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Alexander Law

Scottish Schoolbooks
of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries
Part II



COLLECTIONS AND READING-BOOKS

A work that was to have an influence on the teaching of reading throughout the United Kingdom and Europe was Charles Rollin's *De la manière d'étudier et d'enseigner les belles lettres*, published in four volumes in Paris between 1726 and 1728. Translated and published in London in 1734, this work encouraged the reading of works, not in Latin, but in the vernacular, and recommended the use by teachers of collections of extracts from great writers. Throughout the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth century, anthologies of this type, generally called Collections, were published by well-known teachers like Arthur Masson, William Scott, and Alexander Barrie. From the 1820s, books of a somewhat similar type, but with extracts graded in difficulty to suit the needs of pupils, gradually became more generally accepted. These are known as Readers, or Reading-books.

The earliest Scottish Collection is John Warden's of 1737, and the title indicates its scope:

A collection from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, Mr Pope, Mr Dryden, from Mr Rollin's method of teaching and studying the belles lettres, and his

universal history...Edinburgh: Printed for John Warden, Teacher of English, 1737.

The selections include Addison's essay from *The Spectator* on "The Evidences of the Christian Religion," essays by Steele, and passages from the discourses of Thomas à Kempis. History figures largely with a "short account of sacred and profane history," the life of Joseph, the death of Socrates, as well as a discussion on the nature and origin of poetry. There is a short section of poetry, with selections from Pope and Dryden's translations from the classics, and Pope's *Essay on Man*. Dramatic verse includes Shakespeare and speeches from Addison's *Cato*. Warden claims in his preface to include a little Latin:

As the ablest Latin and French masters in this kingdom have always commended the publisher's (i.e. Warden's) practice of using his scholars to read Latin, he has understandably put more passages of that language in this book than in the former. The publisher presumes he has furnished proper materials for English schools. By reading this book English masters have it in their power to acquaint their scholars with Latin pronunciation before that language becomes their particular study, and thereby ease Latin masters of the trouble of telling their boys that Latin is to be read in a different way from English (verso of t.p.).

This can only mean that these lengthy passages from Addison and others, with the Latin mottoes and quotations they contained, were intended to be read by, among others, boys aged about nine who were about to begin Latin. In this solid book there are, however, many interesting passages, and the whole concept of including what were almost contemporary pieces of poetry and prose must have been attractive to those whose previous reading had been restricted to classical authors. Warden also commented in the preface to his Spelling Book on "The custom of teaching children to read by the Holy Bible" which he found, "very unaccountable" (Edinburgh, 1753), p. xv.

Perhaps the best-known of the Collections is Arthur Mason's, since Burns mentioned it as one of his schoolbooks. In his letter to Dr. John Moore, of 2 August 1787, the poet writes:

The earliest thing of composition that I recollect taking pleasure in was, *The Vision of Mirza* and a hymn of Addison's beginning--"How are Thy servants

blest, O Lord!" I particularly remember one stanza which was music to my boyish ear--

For though in dreadful whirls we hung,
High on the broken wave--

I met with these pieces in Masson's English Collection, one of my school-books.

John Murdoch taught Robert Burns from the age of about six and a half to nine: his account, as given in Currie's edition of Burns of 1800, is as follows:

My pupil Robert Burns was then between 6 and 7 years of age...Robert and his younger brother Gilbert...both made a rapid progress in reading and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences etc. Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were the *Spelling Book*, the *New Testament*, the *Bible*, *Mas[s]on's Collection of Prose and Verse*, and *Fisher's English Grammar* (I, 90).

The earliest copy of Masson's Collection in the National Library is the fourth edition of 1764, "improved." It is a varied selection, certainly one that a little boy of genius would find attractive. There are fables and stories, tales of King Lear, the Trojan War, Alfred, Canute, Ridley and Latimer, as well as Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage," and "To be, or not to be." Poems included passages from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and more contemporary works by Parnell, Addison, Pope, Dryden, James Thomson, and William Mallet's *William and Margaret*, a romantic tragic ballad. There are essays by Addison and from Samuel Johnson's *Rambler*.

Alexander Barrie's *Collection of English Prose and Verse, for the use of schools, selected from different authors* (14th edn., Edinburgh, 1800), follows lines similar to Masson's. Here are "Select sentences," "Choice sayings," "Moral Instructions," and "Fables," leading on to quite difficult selections from Shakespeare, Milton, and British history. The Gunpowder Plot figures here, and a character sketch of the famous Lord President, Duncan Forbes of Culloden.

