a right of way.’ ‘Reasonable cause’ for an action or a belief is just as much a positive fact capable of determination by a third party as is a broken ankle or a legal right.”

But the contrary view prevailed, as in the words of Lord Romer:

“It is also to be noticed that the words of paragraph 1 are not ‘if there is reasonable cause to believe’ but, ‘if the Secretary of State *has* reasonable cause to believe.’ It is, of course, true as has been said by my noble and learned friend, Lord Atkin, that the words ‘if a man has a broken ankle’ do not and cannot mean ‘if he thinks he has a broken ankle,’ but the regulation is not dealing with the state of a man’s body. It is dealing with the state of man’s belief, in other words, with the state of his thoughts. The words ‘if a man has a belief that a certain thing exists’ necessarily mean ‘if he thinks that the thing exists,’ and the word ‘has’ may well have been used in the regulation to indicate that it is throughout concerned with the impression that is created in the mind of the Secretary of State and not with the impression that is created in a court of law. Not only is the belief to be his. The estimate of the reasonableness of the causes that induced such belief is also to be his and his alone...”

Lord Greene spoke more firmly in 1943:

“If one thing is settled beyond the possibility of dispute, it is that in construing regulations of this character expressed in this particular form of language, it is for the competent authority, whatever Ministry it may be, to decide as to whether or not a case for the exercise of the powers has arisen. It is for the competent authority to judge of the credibility of that evidence. It is for the competent authority to judge whether or not it is desirable or necessary to make further investigations before taking action. It is for the competent authority to decide whether the situation requires an immediate step or whether some delay may be

allowed for further investigation and perhaps negotiation. All these matters are placed by Parliament in the hands of the Minister in the belief that the Minister will exercise his powers properly, and in the knowledge that, if he does not do so, he is liable to the criticism of Parliament. One thing is certain and that is that those matters are not within the competence of this court. It is the competent authority that is selected by Parliament to come to the decision, and, if that decision is come to in good faith, this court has no power to interfere, provided, of course, that the action is one which is within the four corners of the authority delegated to the Minister.”

And yet, that is not the end. Justice Sachs was not overwhelmed by the authority of the executive when he rendered judgment in 1962. Acts of Commissioners of Customs and Excise were the object of his comment.

“There was developed in behalf of the Commissioners the single essential point—that whenever a competent authority can rely on the drafting mechanism of the words ‘appears to them to be necessary,’ no court can enquire into an action done by that authority in good faith. It is a mechanism which, if the submissions for the Commissioners are right, can achieve and effect exclusion of the subject from almost every right given to him by the common law; in particular it can render nugatory those decisions of the court which have denied to the Executive the right to have their decisions on a justiciable matter treated as ‘final’ merely by so stating....

“I reject the view that the words ‘appears to them to be necessary’ when used in a statute conferring powers on a competent authority, necessarily make that authority the sole judge of what are its powers as well as the sole judge of the way in which it can exercise such powers as it may have. It is axiomatic that, to follow the words of Lord Radcliffe.... ‘the paramount rule remains that every statute is to be expounded according to its manifest or expressed intention’. It is no less axiomatic that the application of that rule may result in phrases identical in wording or in substance receiving quite different interpretations according to the tenor of the legislation under consideration. As an apt illustration of such a result it is not necessary to go further than *Liversidge v. Anderson* and *Nakkuda Ali v. Jayaratne* in which cases the words ‘reasonable cause to believe’ and ‘reasonable grounds to believe’ received quite different interpretations.

“To my mind a court is bound before reaching a decision on the question whether a regulation is *intra vires* to examine the nature, objects, and scheme of the piece of legislation as a whole, and in the light of that examination to consider exactly what is the area over which the competent authority is purporting to act.

“It is no part of the functions assigned to the commissioners to take upon themselves the powers of a High Court judge and decide issues of fact and law as between the Crown and the subject.

“In the result this attempt to substitute in one segment of the taxpayer’s affairs the rule of tax collectors for the rule of law fails....”

And so my prized extracts reached from the late 15th century to something less than ten years ago. They helped to illustrate my theme that the study of

constitutional history provides, in some of its parts at least, evidence of noble minds speaking upon exalted subjects.

Certainly to read these familiar passages was, as ever, a joy. With their support I was able to present my last lecture with confidence. I concluded by saying that a democratic society to succeed must have the service of intelligent citizens and that the role of the intelligent citizens is to be alert, attentive, patient and discriminating. Where better, I asked in my last sentence, could one acquire these qualities than in a course in English constitutional history?



# *Adult University*

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I was at once interested when [Prof. Will[iam] Provine asked me in the Spring of 1973 if I was willing to take part in the 1974 Cornell Alumni University program on the Beauty of Nature. All he had to offer was this general title. He assumed I would deal with some part of the topic that concerned man's enjoyment of nature. The subject was one I had thought about a good deal and I had talked about it often in conversation. Much of my life since childhood I had built around the appreciation of birds, flowers, and trees. I had been a fisherman since I was 7 or 8. In 1943 I bought an abandoned farm of 100 acres near Ithaca after a long search in which my professor friends gave great attention to finding a piece of land with a maximum number of natural conditions. The result was that the 100 acres contained a stream that was active all the year, a swamp, woods, a ten-acre pasture-like field and a four-acre pond. From 1962-1971 I had studied the paintings and writings of Louis Agassiz Fuertes in preparation for publishing a book on his life as a painter of birds.

In my daily life the abandoned farm became the chief influence on my attitude towards nature. Members of my family did not care to go there; in consequence I usually went alone, to fish, work in the vegetable garden, or walk in the woods. Except in the most wintry weather, I went to the farm two or three times a week and as a rule found there a complete absence of mechanical and human noise. Birds were there, wild flowers, ferns, a family of beaver, mink, one or two kinds of snakes, and deer. In the pond pickerel, bass, carp, bullheads, sunfish, and large snapping turtles. With the farm to stimulate me, my interest in photography renewed. I ranged from photographs of the pond and of flowers to studies of the bark and trunks of trees.

For years a daily event in my life had been a walk through a small part of Fall Creek Gorge (except in the winter months). Behind Sibley Hall, where I had my office, was a path which led down to the bottom of the Gorge, perhaps a hundred feet deep, I walked down the path, looked at the birds, the trees, and the ferns, listened to the water, sometimes a torrent, sometimes a gentle stream, and climbed back up again; about fifteen minutes of solitude before the day's work began.

So natural surroundings were, in many forms, a part of my life from day to day. From my experiences I derived great pleasure and a sense of being a part of these surroundings. I was not an observer, but a companion of the animals and plants and rocks among which I moved. The birds migrated, the plants grew, flowered, brought forth their fruits, or died in the winter, the rocks stood firm, now warm, now cold, now laced with icicles. I was part of the seasonal changes and of the sense of timelessness.

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*Undated*

Such was my association with nature when I agreed to join the Cornell Alumni University faculty. But experience and a habit of mind were one thing, the role of professor another. What should I lecture on? What would I do in discussion in the seminars? Certainly I must prepare myself with much more disciplined thinking; and as a preliminary to that, a great deal of reading. The more I thought, the more I became convinced that one lecture must be general: the theme the apprehension of nature by man through the mind and through the senses, with emphasis upon the senses. This suggested the theme for the second lecture: man's record of his experience of nature through the senses as shown in graphic art and, or, literature.

My own knowledge made it necessary to confine the whole approach to western man. Further thought, backed by experience in lecturing, suggested that though I have had much experience in lecturing on the graphic arts I might have difficulty in assembling slides of first class quality for use in a lecture in this instance. And it would also be difficult to put together a coherent argument. It would be possible to string together a number of items from early cave drawings of animals, through medieval miniatures to Dürer and Rembrandt and the landscape painters of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, but what would this prove?

I therefore turned to poetry. I would search English and American poetry for examples of different kinds of nature poems and trust to luck that after I had assembled enough examples a sound topic would emerge.

These were my thoughts in the summer of 1973. From that point on, I used all my spare time in reading, note-taking and thinking about the two lectures. Through the Fall and Winter of 1973 and the Spring and early Summer of 1974 I read what I could find in anthropology and the history of science for the first part of the first lecture and I searched for writings that explained the sensory experiences of artists, writers, and others for the second part of that lecture. For the second lecture I made a survey of the principal English and American poets. By late Spring I had put together what I judged to be an adequate collection of extracts and notes. In May and June the lectures began to take shape. I took a short holiday in June and then, looking over my poems, I saw that I might use groups of poems or extracts from poems to trace different approaches to nature from simple description of natural scenes to the use of natural scenes as a means to illustrate moral principles. My last stage of preparation was to write out both lectures completely, a step I had never taken before, although I must have given some thousands of lectures. The difference now was that I was to lecture on a subject that was in the formal academic sense new to me.

I was deeply concerned about making a success of the lectures. It amused me to think that while I could lecture on almost any aspect of English History or English Constitutional History with no more than fifteen minutes meditation before the lecture and without notes, I was now tied up in emotional stress after a year of careful preparation, and every possible care to avoid disaster. One contributing factor was the elaborate preparation, another the circumstance that I would be lecturing in the presence of colleagues, a third the audience. Long experience had taught me how to address a student audience. What would I do with an audience of mature adults, persons I had never seen before who would certainly expect

from a Cornell professor emeritus the highest level of performance? How much easier it would be to lecture on the British Coal Nationalization Act of 1946!