Masson and Barrie remained for many years the standard types of Collection, but books by John Drummond and William

Scott concentrated on verse and prose suitable for elocution. Drummond's book, *Reading and Speaking* (2nd edn., Edinburgh, 1780), refers to "An Introduction in which are made observations on accent, emphasis, &c, and directions given for expressing properly the principal humours, sentiments, and passions which occur in reading or public speaking." In addition to printing "examples of speeches, taken from the most celebrated ancient and modern writers, in prose and verse," Drummond gives "Notes of direction, not to be found in any other Collection." These notes are often abbreviations like "abhorr.," "affectio," "irritat," printed at the side of passages where gestures indicating such emotions are appropriate. As an example of how to express the passions, Drummond writes: "The arms are sometimes both thrown out; sometimes the right alone; sometimes they are lifted up as high as the face, to express wonder" (p. 16). Such a book was probably popular with adults who attended the many classes in elocution, but it seems also to have been intended for schools, where, of course, dramatic recitations were usual at end of term functions and displays. William Scott's *Lessons in elocution* (Edinburgh, 1779) was intended for such a market judging by the title, which includes "for the Perusal of Persons of Taste, and the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking." It is a curious and perhaps significant fact that none of these collections contains any passages in Scots, and that the professed aim was, as William Scott put it in his *Beauties of Eminent Writers* (Edinburgh, 1794), "For the instruction of youth in the proper reading and reciting of the English language."

John Wood's *The Sessional School Collection* (10th edn., Edinburgh, 1839) is called a collection but might easily be a reader, being more obviously related to the abilities of children and their interests than the well-known eighteenth century anthologies were. The title describes it as "consisting of Religious and Moral Instruction; a Selection of Fables; Descriptions of Animals, Places, Manners &c; Historical Passages, and Other Instructive and Entertaining Information for Early Youth." The preface puts it bluntly:

The compiler...had occasion to observe that a considerable portion of the collections at present in use in our public schools, was occupied by dramatic pieces, speeches in Parliament, and other matter but little adapted to the capacities of children... too little reference to the duties, or the vices, connected with their own period of life...almost exclusively addressed to children in the higher

ranks of society... (p. v).

He has omitted passages from the Bible because, "the whole Scriptures are a standard schoolbook in all our parochial establishments" (p. vi). He was prompted, he says, to produce

a work peculiarly adapted to the nature of our parish-schools, where the great bulk of the children are drawn from the humbler walks of life, but are intermingled at the same time with others of a higher condition, and particularly with those, who are afterwards to be the religious instructors of our people, most of whom there receive the first rudiments of their education (p. v).

There are seven sections, dealing with: religious and moral instruction of youth; fables; descriptions of animals; descriptions of places, manners &c; historical passages; miscellaneous passages; and additional poetry. The tone, as might be expected, is serious; the first section deals with such matters as "Profane Swearing," "Application and Industry," "Lying," and "Irregular attendance at school." The fables have suitable morals attached. The descriptions include an interesting account of Carron ironworks, and of a Newcastle coalmine. Half of the historical extracts are from Roman history, but from Hume come passages about Alfred (and the cakes), Canute, the Black Prince, the Gunpowder Plot. There is an extraordinary section on the duties of schoolboys, taken straight from Rollin, and the book ends with some extremely gloomy poems. The impression one gets of this popular volume --the 10th edition in the National Library is of 1839--is that the general idea is probably sound enough, but that the editor's taste was unsure.

A complete change came in 1827 with the publication of the Rev. Dr. J.M. McCulloch's *A Course of Elementary Reading in Science and Literature, Compiled from Popular Writers; with an Appendix: Comprising a Vocabulary of Scientific Terms, and a List of the Prefixes, Affixes, and Principal Latin and Greek Roots of the English Language* (53rd edn., Edinburgh & London, 1882). This is the work of a real professional, for Dr. McCulloch, Minister of Kelso and later of Greenock, had been headmaster of the highly successful Circus Place School in Edinburgh. His reader sold so well that there were 53 editions by 1882.

The contents are classified under natural history, physical science, geography and astronomy, industrial economy, language and literature, religion, miscellaneous, poetry, and an appen-

dix. The subjects treated are of great variety, from seeds and the circulation of the blood to magnetism, James Watt and the steam engine, the Gulf Stream, figures of speech, the law of wages, strikes, Divine truth, books and how to read them, and Burke's description of Marie Antoinette. They are taken from popular writers, including the authors of textbooks, as well as from great masters of literature. There is a lot of information here, most of it put forward in an interesting and palatable way, the intention being not so much to provide facts as to stimulate thinking. It seems to be aimed at clever children of twelve years and upward, the older groups in city schools and parish schools.