When we, the four lecturers, met our audience informally on the evening of July 14, we quickly learned that we were dealing with a friendly, active and lively varied group, persons of all ages and backgrounds. We spoke to them briefly on that occasion. They, it was clear, would be on our side. There was, however, no doubt that they expected the best from us. The very fact that the evening went off well heightened my apprehension about my role as the first lecturer the next morning. I was to set the tone, the level, of the whole performance. I had never seriously planned to read my lecture to the class from the text I had prepared. I had therefore drawn up an outline of the lecture and had written out eight or ten extracts from original writings which would support my argument. After the meeting I went home and looked over my lecture outline once or twice. I had a restless night.

In the morning I did everything to ensure success; made sure the lecture outline and the quotations were intact, arrived early at Kaufmann Auditorium, arranged notes and watch on the podium, and obtained a glass of water. To my "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen," the class responded cheerily. All was well and I launched into my opening passages which I had prepared so thoroughly that I knew them almost by heart. As the lecture went forward I glanced at my watch and saw that I was out of step with the time pattern I had planned. The program set up for the lectures and seminars was a tight one in the mornings. I would do my colleagues a disservice if I lectured beyond 9:35, the prescribed deadline. I had begun lecturing at 8:45: it was now 9:05 and I was barely through the first quarter of the lecture.

Not an occasion for panic, but for hasty reassessment while the lecture was going forward. I had gone far enough in developing a thumbnail sketch of the history of science to make it necessary for me to finish the story. After that came the main part of the lecture—the use of the senses in apprehending nature. Clearly, that part must be slashed to a quarter the size I had planned for. All this reconsideration had to be done while the lecture went forward. Luck and some years of experience saw me through without total disaster. Joel Silbey and I walked back to our office later in the morning and as we reached the 4th floor of McGraw Hall I said, "I'll have a cup of coffee." We went to the departmental coffee machine and each filled a cup. "Do you want it black or white?" Joel said. "Black," I answered. He asked if I usually drank it that way. I said, "No, only in times of crisis."

For the next two days I pondered the misfortune of that lecture and wondered what I could do to remedy it. The second lecture did not bother me. I would not be so tense and the arrangement of the lecture allowed for a good deal of manipulation if time was running out. Perhaps I could use the seminars to present the information and ideas about use of the senses that I had thrown out of the first lecture.

The second lecture went without difficulty: I managed the time to the minute. My state of mind and emotion in delivering it owed much to the fact that I had already met two seminar groups. At the first of these I felt awkward as

I developed the idea that most people make little use of their senses and as I tried to show how I combined the daily routine of my formal, social, regulated life with almost continuous use of my eyes and ears and hands. I spoke of stopping by a tree and feeling its bark or holding a leaf in my hand and looking intently at its form and color. From that I went on to explain that in dealing with students I used my mind and my senses side by side, the senses to judge the student's mood, degree of interest, need for challenge or encouragement, the mind to frame the questions that would move us to the next stage of discussion. Consideration of this topic by teachers, doctors, and persons involved in personnel work led to much give and take.

I wished to lead conversation back to the notion that most persons would gain pleasure by giving more attention to the things around them. I had brought into the seminar room a piece of chicory, the common blue weed then abundant around Ithaca. I spoke of the beauty of its blue, of the form of the flower, and of its buds growing directly from the stalk. I said I had two other friends outside the building and would introduce them to any members of the group who might wish to see them. We walked across the road. I showed them the lower branches and leaves of a locust tree just south of Goldwin Smith Hall and suggested they touch the leaves while they were looking at them. No one hesitated. A man with a camera said, "Wait a minute, I must get that." I then took them to a European beech a few yards further south. They needed no encouragement. They looked and they touched. They parted the branches and saw the silver-grey trunk. More photographs. We stood in the sunshine, relaxed, happy.

As I sat at lunch in my office, eating tea and crackers, I wondered whether this outdoor experience might be expanded. Suppose I led the group on a walk... to the Luella Minns Garden, six or seven minutes walk away. The annuals and perennials in full bloom would give opportunity for a wide range of sense experience. I would try it at the afternoon seminar.

And so I did, with remarkable results. I began with a fifteen-minute talk in the seminar room and then asked, would they like to visit a flower garden? All said "Yes," and away we went. We walked in twos and threes and I moved from party to party. On the way we stopped from time to time to look at a shiny leaf, or at the form of a tree. Persons who had been quiet in seminar now became talkative. The alumni now displayed to me what I later came to see as their principal characteristics, friendliness, warmth, openness.

At the garden we stood around for a few minutes and I then suggested that they try to decide how many different shades of blue there were among the many blue flowers in the garden. I led them to a clump of five or six lobelia plants, all intensely blue, and asked did they all have the same blue? After careful inspection all said, "No." I then suggested that someone kneel down and look closely at an individual flower, about half the size of a penny; did that have a single blue? From there we went to a basil plant, touched a leaf, and smelled our fingers, and to a lavender plant and touched the flower. Next we visited some flowering kale, a cabbage-like plant with a flat open head. I suggested that someone kneel down and lay an open relaxed hand on the center of the plant. "Press down gently," I said, "then rotate your hand slowly and feel the soft rubbery fringes of the leaves." "Fancy that," said a lady, "fingers and the palm of the hand feel them differently."

We then stood under a copper beech at the east end of the garden, admired the silver-grey trunk, with its swirling black markings, and saw the play of light on the edges of the leaves as we looked upwards. Such was the pattern of future visits to the garden. With each visit I had a sense of close personal association with the alumni. Often, a man or woman who seemed reserved had let down all barriers when asked to touch a plant or talk about colors or forms.

For me these experiences, joined with the social hours, established an atmosphere that was unique in my long career as a teacher. When it was all over, we had been together only five days, yet in that short time what pleasure, what a sense of closeness to the alumni. All of us spoke openly, simply, about personal things as well as the subject matter of the formal program. True, some of the alumni had been students of mine whom I had long forgotten, except for the names; we enjoyed the spirit of a re-union, memories revived. But everyone seemed to express the same feeling of total enjoyment, of closeness to those of us who were the supposed faculty.

After a week's break, we repeated the first week's program with a new and slightly larger group. I had decided to substitute a lecture on Louis Fuertes for my earlier lecture on poetry. Otherwise, the program remained unchanged. At our informal meeting with the new group, I myself felt a good deal more tense than I had at the similar meeting two weeks earlier. But the four lecturers meeting together before the group assembled, had, under [Prof. Joel] Silbey's urging, agreed to take a more positive position in presenting our points of view than we had done in the previous week. "They want to be told," Silbey had said. "They do not wish us to appear in doubt about anything we say." I was the only member of the group who had spoken not out of knowledge, but belief. I must tighten up my presentation of my belief. Perhaps a sense that I must make a change of stance caused me to feel uncomfortable when I made my preliminary remarks at the Sunday evening meeting. My own impression was that this meeting did not go as well as on the earlier occasion.

During the week's break between the two programs I had reconsidered my first lecture, had rearranged it so as to give more emphasis to the approach to nature through the senses and had worked out a time schedule in ten minute units so that as I lectured I knew exactly what deadlines I had to meet. All seemed in hand when I faced the audience on Monday morning. I began again by wishing the group, "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen." Dead silence. Were we in a new and more somber setting?

The lecture went well from my point of view: full opportunity to say what I wished to say, and the time schedule exactly kept. As I lectured I felt I had not established full rapport with the audience. Once or twice when I expected a response from the audience it did not come. However, applause greeted my final words and an elderly man, an old student of mine, brushing a tear from his eye, said he was deeply moved and clasped my hands.

My granddaughter, Sarah [Marcham], aged 15, had come to hear me lecture for the first time. She observed this incident. As she and I walked across the Arts College quadrangle, I said to her that she had seen an unusual event. "No

undergraduate,” I said to her, “would ever admit that anything offered to him by a lecturer called for an emotional response.”

Apart from the Fuertes lecture, which was foolproof and went well for me, my experience with the new alumni group consisted of the seminars, the social hours, the barbecue and the final round-table discussion, followed by the banquet. I began each seminar by saying that I offered a menu that contained three items but could deliver only two during the allotted hour and ten minutes. The items were a description of my own life-style and opportunity for discussion, a presentation in brief of the nature poetry used in the lecture during the first program, and a walk to the Garden. All seminar groups wished me to talk about my life style. Four of the eight groups wished to talk about the poetry, copies of which each student had. The other four groups wished to walk in the Garden.

In this second week, presentation of my life style called forth more vigorous discussion than in the first week. Some students thought I had established a good balance by keeping in motion side by side the world of the mind and the world of the senses. Others said that the rigid time table I observed from day to day in meeting my social and academic obligations suggested a personality that was compulsive, shut in, ruled by concern for detail. One lady, having heard my story, asked, was I not pleased to feel that as teacher and minor public official I was serving my fellow man. Another lady jumped into the discussion to say that one word described me: “Selfish.” To this I said, “Exactly, I have no other purpose than to do that which seems pleasing to me.”