A few years later McCulloch brought out a very interesting book *A Series of Lessons in Prose and Verse* (Edinburgh & London, 1836) intended as an introduction to the *Science and Literature* volume. The emphasis is on words, their derivations and meanings, and to that end there are many exercises. There are moral tales, some from Mrs. Barbauld, and Mary Howitt's "Voice of Spring":

I am coming, little maiden!
 With the pleasant sunshine laden
 With the honey for the bee;
 With the blossom for the tree;
 With the flower and with the leaf;
 Till I come the time is brief.

(p. 8)

There are "Elliptical" lessons, where the pupil has to fill in the blanks in passages like this about the Ant:

Let us come closer _____ these ants. See how
 curious _____ inside _____ their house is! The
 hill which _____ occupy seems to be divided _____
 various streets (p. 10).

The spaces indicate by their length the word required. There is even an "Elliptical" poem:

The Poor Man's Prayer

As much have I of wordly good
 As e'er my master _____,
 I diet on as dainty _____,
 And am _____ richly clad (p. 33).

And here is a well-known story of a famous man:

It is _____ of the late President Washington, when about six _____ of age, that someone made him the _____ of a hatchet; of which, being, like most _____, immoderately fond, he _____ about chopping everything that _____ in his way; and going into the garden, he unluckily tried its _____ on an English cherry-tree, which he _____ so terribly as to leave very little _____ of its recovery.... 'George', said the old Gentleman, 'do you know who _____ that beautiful little cherry-tree, yonder in the _____? The child hesitated for a _____ and then nobly replied, 'I can't tell a _____, papa; you know I can't tell a _____, I did cut it with my _____'. 'Run to my arms, my boy!' exclaimed his _____; run to my _____! Glad am I, George, that you have killed my _____, for you have paid me for it a thousandfold! Such an act of heroism in my son is of more _____ than a thousand _____, though blossomed with silver, and their fruits of _____! (p. 58)

Indeed all the well-known figures are here--Gelert, the St. Bernard Monks, Ralph the Rover, Camillus, Maria Edgeworth's dog Trusty, Alfred and his cakes, Sir Philip Sidney at Zutphen, and even--and this shows a modern outlook--Roscoe's "The Butterfly's Ball," one of the earliest amusing poems for children, of a type that became familiar in the works of Lear and Carroll.

A much more serious schoolbook is Neil Leitch's *Monitorial Class Book* of which the third edition (Edinburgh, 1840) is in the National Library. Leitch was a distinguished teacher in the West of Scotland, and one of the original members of the Educational Institute of Scotland. The book is intended for an earlier age-group than McCulloch's, probably between 7 and 9, and the lessons are simple enough to be conducted by monitors. The first lesson begins with twelve words, their meanings and pronunciation: scarcely, instruct, provides, tenderly, &c, all relating to the reading passage that follows: "Love your father and mother. They love you very dearly; and they have taken care of you ever since you were born. They loved you, and took care of you, even when you were poor little helpless babies, that could not talk, nor walk about, nor do scarcely any thing but cry, and give a great deal of trouble..." (p. 3).

Of the 35 lessons, five or six are definitely religious in tone and content, dealing with subjects like the Bible, the word "Amen," the way to be happy. Even more are moral--on

the duties of children, and kindness to animals. A large number of the lessons are, in fact, concerned with animals-- dogs, the ostrich, the bear (with passing reference to Elisha and the rude children who called him names), silkworms, and, of course, the ant.

Lesson 13 is a story of Edinburgh.

A grocer in Edinburgh had a dog that for some time amused and surprised the people in the neighbourhood. A man who went through the streets, ringing a bell, and selling penny pies, had the kindness one day to treat the dog with a pie. The next time the dog heard the pieman's bell, he ran to him with great speed, seized him by the coat, and would not suffer him to pass. The pieman, who understood what the animal wanted, showed him a penny, and pointed to his master, who was standing in the shop door, looking at what was going on. The dog instantly ran to his master, and by incessant humble gestures and looks, seemed to say "If you please, sir, give me a penny". The master put a penny in the dog's mouth, which he instantly gave to the pieman and got his pie. This traffic between the pieman and the grocer's dog was carried on daily for many months (pp. 24-6).

The verse in this volume is mostly of a simple, religious, type and includes "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" by Jane Taylor, and hymns by Isaac Watts and John Newton. The sad Victorian theme of the death of children is also here, in, for example "The Good Angels":

Around God's glorious throne above,
The happy angels stand,
And ever praise the God they love,
And fly at his command.

Their faces, like the sun, are bright,
And sweetest smiles they wear,
They never sleep; there is no light;
No need of candle there.

But though the angels live so high,
They love us men below;
And hope to see us in the sky,
In garments white as snow.

And when a dying infant lies
 Upon its mother's breast,
 The angels watch it while it dies,
 And take its soul to rest.

(pp. 19-20)

Leitch's more advanced reader *The juvenile reader*, was enormously popular. Published by Collins of Glasgow about 1839, it had sold 75,000 copies by 1852. The title page indicates its purpose of *Religious, Moral, and Intellectual Instruction; Exercises in Spelling, Explanation, and Derivation; and an Appendix Containing Select Pieces for Recitation; the Principal Prefixes, Affixes, and Roots of the English Language, with their Literal Significations, Derivatives, and Compounds*. Lesson 15, on the horse illustrates the method. Under a cut, in color, of a horse, there are ten words, of which the first three are:

af-fec-tion-ate, fond...*facio*
 docile, manageable...*doceo*
 as-cer-tain, make certain...*certus*

Then come words with meanings only: symmetry, proportion; sagacious, wise, acute; generous, open-hearted; courageous, bold; dominion, government. The passage finally comes:

The horse is universally allowed to be the most noble, beautiful, and useful of the four-footed animals that God has put in subjection to mankind. The noble largeness of his form, the glossy smoothness of his skin, and the exact symmetry of his shape, have taught us to regard him as the first and most perfectly formed. Though less sagacious than the elephant or the dog, he possesses very much of that quality, especially when properly trained.

(p. 151)

There is an amusing reference to the pleasures of winter in another lesson:

If the ice afford to the schoolboy the joy of gliding swiftly on its smooth expanse, it is not niggardly of its amusements to the more sedate minds of the mature in age. To every northern country, some amusement on the ice is familiar; and, among these, that of *curling* may be mentioned as the game peculiarly prized in many districts of

Scotland; and also, if I mistake not, in the Netherlands; from which latter country it seems to have been originally derived.

"You can give no reason," says Mr Abbott, a pleasing and amiable American writer, "why the heart of a child is filled with such joyous glee, when the first snowflakes descend. There is no very special beauty in the sight; and there are no very well defined hopes of slides or rides to awaken *such* joy. At fifty, the gladness is not expressed so unequivocally...."

(p. 150)

Enough has been quoted to show that Leitch's *Reader* has a serious, moral tone. The poems for recitation are well chosen from Shakespeare, Scott, and Campbell and there is a prose passage by Galt on John Knox.

Most of the members of the Scottish School-Book Association were parish schoolmasters, and it is a fair assumption that the publications of their Association were the books most commonly used in parish schools. There were two main series. The original series, with modifications from time to time, consisted of the *Child's First Book*, *Primer*, *Second Lessons*, *Third Lessons*, *Readings in Prose and Verse*, and the *First* and *Second Collections of Instructive Extracts*, thus covering a child's progress from five to about twelve or thirteen.

For the most part the books of this series are conservative: they contain, for example, lists of words to be read, pronounced by syllables separately, and then combined, with the proper accent. Lists of name-sounds, shut sounds, occasional sounds, and diphthongs remind the reader of eighteenth century practice. The preface says: "By reading a column or two in this way every day, or even at every lesson, as soon as his progress may admit, the pupil will soon be able to read the longest words in the lists; and to divide and read similar words wherever he may meet them...." The reading lessons that follow are nearly all of a moral and religious nature, as in the *Third Lessons* (Edinburgh, 1845 edition) in the National Library. One story is "No one should be idle," and it begins:

There was a little boy; and his pa-pa and ma-ma gave him a little book like this, and sent him to school. It was a very fine morning; the sun shone, and the birds sang in the trees....And he saw a bee flying about from flower to flower; so he said, "Pretty bee! will you come and play with me?" But the bee said "No. I must not be idle; I must go

and gather honey"...[The same question is asked in turn of a dog and a bird, with predictable answers, and the boy grasps the idea that no one is idle.] ...So he went to school, and sat down to his lessons; and the master said he was a good boy.

First read your book, then go to play;
And wiser grow from day to day. (p. 3)

A section of this book deals with Scripture history, ending with passages on heaven and hell--"Hell is a place of endless torment. It is the dwelling-place of Satan, and wicked spirits, and wicked men..." (p. 80). There are "Lessons in verse" including Mrs. Hemans' "The child's first grief":

Oh! call my brother back to me,
I cannot play alone;
The summer comes with flower and bee,--
Where is my brother gone?
The flowers run wild, the flowers we sow'd
Around our garden tree;
Our vine is drooping with its load--
O call him back to me!