At the end of the average seminar, I found one or two persons who wished to carry on discussion about lifestyle. I had made the point in seminar that for me it was vital to sit down every three or four years and write a short essay beginning with the words “I believe.” This procedure interested them. When did I begin doing this? Did I think a personal tragedy was a necessary preliminary to committing oneself to such a procedure? Discussions after seminar were usually a development of this topic carried on, on a one to one basis. During the mid-day break, when I had an hour and a quarter to rest my voice and drink some tea before beginning another seminar, I sometimes found it necessary to turn students aside who wished to carry on discussion through the break. In our seminar discussion there was usually a good deal of conversation back and forth. Lawyers, teachers, doctors, businessmen, personnel administrators talked about their use of sense appraisal and mental planning in interviewing patients, clients, students and so forth. Once or twice a lawyer or businessman would say rather sharply, “See that plant in the pot behind you; tell us what you see when you look at it.” And so I would have to comment on line and form and texture.

The program for each week ended, in its academic proceedings, in a so-called “roundtable.” The four of us who were lecturers were expected to sit at a table on the platform in Kaufmann Auditorium, maintain a discussion among ourselves on the general topic and answer questions from the audience of some 150. The first time around this did not go well, but one incident is worth recording. A young woman stood up and said to me, “You’ve talked a lot about seeing beauty, how do you know when something is beautiful?” I said, “You feel it” and I went on to tell of an incident in my undergraduate days when I had walked into the art gallery at Oxford and suddenly found myself looking at a small drawing

of a woman's head by Raphael. I was transfixed. I stood there for a minute. I could not believe anything was so beautiful and so simple. Here was perfection. The young lady seemed satisfied. But that evening at the social hour before the banquet she came to me and said, "Now I see what you mean. It's like falling in love. You just feel it." I said, "Yes, that's it." She said, "What do you mean by the word 'love'?" I told her.

At the second round-table things, as it seemed to us, went well. The four of us, and particularly Silbey and [Prof. Jay] Orear, maintained a spirited dialogue in which the audience joined actively. And here again there was one incident which told much of the relationship between the audience and the lecturers. A man I had come to know well raised his hand and said he had but one question to ask. "Each of you," he said, "has explained his view of nature, its order, and its beauty. Will each of you tell us whether your study and contemplation point to the existence of a supreme being?"

The first answer fell to me. I began by saying that one strong feature of the program had been the wish of the audience that the lecturers lay bare their souls. I said I was willing to do this, on this platform, in the presence of 150 persons. I believed without a doubt in the creation, in its order, its beauty, its seasonal changes and its timelessness. For me the creation and the creator were one. For me, I paid homage to the creation by a continual interest in and enjoyment of its beauty. If you, the audience, care to call my love of people and animals and plants worship, that satisfies me.

As I look back on the total experience some characteristics are clear. First, the audience was highly diversified in background and in what it wished to gain from the program. For some it was an escape from their routine, for others a cheap holiday, for others a wish to grapple with a subject and hear it discussed, for others a chance to renew acquaintance with a professor they had known in college or to get to know some new professors. Some persons, perhaps 10 percent were as far as I could see totally inactive in seminar, a large majority could be drawn into discussion, if you asked "What has your experience been in the matter," or "Does your work require you to make decisions of this kind?" or "Is it your view that the sensory experiences of children seem more acute than those of adults." Before the program began we had been warned that a major problem in the seminars would arise from the attempt of one or two persons in each group to dominate the discussion. With my groups that never happened. On one occasion a student sailed into me, charging that my description of how I used my senses to appraise the mood of a student as I went forward with an interview was a euphemism for manipulating people. Others in the group at once attacked and silenced him.

Without question, Silbey's view that the alumni wished to be told was right. In presenting a topic to an undergraduate or graduate student audience the wise procedure would have been to speak somewhat diffidently; to say this is one point of view and this another and to explain the problems that arose from accepting the one or the other. The object would be to put the student in the position of making up his own minds. But not here. One must speak from the professional chair with authority and answer questions as if there were no doubt as to the answer.

Another feature of the audience was its wish to get inside the professor's mind and personality. The audience wished to establish a close personal relationship with the professor, almost to reach out and touch him. This was all the more marked because the association was of necessity a short one, a matter of three or four days. In dealing with undergraduates in a small group a relationship of this kind might develop during a semester or a year, and in that period the student would reveal a good deal of himself; slowly at first, then with less inhibition. The alumni audience revealed little or nothing of its own beliefs or attitudes, at least in my groups. Self-revelation was a one-way street.

To me the total experience suggested a number of questions. I doubt if a program of this kind, with this audience and this time pattern will change in its basic characteristics as they affect student-professor relationships. The students, persons for the most part who as mature professional people have been used to telling people how to conduct their legal, physical, or financial affairs, have taken a holiday from telling and wish to be told. They have been away from the academic scene for many years and they wish an instant return to it. For them this means getting as close as possible to the professor.

Subjects suitable for discussion at these programs must be clear, incisive and close to the interests of the audience. Politics, foreign affairs, economics, technology, matters in which news and discussion in the media might give the alumni a basic body of information, would appear to be first choice, particularly if a panel of professors would deal with them trenchantly. One might suppose that another range of topics, such as marriage and the family, in which the experience of the alumni would come at first hand, would also serve well. But here I have doubts whether the alumni would be willing to speak freely. My own seminar topics reached deeply into personal experience but the audience wished not to draw upon their own but to have me bare mine.

To me, as a person who enjoys exchanging opinions with others, the program was in many respects rewarding. It was alive. For a short time, sometimes in the expression of a point of view, I saw some aspect of another person. A man or woman came into focus for an instant as a whole human being. It was exhilarating to believe that I had stirred a thought or emotion in another person. But one worked hard to bring about such moments. Continuous teaching in a program of this kind would be impossible. The nervous strain is too great: one gives, all the time; and with the giving goes a sense of not having done the job as effectively as one would in regular teaching. However, as an occasional interlude, teaching in the program is fun.

As I take a last glance over the events of those two weeks, my thought is of a partial success, a partial failure. Behind my personal enjoyment of the associations with people and the simple, open, warm exchanges we maintained, lay a sense that I was not accomplishing what I set out to do. Further, the eight-fold repetition of the seminar scene—raised to sixteen by the time both weeks were over—produced for me a kind of paralysis that led me to make extreme attempts not to repeat the pattern. But all in all, with success and failure, it may be that, as in all teaching, one never quite hits the mark, and the effects of the attempt to teach can never be judged by the teacher.

# *Altering the Pattern: Retirement*

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There is a rhythm to our days, and within each day there is a pattern to which we conform with more or less regularity: the early morning rituals of washing and dressing and eating, the journey to the office or factory or classroom, or beginning the routine of the household. For each of us the rhythms carry with them patterns of personal association. Members of our family move in and out of our lives; a supporting cast of colleagues, secretaries, clients, patients, employees have their exits and entrances. From day to day, their movements and ours are so patterned that we come to count on them.

Does the life of the active professor fit this mold? To a high degree, yes. His colleagues he meets at intervals throughout the day: the first as he parks his car in the morning, another as he climbs the stairs to his office. The exchanges are brief, a word about the weather, the latest news, last night's hockey game.

Once in his office the professor comes to grips with his day's work: some time for reflection about his lecture at 10, a check on the time of a committee meeting, a decision to spend the afternoon in the library or the laboratory. He may stroll down the corridor to check a point or interpretation with another member of his department.

On his way to the lecture room he may spend fifteen minutes offering advice to a young colleague on the draft of an article he has been asked to read. The classroom is one of his major centers of action, bringing him in touch day by day with undergraduate and graduate students. Most he sees in serried ranks in the classroom; others, perhaps a dozen or two, become his friends, callers at his office, members of his small classes and seminars, persons who carry on discussion as they walk with him across the campus after class. Lunch he may have at the [Statler Hall] Rathskeller and take potluck on the colleagues he meets, usually from other colleges or departments. Here he joins in a discussion of some aspect of university affairs or national politics; perhaps a lighter matter, the latest Cornell novel.

After lunch the professor's laboratory or his study at the library will give him the opportunity to work with less chance of interruption, but there will be colleagues not far away. His new book or paper may be a joint venture with another professor, his experiment may build on the experience of three or four other persons. At 5 p.m. he leaves for home, after the customary words to the lab attendant, the janitor, or the man at the door in Olin Library.

At home he enters another pattern of associations; his family has spent the day on the job or at home or in school. Together they exchange news and gossip during the dinner hour and pass judgment on friends, neighbors, and rivals. Perhaps the

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*From the Cornell Alumni News, July 1975.*

professor spends half an hour watching TV news; then to the workroom for two hours reading or preparing a lecture or sketching the framework of a paper.

And so to bed. A day is ended. Not quite like yesterday, and tomorrow will be a little different too. Yet this day has moved with the rhythm common to his days: from home to campus to home, from office to classroom to library or laboratory. His thoughts and conversation have ranged back and forth from the trivial to the profound, perhaps the sublime.

Retirement shakes apart this pattern. Gone are the students, the classroom, the classes that gave a framework to his days, items in a schedule around which he planned the rest of his activities. From the students he had received the stimulus of the young: lively and eager, they kept him on his toes, pleased him by the attention they gave to his advice or the open way they challenged his ideas.

In addition, as a teacher he had been a member of a team. He and colleagues in his department talked informally about the teaching program, helped one another with information, or offered a new point of view on a lecture topic. All of this has gone.

What of the rest: the office where he kept many of his books and notes, the part of the campus that was in a special sense his own, his base of operations? What of his study in the library, or the laboratory facilities that had for years been available to him?

In many colleges at Cornell the retired professor is allowed to keep an office, perhaps his old one—this is rare—or a smaller one, perhaps with no assurance that he can use it more than a year or so. Laboratory facilities perhaps; but if so, probably at a reduced level, and here again for a time not certain.

Indeed in these matters he will see that his prospects of continuing this part of his professional life will depend in large part on whether his department or school has been blessed in recent years with a new building. The newer the building the greater the prospects. Going to the other extreme, if fate has placed him in Goldwin Smith Hall or McGraw or one of the other older buildings, the likelihood is that even the active faculty does not have space enough.

If he is one of those to whom a study in Olin Library was the center for his research the change will be drastic. Here again the demand by active faculty members is too great, and only in the rarest instances is a retired faculty member allowed to use a study. Then the logistics of research among books will become difficult. Working out of his study in the library he had been able to move from the stacks on the third floor to the fourth to check a footnote, or to copy the text of a document; in a minute or two he could consult the catalog or the works in the Reference Library.

Now, if he wishes to spend more than an hour or two with a book, he must carry it across the campus to his car and study it at home. The sprawl of books and articles he could assemble in his study in the library with little trouble must now be carried out one or two at a time. Without an office or a study, his status will become essentially that of a daily visitor to the campus, whose best hope of retaining a sense of belonging to the university community will be to join the faculty throng who lunch daily at the Statler [Faculty] Club.

But for some, say the retired professor of Law, or of Agricultural Economics, Business and Public Administration, Engineering, or Industrial and Labor Relations, the task of continuing his research may not be so frustrating. He may have an office in his old building and find that his own college library in the same building or nearby will serve him for much of his work. And there may be some mitigation of his sense of isolation from his department. Here and there departments make a point of inviting retired professors to department meetings and may call on them from time to time in examining candidates for doctor's degrees.

What in fact do individual professors do when faced with the changed pattern of life? Some see the break as final and complete, like my friend who moved away to the Atlantic Coast when he retired a year or so ago. When I saw him a year later he talked much of his companions at the Rotary Club and of his partners in the bowling league.

Others stay in Ithaca and give most of their time to a hobby, say gardening or advocacy of environmental protection. They live as it were on the outskirts of the campus; their rare visits may be to take advantage of the free athletic coupon books the university provides for them and their wives.

Among the scientists there are many for whom the way is prepared at retirement to continue their research. Some have been consultants to industry and simply give more time to this work than they did before retiring. Some hold high place in a professional society and are engaged to serve on technical committees, to prepare reports or organize conferences. Some have had the good luck before retirement to obtain a continuing grant for a government-sponsored project which will see them through five years or so after retirement. The retired professor's department may regard him with such esteem as to allow him to use the department's facilities.

The retired professor of Industrial and Labor Relations or of Law may have similar opportunities to serve as a consultant to branches of the federal or state government, to industry, or to a union. He may find himself more or less continuously busy as an arbitrator. And all retired professors who have an interest in teaching are likely to be invited for a year, a term, or a series of lectures to visit another university here or abroad.

The options before the retired professor vary from one field to the next, from one professor to another. If his way of life before retirement gave prominence to research he may move with almost unbroken stride from one condition to the next; only the title "emeritus" will be new. A distinguished professor of history presents this image. He was a great teacher of graduate students but research was the center of his life. For thirty-five years he had come to the campus every day, sometimes on Sunday, spending every hour that he could in his Olin Library study and going home at 6. He became acknowledged master of his field. On his retirement he retained his study. He arrives at 9 and leaves at 6.

Carl Becker found some comfort in retirement. "I am retiring this June," he said in 1941, "from active teaching. As rackets go, teaching is a good one, but after forty-two years one is content. I am not sorry to be done with it, but sorry only that I have reached the age when one is not sorry to be done with it."

Another professor, a widower, who had woven his life almost completely into teaching could not bring himself to face retirement. He pleaded with his department to allow him use of a small space: a cupboard would do if it had a window looking out on the Arts College Quadrangle. The department was not able to do so. The professor shut himself up in his home. Four months later his body lay at the bottom of his cellar steps.

Whatever the opportunities that are open to the retired professor, he has, if he will use it, one great advantage. Whether primarily teacher or researcher, his life has been in large part the life of the mind. For thirty or forty years his studies have kept him in the company of great men, philosophers, statesmen, and scientists, men of letters, artists. However narrow his special field of study may have seemed to the outsider, it had links with a range of knowledge that was almost limitless. As a member of the university community he was made aware day by day that he was one of a fellowship of scholars.

Retirement may change the pattern of the professor's life on campus and limit his personal associations, but it cannot change his habits of mind or the range of his knowledge. The scholarly endowments he acquired in his long active career remain with him to enrich his reading, his studies, and his observations in retirement.

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*Editor's note from the Alumni News: The author is the Goldwin Smith professor of English history, emeritus, and at 76 continues to teach at the university. The Office of the Dean of the University Faculty reports 356 emeriti of the Ithaca and New York faculties, at the annual count made in November 1974. Of 298 Ithaca emeriti, 196 continued to live in Ithaca, 102 elsewhere.*

# *The Enjoyment of Teaching*

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My own momentum, in the summer and fall of 1970, was directed solely toward teaching. I was to serve as [Prof. L. Pearce] Williams's assistant and to take two sections [in the department's Western Civilization course]. Much of the material in the course was entirely new to me. Certainly I had done nothing with ancient history since 1924 and what I had done then had been quite fragmentary. Now I had to conduct a series of classes in Greek Science, for example, and duty dictated that I should be well prepared. My grey hairs would offer the student some kind of guarantee that I knew what I was talking about. If I faltered my loss of status would be far greater than that of a mere beginner.

Each week we tackled one of the problems in the [text] book prepared by [Profs. Brian] Tierney, [Donald] Kagan and Williams and generously dedicated to me—one more reason why I must succeed. My practice was to read the problem over once or twice; then to read it again, making elaborate notes, sometimes ten pages of them. I concentrated always on the ancient texts and told my students that these texts alone would be the subject of our discussion in class. And so the class became to a considerable degree [a] seminar in exegesis.

The classes and I made some progress, but I felt uncomfortable. I could maintain a reasonable exchange with two or three students in each section but most of them sat still and quiet, and all my arts could not move them. My verdict on that year's work was that it was a failure. The students, for the most part freshman, many not Arts College students, either were put off guard by my grey hair or were entirely out of tune with my method. When the year's work had ended I spoke to one or two of these silent ones and got the same reply: they had never studied with anyone who read and interpreted so carefully as I did. They were fascinated, they said; they wished me to do all the talking. How true this may have been I don't know, but seen from my point of view this was not good teaching. I decided not to do it again.

The end of the academic year also saw the end of my formal status as a teacher at Cornell. Alongside the sections, I had taught a course in English Constitutional history. In addition I had served for this year and the preceding one as the department field representative in the Graduate School. The last lecture in the Constitutional History course was to be my last formal lecture at Cornell. When it had been given and I had had time to let the experience settle down I thought it appropriate to write an essay on the subject. I had been lecturing formally at Cornell since 1924 at an average pace of about six lectures a week during an academic year that consisted of about thirty weeks. This I had kept up for some forty-eight years. In all, then, something more than 6,000 lectures, apart from

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*From Cornell Notes, 1967-1979, unpublished as of 2005.*

seminars and recitation sections. I had never gone into lectures unprepared. The lecture itself rarely reached the standard I aimed at. But it had been planned. And so was the last lecture.

This volume contains an essay I wrote on the last lecture. The lecture, though unusual in form, was the last in a series of daily pieces that had come to be apart of my life. In the summer of 1971 I felt for the first time that that pattern had ended. During the vacation months, I had nothing to do. My *Fuertes* book was in the press and I could do no more than wait for its appearance. I read novels and dawdled through the evening with a peek at television or an hour on the porch. As August came I began thinking of my new routine. I would try to put my notes on Cornell in order, working in the archives room at the Library, or perhaps in my [mayoral] office at the [Cayuga Heights] Village Hall. Each day I would take long walks. And in the evenings some reading—not studying—music and television. This would have its melancholy side, for though I enjoyed walking and could take along binoculars and a camera, I believed that there would be something contrary to my disposition in spending two or three hours a day alone.

One day, while these thoughts were in my mind, Williams asked me if I would serve again as an assistant. I would be assisting [Prof. Alvin] Bernstein who was to teach the first term of the general course and [Prof. William] Provine in the second. I said I thought my last year as assistant had not gone well; the scene had been too formal for my style. I would not repeat the standard instruction by section but if I could arrange to have a few students in groups of fours and fives, I would gladly meet with them in my office. In addition, I said, I would be willing to direct some research or reading in English History on the same terms—small groups in my office. I said I would enjoy doing it only on the understanding that I received no pay. On these matters we agreed, and the world became bright again.

This decision has been and is of great importance to me. I am back in my accustomed pattern. Teaching has become again the central item of my life. And yet it is a new kind of teaching. My classes range from two to eight in size. I am able, after a meeting or two, to talk simply and directly and to arrange matters so that the students interrupt me, question me, challenge me. I find it easy to bring five or six students into a frame of mind in which they see themselves as a group. In all instances—particularly in the English Constitutional History class—I do most of the talking. But it is possible, I think, to manage this so that the distance between the students and me is kept small. Now, after, perhaps, 200 of these sessions, I see this mode of teaching as ideal, at least for me. I can lead the students, almost as though by hand, into an understanding of what it is a historian is trying to do.

And so every week, I find myself in contact with about thirty students. They visit me in my office (shared with Joel Silbey, at the moment) from time to time and we talk over the papers they are writing for me. I have tried to arrange for each student an exercise that calls for a study of original sources—parliamentary debates, records of trials, plays, diaries and so forth. My attempt has been to put the student in a position where he becomes entirely self-reliant in interpreting the material. The historical question associated with the documents he studies must have a lively interest for him. But the topic need not be an important one.

The important thing is that he should have a sense that he is in command of the situation; that he will know more about the topic when he has finished his paper than anyone else. I cannot guarantee that all of my students attain this sense of mastery, or, if they do, gain from it the strength that I gained some fifty years ago when [his Oxford tutor A. B.] Emden suggested that I make a study of the prints of St. Edmund Hall and said almost as an after thought, "You know you'll be the first person who has done this for any Oxford college."

I find it hard to sort out all the circumstances that account for my enjoyment of teaching. How much of it comes from a sense of advantage over the student, the sense of superiority that one has in leading a toddling child by the hand. I am sure that something of this is in the experience, however often one tries to minimize it. Related to this is the pleasure of asking the student to look again at his text, "The Rights of Man and the Citizen." Why add on "the citizen"? "When you have looked at this list of rights, what items that you regard as important are left?"

Best of all for me is another experience. Last term I had in one of my freshman classes a black boy named Al Johnson, from the Bedford Stuyvesant quarter of Brooklyn. I assigned to him as to the other students the task of writing a paper and told him to come to my office to decide on a topic. When he came I asked him what he wished to study; he said, "Freedom." I said we would have to set certain limits: first, a time limit; we were working in the period before 1600, and second, we must find a particular aspect of freedom. I had explained to him that the essence of the project was that he would be working solely from original sources. As we talked back and forth it occurred to me that the topic that best suited all requirements was the controversy over free speech in Elizabeth's house of commons. I showed him where to find the debates in the book of documents by [Prof. Carl] Stephenson and myself.

Within three or four days he was back, full of excitement. "You know what," he said, "those guys in England in the 1500s know all about free speech, I can't believe it. I always thought the idea of free speech was invented by the Founding Fathers." I said the idea had a long history. He asked, "Do you suppose Washington and Jefferson had ever heard of Peter Wentworth?" I said, "No, not many people know about him. In fact you know a great deal more than most people in the United States." He asked, "Was anyone writing about free speech then?" I said "No, not in England; but a little later John Milton wrote a famous pamphlet on freedom of the press called *Areopagitica*." He stumbled over the name as he tried to pronounce it. He asked, "Can you recommend any recent books on the subject I can read?" I said I didn't wish to do that because I intended his study to be original, to be his comments on the text. I learned later that he did not accept this advice; instead he began to read fairly widely on Elizabeth's reign.

He came back in a week or two and asked if I would read over with him Peter Wentworth's speech of 1576. I began with the first words dramatically accenting the key expressions so, "Mr. Speaker, I find written in a little volume these words in effect. 'Sweet is the *name* of liberty but the *thing itself* a value beyond all inestimable treasure.'" "Wow," said Al, "I didn't get that when I read it." I asked him, "If you were going to deliver a speech on free speech how would you

begin it!” He hesitated, so I invented a few openings, all of which were positive and forceful. “Well no,” he said, In fact he said that he read this in a *little book*’ “What,” I asked, “was the disadvantage of starting a speech as a strong positive note.” Al answered at once. “You can’t go up.” And as we prepared ourselves to see if, as Wentworth went forward with his speech, he got strong and bolder. We spent an hour together and he left in a state of high excitement. There was much more of high principle and drama in these pages than he had imagined.

A week later he was back again. He had read a speech by Elizabeth in 1567 in which she had denounced certain members of the house of commons who by free speech, she said had “thought to work me that mischief which never foreign enemy could bring to pass.” Al was ecstatic about this speech; indeed, he couldn’t sit down as he told me about it. He impersonated Elizabeth, not consciously, but in the same manner that I in interpreting Wentworth’s speech had impersonated him. Al was telling me what it all meant. And so it went week by week until he came to the end of the readings, which was Elizabeth’s speech of 1601.

When he had read it he came to see me in a mood that was quieter than on his more recent visits. He said he wished to explain his views to me on the whole subject of Elizabeth’s role in the free speech controversy. Again, after he had spoken a few sentences, he stood up and addressed me pretty much as a lecturer would a class. The only difference was that he was completely inside–committed to–everything he was saying.

The key to an understanding of Elizabeth’s part was, he said, her age. In 1569, the time of her first outburst, she was 34. She was 68 when she made her last speech. He spoke briefly about the former speech. He took great care in showing that the mood, the ideas, the language of the last speech were appropriate to an elderly woman. In the first speech she had said, in effect, that the house of commons needed control and must depend on her judgment of what was good for them and the country. In the last the emphasis was upon her love for them. The mood was of accommodation.

Up to this point what he had accomplished was to identify himself with Wentworth and Elizabeth. Our job was now to go back to some of the concepts that had been under discussion and weave them into the story with the principal characters. I worked out with him a set of key questions that called for answers: we arranged them in order. He visited me almost every day to tell me of his difficulties and his progress. He felt ill for a while and got behind in all his work, but he hung in and wrote a good paper.

Without question he made an immense stride forward in identifying himself with the principal persons and in understanding the force and quality of the speeches. He had almost by himself made the history of this episode come alive. What he needed still to learn was how to put on paper a lively succinct statement of his experience. If he worked with me again I would try to help him organize his thoughts and write the flowing sentence and paragraph.

In the course of the past three years I have had scores of associations of this kind. Not all have succeeded. For one reason or another, perhaps one out of every twenty students cannot finish his or her work under this informal relationship. Some, I believe, regard the informality of the relationship as inviting them to

default. Others do not wish to default but are handicapped by the fact that they can turn to me at almost any time for comment, a bibliography, an opportunity to discuss the precise subject of their paper. They are still calling and discussing when the term comes to an end.

But with the great majority of the students the arrangement seems to be altogether successful. For me there is no greater intellectual pleasure than getting to know something of a student's mind and personality. I could live out the rest of my life in a succession of days of class discussions and informal meetings with individual students. I hope that for a long time I shall be asking students, "What do you regard as the precise topic that you intend to study?"



# *The ‘Marcham Program’*

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[At an alumni testimonial for F. G. Marcham in New York City December 8, 1975, Dean Harry Levin was one of the speakers.]

Dean Levin...said that “Marcham” had become an adjective in Arts College usage to describe a particular mode of teaching. He said that while we sat there a decision was in the making by the National [Endowment] for the Humanities to make a substantial grant to the History Department for development of a program based on my methods.

[Later in F. G. Marcham’s “Notes”]

[T]he testimonial dinner...coincided with a plan to persuade the Federal Government, through the National Endowment for the Humanities, to provide a large sum to be used by our department for experiments in teaching. Some months earlier [Prof. Michael] Kammen, as chairman, had asked me to write a short essay on my teaching procedures: the pattern of teaching and the benefit of application for the grant. N.E.H. allotted us \$250,000 and the intent was that some of our teachers, particularly the young ones, would take a term’s leave and devote themselves to preparing a course or courses on a topic they had not taught before and that seemed suitable to a relatively informal mode of presentation. The classes, like mine, were to be for freshmen and sophomores. The world being what it is, I should not be surprised that at least one of the young teachers use the occasion and the money to take a trip to South America to carry on his research.

Under this new departmental program my own situation did not change, except that the budget for the program allotted me a salary of \$5,000.

I am about to begin the third of the three years the program covered. The work I have done in my courses and in my sections in the Western Civilization course occupy the greater part of my day during the school year. Usually I have two N.E.H. courses—this year there will be three—each of two hours per week and five small sections in Western Civilization of one hour a week each. The class size in all instances varies from four to twelve. I hold these classes in small rooms and set them up in such a way that all of us sit around a table and carry on a running commentary. I try to bring each student into the discussion by having them read a text—a passage from a poem, an essay, or a play—and then I promote a conversation by asking for interpretation. I have assigned reading in the play, etc. for the evening before our meeting so that a student has opportunity to prepare himself or herself. After the first two or three class meetings I have no difficulty in making this procedure work. But it does not succeed in my courses in

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*From “Cornell Notes, 1967-79,” unpublished as of 2005.*

English Constitutional History, even though in that course we do almost nothing but the interpretation of documents.

On the overall mode of teaching, my opinion is that it is ideally suited to most of the students who are in my classes and to me. Our class work and the consultation associated with it put me from week to week in close touch with the students. Each student becomes for me a whole person. His or her background, abilities, interests, and intellectual possibilities gradually come into focus for me. I can develop for each one an appropriate reading program and topics for study. Above all I can calculate which kind of enterprise will carry the student into new intellectual experiences.

Since my wife's death [in 1977] I have given much more of myself to teaching of a formal and informal kind. On almost all days I fill up the time between my classes—when there is a blank hour between them—by informal meetings of one kind or another. I have let it be known that if an individual student, or two or three students, wish to sit down with me and study anything within the range of my experience I will gladly take part. Last term one student came to me to read Chaucer aloud, each of us taking turns to read, one to read Shakespeare, four to look at and discuss drawings and paintings of the old masters. In each instance we met regularly once a week throughout the term.

# *Studying Literature*

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Some items to be considered in studying a piece of literature or any other writing with a view to using it as a historical record:

1. Scope: make a 100-word description of the writing; e.g., an essay, novel, play, diary, collection of speeches, written at such and such a time, at a certain place, by X, and dealing with certain aspects of life, and of a certain length.
2. Language: e.g., of the streets, simple, direct, involved, pretentious, technical.
3. Mood.
4. Style
5. Intellectual range: Other writers referred to, what knowledge assumed on the part of the reader?
6. Mode of argument or presentation: If descriptive is it general, or detailed; if an argument, say for free speech, how does the writer justify it? What are the standards of good and bad, right and wrong, success, failure?
7. What do you judge to be the audience addressed?
8. What was the general purpose for writing?

What items that you might have expected to find in the writing are not there, e.g., discussion of appropriate spiritual issues, mention of the arts, or class



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# Supervised Reading

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distinctions?

Course: History 301. Section 31

Professor F.G. Marcham

The purpose of this course is:

1. To give students, in groups of ten, the reading of English literature to one another so that they may learn the force and value of the spoken word. At each one-hour meeting students reading out loud takes 90 percent of the time.
2. To present to students the different forms of expression of the English language as it has been used to describe religion, the words of patriotic duty, the language of passion, the mind of Chaucer and Shakespeare, the language of satire, of comedy, and the horrors of war, together with the legal language of lawyers speaking in the Supreme Court of England, the House of Lords.
3. To give students the use of language as a means of stirring the imagination to set beside the use of language as used in college instruction, that is, to give information.

The books read

1. The Book of Job in the Bible (3 meetings)
2. Pericles Funeral Speech in Athens, 400 B.C. (2 meetings)
3. *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*
4. Chaucer, *The Chanticleer Tale*
5. Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*
6. Marlow, An Horation Ode and To his coy mistress
7. Bunyan, *The Pilgrims Progress*
8. Swift, *Gullivers Travels*
9. Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*
10. Owen, *Letters and Poems*
11. Sherriff, *Journey's End*
12. House of Lords Decisions, 1942

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Written 1991

Liversidge vs. Sir John Anderson and another

# *Student Writing*

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December 20, 1988

Dean Glenn Altschuler  
55 Goldwin Smith  
Dear Glenn:

A student of mine, now in his senior year, brought to me last week a fifteen-page paper on the question, was there in England the acceptance of the idea that the North Westernly section of this country was economically and socially poorer than the sections to the South and East. The student presented some thoughts on this subject at the beginning of the term when he came back from England, where he had spent six months or so as an assistant to a Labour member of Parliament. When he spoke to me at the beginning of the term I suggested that he examine parliamentary and other official debates and statements. From time to time during last term he showed me some documents he was studying and from this and the rest of the story all was well. He was a student of mine whom I had recommended for study in England.

The paper he presented to me was weak in almost all respects. The argument he put together was not well-organized and lacked the supporting evidence it needed. Points of importance, particularly regarding the presence of unemployed youth, were not worked into his statement, and the style of writing had nothing of form, continuity and simplicity that is necessary in our formal statements. I told him of his weaknesses. He was surprised, particularly when I said that this might be the first draft of the essay, but he had to write two or three more rearrangements of it before he met the best standards at Cornell.

The more I have thought about this discussion with the student the more I believe that so far as this kind of thinking and writing are concerned, the student is, in a sense, uninformed in a range of things that are necessary for fulfillment in our field of study. He thinks and writes in terms of himself alone. When I spoke to him about the importance of rearranging and reducing his argument so that other persons could follow it, he said, "But that's the way it takes shape in my mind." When I took the first paragraph of the paper and said it had no simple, direct statement of what he was going to discuss and that it must be so written as to convey to the reader what his own mood or manner was in opening the discussion, he could not understand me. He will soon be a graduate of this college and yet, in some simple ways, without education.

All of this leads me to the thought that in addressing freshmen in the College of Arts and Sciences, under the program\* about to be started, there will be presentation of ideas about the curriculum of the College and the way the various subjects we teach support one another. I hope there will be something more about the general qualities of mind the student should understand and

develop in the four years of the program; the alertness, the curiosity, the wish to explore new fields of thought, and the sense that in becoming a mature person he or she speaks and writes to others and that joined to the students' own thoughts and expressions is the need to know how other persons' minds work and how to present ideas to them.

At this time I will go no further but, as I said on the telephone I will spend part of the Christmas vacation in planning ways in which these patterns may be presented.

Yours, Fred\*\*

January 9, 1989

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\* [A new freshman writing program.]

\*\* [At the end of the letter originally signed "Fred," he wrote to me, John, the editor: "I added some further thoughts about presenting the above points of observations to the student and said I would try to find ways of doing this."]

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I will take care of the applications as they arrive.

When I spoke to you two or three weeks ago about the paper you gave me I did so with the careful purpose of making you aware that for the career you have marked out for yourself, work of the kind you gave me must never seem to a reader to be you at your best.

I have marked almost a million student papers and I know what passes and what does not pass. The paper of yours failed in all respects and left me with the notion that you will be judged by papers of this kind and not by the person you are or by your conversation.

A letter such as this which I am writing to you I have carefully prepared and I have written out in a first draft to make sure it says what I wish it to say. Every lecture I give is prepared three or four times before I give it, even to the last half hour before it is given.

For all your life what you put on paper and hand to another person will be part of you. Your friends and colleagues and associates will say that this is one of the best of [your] productions. In the law and in government this is certainly true. To learn this is by far the greatest thing you have to learn and that was clear from the note you sent with the law school applications—written at high speed with a couple of alterations.

I urge you from now on to make writing a central part of your study.

Yours sincerely,  
F. G. Marcham

# One Encounter

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June 25, 1988

Dear John [Marcham],

## A Historian's Story.

At 9 p.m. last night the phone rang and a distant voice, hard to understand, asked was I Professor Marcham. I said "Yes." The man gave a name—again distant—that I could not decipher. He said he knew Prof. [Wallace] Notestein (English History professor at Cornell, 1920-1928). He knew me when I assisted Notestein. The speaker said he was 84 and of the Class of 1927. I was Notestein's assistant, 1923-4.

Could I help him, he said, to find the precise words and total attribution of some lines of poetry. He spoke twenty or so words and when he repeated them I heard the name "Trelawny," and "Twenty-thousand Cornish men will know the reason why." I said to him, "Trelawny," and spelled it out, letter by letter. "Yes," he said "that's it." Trelawny I knew to be a Cornish name, but I could not think of 20,000 Cornish men uniting, at what local cause or at what age in English history. So I said to the enquirer, "Sit still for a while, while I look around."

Where shall I go? *The Encyclopedia Britannica* has everything, but it would take too long to get it. And so to Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, where, to my delight I found just one entry under Trelawny, p. 509. So back to the enquirer. I gave him the three lines, taken from "Song of the Western Man" by Robert Stephen Hawker 1803-1895.

*And Shall Trelawny die?*

*Here's twenty thousand Cornish men*

*Shall know the reason why.*

Bartlett's footnote to this quotation said that Trelawny was a Cornish bishop who with six other bishops refused to read the Declaration of Indulgence, issued by James III of England. They were charged with seditious libel for the statement they made to justify their refusal. So said Bartlett and I went on to say that I had published an edition of the Seven Bishops' case (remembering only the Archbishop who was among them), that the London jury voted in favor of the bishops, and that, shortly thereafter, the English staged their Glorious Revolution of 1688 and James fled to France.

The enquiry and my response took fifteen minutes and carried me back to my first classes at Cornell.



# *The History Profession*

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February 8, 1989

Miss Louise Boyle  
107 Cayuga Heights Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850

Dear Miss Boyle:

I enjoyed the review you sent to me for what it said about the history profession and for putting on the stage two of my acquaintances at Cornell from the 1920s. Wallace Notestein and Charles Hull were close colleagues of mine. I thought of Charles Hull as an ideal friend and professor.

If you ask me what is history I say, as I have always said, that it is one person's joining together into a narrative and an examination a single person's view of what he or she wishes to present of the human past. What the historian writes is what he has learned and put together. He may put it together again in a different form and it will have its place beside what other persons have said on the same subject.

A half an hour ago I finished a lecture on a topic I have lectured on for sixty-six years. I worked out the lecture again, page by page over the weekend, and in my judgment it was a better lecture than I had given before—the point of view the same but the information on some items more precise and the lecture's arrangements of ideas was, as I thought, more logical and compact.

None of my colleagues has talked over with me the rules of history—today we don't hear one another's lectures or talk about one another's books. My general opinion is that the few historians that I know work pretty much as I do, writing their own opinion, based on their own new study and thought. Some think that the research they do is based upon historical resources other historians have not consulted, or resources others have consulted but not examined as their own study and thought now present them to us. But what they present they see as their own, 1989 interpretation, an interpretation to be set beside the interpretations of others.

So to me the word "objective" as applied to the historical profession has no immediate meaning.

I endorse the views, represented by the book's author, that, in the First War and the Second, some members of the history profession—with those of other professions—put aside their professional notions of what for them had been their duty as scholars and became part of the propaganda machine.

Yours sincerely,  
F. Marcham



# *A Letter*

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June 14, 1990

President Emeritus Dale Corson  
615 Clark Hall

Dear Dale:

I agree with your comments in the Rutgers program as you describe the place of teaching in considering the qualities of a candidate for appointment or promotion to a tenured faculty position. You give the right view on how to find out who is a good teacher. You say what the good teacher should accomplish.

From my position on the Cornell scene I believe that the ability of a candidate to teach has a small minor part in his record, because the University and the academic profession as a whole concern themselves primarily with research. Research among other things produces results for all to see. Teaching is an activity between the individual teacher and the student. In large part what teaching produces has its effect ten or twenty years later. I had a month ago a response from a student I spoke and wrote to last in 1944.

Teaching as I know it at Cornell is what we may call a private business. Each class is under the professor's control. He asks no other professor to visit his class or talk over his teaching program. In my sixty-seven years of teaching no colleague has come to one of my classes except the visiting non-professor, David McCullough, who taught a history course here in 1989.

In the late 1930's four professors, from economics, philosophy, biology and myself set aside a term to study teaching at Cornell. We explained in detail our own classroom program, attended one another's lectures and discussions, and went out to hear the best and the worst of Cornell's teachers. But that was fifty years ago.

Today my judgment is that the person who is primarily or exclusively a good teacher has no place in the minds of those who make the choice of a professor in the humanities. They think of the candidate's skill in research: my assumption is that to them the ability to do research carries with it the ability to teach.

A year ago I saw the file of recommendations for a candidate for a professorship in the humanities. Many who wrote to praise him gave pages of comment on his research. No one spoke of his teaching skills except a professor who said that the candidate had been the professor's assistant twenty years ago. No more. The candidate became a professor.

Those who teach in the humanities teach for about one-fourth of their academic time and use three-fourths in the library and at home. Many are good lecturers and many design study programs for their students. In this faculty-student relationship there is no association you maintain in the sciences through

your work with students in the laboratories. There is in the humanities not the standard you set when you speak of the “frontier of the field.”

Undergraduate education in the humanities leaves to the student the task of knowing how to bring into focus questions concerning human affairs, public and private, of literature, the arts and music. The student should know where to find information, how to define a problem for study, how to write about it and where to find the next intellectual commitment.

In the sciences the student has a different task. The problems of study are laid out, professors help the student carry out experiments, and the student is working in a “department which seeks to be at the frontier and which seeks to produce graduates at the doctoral level who are capable of dealing successfully with the most difficult problems in their field.”

These contrasts are not so distinct as I have made them but there is, I believe today in the humanities, less emphasis than in the past on the relation of teacher and student and the acceptance by the student that undergraduate education is self-directing and self-improving.

Yours,  
Fred Marcham

P.S. The Arts and Sciences News Letter, Vol. 11, No 2, p. 6. has an article by Alain Seznec on retired professors. He says retirement brings pleasure, part of it from things the professor does not have to do any more. Among them are “no exams to Cornell, no holding of inexorable office hours.”

# *One Student's Experience*

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The plight of the freshman at Cornell is an old story which hardly needs repeating. Briefly, it could best be described as a feeling of complete anonymity. This is particularly true for students in the College of Arts and Sciences. Students in other colleges, like Architecture or Engineering, are in a more stable position. They have a more definite vocational direction and they have certain required courses in their freshmen year. On the other hand, students in the Arts College, particularly if their interests lie in the humanities, will often have only a vague idea of their ultimate academic goals. Thus they have few guidelines in selecting their academic schedule. An Arts freshman is thrown into a system which he does not understand but must function in. This feeling of confusion is compounded by the size of the university, the social situation, and the disorientation resulting from a new, and seemingly unfriendly, place. The one thing a freshman is sure of is that he does not know what is happening at the university.

Most students adjust to their new situation with relative ease. But the academic life of the freshman is often not very satisfactory. I can only speak from my personal experience and those of my friends, but the phenomenon seems widespread. Most freshmen in the humanities take large introductory lecture courses. These may have between one hundred and one thousand students in them. The discussion [sections] are lead by graduate students and the contact with the professor is almost non-existent. There is no doubt the introductory courses have a valuable place in the curriculum and that they are a necessary part of the educational system. They certainly serve the desirable function of allowing students to experience a wide variety of disciplines. But if the typical freshman takes almost exclusively introductory courses, as I and many of my friends did, what is his position academically at the end of his first year? He has probably studied almost nothing in any depth and thus has received little intellectual satisfaction from his endeavors. He has had a smattering of many fields, but may still be relatively unsure of his main interests. More important, though he has survived his first college experience, he probably does not feel that he is really part of the academic life of the university. He is not in a department, and probably does not know any professors on a personal level. At the end of his first year, the student is in much the same position as he was at the beginning.

It is perfectly conceivable that this situation could continue throughout one's career at Cornell. Even after one chooses a major, and is in relatively small classes, one still may not take advantage of the opportunity for contact with professors. This is primarily because students are unaware of the true accessibility of professors and the variety of opportunities for the different kinds of academic experience available at Cornell. I was fortunate in that I was made aware of the

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*Anonymous and Undated.*

opportunities early in career at Cornell. In the second semester of my freshman year I joined a discussion section of Introduction to Western Civilization run by Professor Emeritus Fredrick G. Marcham. This was my first contact with a professor on any individual basis. There were about five students in each section. I can say without reservation that this was the most important event in my academic life at Cornell. First, I was in a small class which was lead by a professor. It was conducted on a much different level than those run by graduate students. Instead of writing the papers that the rest of the class were assigned, we wrote one relatively long research paper on a topic of our own choosing. The advantages of this are obvious. I was able to write a paper on something in which I was interested and I was under the personal guidance of a professor. Of all the various academic endeavors I undertook during my freshman year, this paper was undoubtedly the best done and most intellectually satisfying one.

The discussion section with Professor Marcham had more significant consequences for me. Because of my contact with him in the section, I was able to undertake independent research projects on a tutorial basis with him throughout my sophomore year. If it were not for this section, I would not have met any professors my first year. My independent studies with Professor Marcham were not only my most worthwhile academic experiences, they were also my most enjoyable. They enabled me to study topics through independent research under the guidance of Professor Marcham. This had many beneficial effects. I was allowed to pick a narrow topic in an area of history in which I was interested. Thus I was able to study a subject in depth, with the time and freedom to use a variety of sources and to explore different methods and approaches. I met with Professor Marcham once a week to discuss what I had done and to decide on my next step. I was allowed a great deal of freedom as to what I did, but Professor Marcham offered suggestions and guidance continually throughout my research. Further, whenever I did write a paper, I had the benefit of a professor's criticism of both my style and my content. These independent studies were the first time in my life that I felt that I was a student in the best sense of the word. That is, I was an intellectually competent human being who had been given the opportunity to learn from an individual who could teach me.

The benefits of being able to exchange ideas on an individual level with a professor cannot be overstated. What one can learn from the free flow of a conversation is of a different order than what can be learned in a structured class situation. The inspiration and encouragement one can receive from personal contact with a professor are immeasurable, but no doubt very real. It has been my experience that the students I know at Cornell, including myself, who are the happiest and most satisfied with their academic life are those who have had the opportunity for individual independent work under a professor. This experience helps to break down the feeling of anonymity within a large university, and it allows one to feel as if one is truly a member of the academic community. Besides the strictly educational advantages of learning under the personal direction, of a professor, there is the benefit of placing academics on the level where the most personal satisfaction can be gained. I would recommend to anyone who had the opportunity for independent study to take advantage of it. I have no reservation

in stating that it was the best thing that happened in my academic life and it had invaluable effects in my development as a student and as a person.



# Criticism of Papers

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On January 22, 1937, around 250 Representatives of the United States in an informal conclave formed what was referred to as the “power bloc” of the House of Representatives. (Never use the passive unless the sense of your statement demands it. Here it weakens your statement by leaving unanswered the question, “who so referred to it?” historians, journalists, their opponents.)

The purpose of the bloc was to formalize in political expression its philosophy that water, in terms of electrical power, controlled the nation. This power should be available to all at reasonable rates, and therefore the government of the United States should actively develop and transmit it. Furthermore the bloc stood against the pooling or selling of government power to private companies. (Look at the phrase “formalize in political expression” above. Search your own thoughts carefully until you have reached rock-bottom, i.e. exactly what you wish the sentence to say. The phrase “formalize in political expression” is an example of unfinished thinking. I know in a general way what you mean but when I try to give exact meaning to your words I know that I am not sure. The purpose of writing is to create exact images in the mind of the reader. You should not leave him to speculate what your meaning may have been.)

(Perhaps the best way to deal with this passage is as follows: “These representatives accepted the view that water, through its product, electrical power, controlled the ((economic or political)) life of the nation. They wished, by forming the power bloc, to create an informal political group whose purpose would be to make power available to all at reasonable rates. To secure this end they favored development and transmission of this power by the federal government. Sale of power at the point of production to private industry they opposed.”) The elected chairman of the bloc was a consistent and staunch supporter of public power, John Rankin of Mississippi.

The question of government owned, operated, and transmitted public power was not a New Deal notion. (“The question of” is a namby-pamby phrase. It takes all the force out of the beginning of this paragraph. “Government ownership, operation and transmission of public power was not a New Deal notion.”). For years people like Rankin in the House or George Norris in the Senate had been working for this goal. *It was* Norris, with Rankin’s support, who had prevented the selling of Muscle Shoals to Henry Ford in the Coolidge administration. *It*

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*Undated. Student papers, with comments by F.G. Marcham.*

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was Norris and Rankin who had for years sponsored a bill that finally would be passed as the Tennessee Valley Authority Bill in 1933. (Any sentence that begins with the construction “it was... who, or that” is doomed. Say, “Norris, with Rankin’s support prevented etc.” What do you gain in the last sentence by “would be”? Perhaps the sentence should begin “Together Norris and Rankin had for years etc.”) Rankin’s career in the House of Representatives from 1933 to 1941 (he served from 1922 to 1952) forms a good example of what the public power bloc wanted, of its articulation and of its successes and failures. (Phrases such as “forms a good example of” are a problem. Test them again and again to see if something simpler would not do as well. My first suggestion would be to try the word “shows”, but is “shows” all you wish to say? I would finish the sentence “what the power bloc wished to do, the organization it used and the extent of its successes and failures.”) John Rankin was, before 1941, when World War II and the subsequent Cold War turned him into a public demagogue, one of America’s foremost liberals and one of her more informed experts on the power questions. He was one of the most diligent advocates of public power, and one of its most statistically prepared spokesmen. (I would avoid repetition of such a phrase as “he was one of.” If you think it imparts force to what you are saying at least consider some slight variation, e.g. for “and one of her more informed experts” perhaps, “in particular an informed expert.” The last sentence might read: “He was one of the most diligent advocates of public power, all the more formidable because he had command of the necessary statistics.”) To a considerable degree then the progress, purposes and aims of public power are seen in his career. (Perhaps, “To a high degree his career exemplifies the progress, purposes, and aims of the public power group.”) Rankin called the power question “one of the greatest issues of the American people.” His purpose, he said, was to bring to every watershed area of the United States power projects like TVA. Not only because it would mean cheaper rates but because it also would develop vast potential water resources that were not being utilized. (Perhaps, “They would make possible cheaper rates, he believed, and would develop, etc.”) All the way from Pasamaquoddy in Maine to the Boulder Dam; from TVA to Bonneville and the Saint Lawrence Seaway Rankin and the public power advocates envisioned a span of cheap electrical power electrifying the nation (“All the way” can be omitted). For “and the public power advocates,” use “his fellow advocates”; for “span”, “network”; for “electrifying the nation”, “serving the whole nation.”

There was a need for public utility construction. (Again the paragraph begins weakly. Why not “Who would build the network?”) Since 1930 little private construction was under way due in considerable degree to the depression. But aside from the lack of construction a large amount of the electrical equipment was obsolete or in poor operating condition. (The opening phrase in this sentence is unnecessary. It betrays a fault worth considering. You used the phrase as a connecting link between two statements because you thought the reader needed to be helped along. You lost faith in the momentum of your argument. Instead, you may generally assume that the reader is moving along with you; he reads faster than you thought out and wrote it. Use connections only when the statements to be connected present a real problem of association. In this instance you should, I believe, make the two sentences into one, I suggested above that you might begin

the paragraph with “who would build the network?” Perhaps we should try again. “Who would build the network: private industry? The prospect was not promising. Since 1930, and largely because of the depression, little private construction was under way and much of the electrical equipment available to industry was obsolete or in poor operating condition.”) The inadequacy of private power was seen by the fact that (substitute “obvious;”) the only areas in the country that had maximum power production, or a surplus, were parts of Florida, Michigan, the lower Mississippi Valley, North Dakota, Idaho, Utah, New Mexico, Texas, Minnesota, Montana, Washington and Oregon. In addition, (This phrase, and “meanwhile” crops up in much historical writing. To me they suggest that the narrator is getting tired. Think twice before you use them. In this instance you might use “worse still.”) the average production capacity of the total power plants was 14 percent less than their installed capacity; that is, if all the circuits were in full demand at one time the generating capacity could not be met.

The opponents of this grand scheme, the private power companies and conservative senators, protested with charges of socialism and expanded government control. (Perhaps “Opponents of the public power program—the private power companies and conservative senators—said they feared socialism etc.”) Government, answered Rankin, must of necessity handle the power development because water cannot be controlled and sold by private interests. (Perhaps begin, “Rankin answered that Government must etc.” The “of necessity” adds nothing. And what about “cannot”? Surely it is inadequate; does it mean “cannot legally” or “ought not to be.”) “The power business is a public business... a necessity of life,” (he said). Since it had to be a local monopoly it would be better for the benefit of the people that the government, who had their interests at heart, rather than the private companies who had dividends at heart, to operate this monopoly. (Perhaps, “Since control of power had to be a local monopoly, the people would benefit more if the monopoly were in the hands of the government, who had their interests at heart, rather than the private companies, who had dividends at heart.”)

The purpose of the power bloc, and of its historical evolution, was, in the words of Rankin, “to emancipate the people from the power trusts.” (Here sense demands that for “of its historical evolution” you write “the reason for its historical evolution.”) This would mean cheaper electricity rates, increased consumption of power and the extension of the service to all homes. (Perhaps for “This would mean,” write “Emancipation would bring.”) A better and more balanced economy was foreseen. (A poor way to end a paragraph. Our old enemy the passive. Foreseen by whom?)

The most controversial and perhaps the most successful of the government operated power projects is TVA. Muscle Shoals, the nucleus of the system, since 1920 had been a symbol of progressive aspirations for public power and conservative demands for private enterprise. (I find “symbol” a misleading word here. Perhaps write “had been the prime exhibit used to uphold both the arguments of progressives who favored public power and of conservatives who favored private enterprise.”)

As the majority of Boston's reformers were ministers or the descendants of clergymen, they larded their broadsides with references to the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount, the Kingdom of God. Under the impact of science and industry, the progeny of the Puritans refashioned their religion to mean more the promotion of democracy and less exclusively the preparation for the Eternal Sabbath. As their covenant-making forefathers lacked nothing in devotion to the divine, so they faltered not in their dedication to homo sapiens. Like their ancestors they regarded themselves as God's stewards on earth.

Solomon Schindler, the Jew, and John Boyle O'Reilly, the Catholic, similarly found nourishment in their reform aspirations....

...Aside from the reform experience of foreign nations, some reformers imbibe deeply from the European ideological draughts of Marxism, Fabian Socialism, and Anarchism....

...Similarly, the late 19th Century progressives were so full of combat, so full of enthusiasm to fight for good, that one wonders how they would have behaved, could they have lived in the perfected societies for which they agitated....

...The reformers who looked forward to their own cross (i.e. to bearing their own cross) were convinced by their reading of history that progress had resulted from the efforts of a creative ethical minority, from men ranging from Socrates to Luther to Garrison, who had announced a truth, been persecuted for it, and eventually heralded as its champions.

(The reformers who wished to bear their own crosses learned from history, as they read it, that a creative, ethical minority had brought forth progress—men like Socrates, Luther, and Garrison, who had announced a truth, suffered persecution for it, and later won acclaim as its champions.) (Should there be commas after “reformers” and “crosses”?)

An articulate minority of Bostonians were social reformers. The mass of the citizens were indifferent or hostile to liberalism. The minority, however, represented all sections of the population. They approached social problems with the sensitivity that derived from their particular position in society. Thus the feminists, Jews, Catholics, and trade unionists regarded social reforms as vitally affecting their position in society, whereas writers, artists, college professors, and students, and Protestant ministers looked upon themselves as responsible for leadership in time of crisis. They all met on common ground in the smelting pot of American equalitarianism. In varying degrees the product of religious idealism, the enlightenment, and nineteenth century science and technology, they all spoke the same language of making life more meaningful for the underprivileged—the language of the American dream.

# *A Story, 1993*

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Ruth Burge '52 was a freshman history major when she enrolled in the Introductory English history course taught by Prof. Frederick G. Marcham, PhD '26. Burge now remembers Marcham as a “teacher beyond comparison, the best I have ever known,” but at the time her thoughts were less warm. She worked hard in Marcham’s class, but was horrified when she received 63 on the first prelim. She approached the professor, who was also her faculty advisor, in tears. He explained that because she was a history major, and because the class was filled with engineers and chemistry majors, he had to hold her to a higher standard than the people who were just fulfilling requirements. So she worked all the harder, only to receive a 73 on the next exam. “I hated that man,” she recalls. “I fought back. I wrote a final exam that would knock his socks off.” At the end of the semester, she left two postcards with Marcham, one for her grade on the final, one for her exam grade.

Both cards arrived on the same day, she remembers. The grade on the final was 70. The term grade was 92. And Marcham added a note: “I knew you could do it if you really tried. Fond regards, Frederick G. Marcham.”

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*From the Cornell Alumni News. April 1993, “A Man of Quiet and Luminous Joy,” by Steven Madden '86, editor.*

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