The book also comprises a Catechism and a list of Scripture proper names for spelling, such as Pharaoh, Isaiah, and Caiaphas.

The *First Collection of Instructive Extracts* (Edinburgh, 1820?) in the same series has sections on Religious and moral pieces, Miscellaneous pieces, Natural history, Geography and topography, Scottish history, and Poetry. The religious extracts include pieces by Bickersteth, Blair, Addison, Johnson, and Wilberforce. The natural history refers in passing to "Graminivorous animals," which recalls John Kerr's story¹ about his colleague who asked the meaning of "graminivorous" and, on being told "grass-eating," then asked what an animal that ate flesh would be called, and was quickly told "carnivorous." When he followed this up by asking what an animal that ate both grass and flesh would be called he, after a long pause, got the answer "A gutsy brute."

A feature of this book is its Scottish content. There is a section of over thirty pages on various stories from Scottish history--Bruce and the Stewart Kings until James IV and the Battle of Flodden, "still remembered as one of the greatest calamities that ever befell the kingdom of Scotland" (pp. 190-2). The poetry section has poems by Burns, Scott and Beattie, as well as Charles Wolfe's "The Burial of Sir John Moore," Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib," Campbell's "Hohen-

linden" and the usual selections from Shakespeare and Milton.

The later series by Collins, called *Progressive Lessons* (Glasgow, Edinburgh and London, 1867), follows in general the same lines, but in several ways the influence of the Codes laid down by the Committee on Education can be seen. *The Fourth Book* (Glasgow, Edinburgh and London, 1870), for example, prints Standard II at the beginning of the book. It is also significant that this book has a page devoted to the individual pupil's "Register of Places in Class," for each day of the month. This is another sign of the very practical nature of the Association's schoolbooks. The casual reader feels that all the important elements were covered--spelling, pronunciation, meanings, well-known poems, proper regard to religion and morals, and lessons of an instructive nature on geography, nature study, and the industrial scene.

Of Chambers's Educational Course, William--later Sir William--Chambers wrote in his *Memoir of William and Robert Chambers* (Edinburgh and London, 1883) of his brother, Robert:

Next, in 1835, was announced and begun a literary undertaking very much more onerous and elaborate. This was Chamber's Educational Course, consisting of a series of treatises and schoolbooks, constructed according to the most advanced views of education, both as a science and an art. In the series of books which followed, was comprehended a section on physical science, the first time, as far as we were aware, of anything of the kind having been attempted in a form addressed to common understandings. Of the series of books my brother wrote several, including *History of the British Empire* (Edinburgh, 1847), and *History of the English Language and Literature* (Edinburgh, 1838), this being the first time that anything of the kind had been attempted as a class-book. (p. 265)

Of the hundred volumes and more in this remarkable series, it is possible only to discuss a few.

The Chambers brothers produced four little books designed to follow the *First* and *Second Book of Reading* mentioned above: these are, *Simple Lessons in Reading* (Edinburgh, 1845), *Rudiments of Knowledge* (Edinburgh, 1848), *The Moral Class-Book* (Edinburgh, 1847), and *Introduction to the Sciences* (Edinburgh, 1843). The titles themselves show that the Chambers brothers had in mind a graduated course of reading that would give to ordinary children a background of accepted knowledge on moral, including religious, knowledge and sci-

entific and economic information. The same ideals of popular education inspired *Chambers's Journal* and *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*.

The aim of *Simple Lessons* and *Rudiments* is given in the preface to the former: the object is to bring a child forward in reading "and so prepare him for methodic intellectual culture in the books which follow...to amuse...and induce reading for the pleasure it communicates" (Edinburgh, 1845, pp. 3-8). The old methods of teaching reading, they wrote in 1845, considered it sufficient to read a passage without blundering, and spell correctly: their idea was that children should also be taught to understand what they were reading. They stressed the importance of the teacher's questioning and explaining, particularly since a course of reading in English "includes a vast variety of topics--elocution, etymology, grammar, elements of physical science, the arts, history, geography &c" (p. 3). The lessons in *Simple Lessons* are illustrated by cuts, and include many extracts from Mrs. Barbauld--e.g. "Robin and the Naughty Boy," "William and Edward"; from Maria Edgeworth--"Dog Trusty"; and Jane Marcet--"Negro Boys." There are fables--the Lion and the Mouse, Fox and Grapes, Wolf and Lamb--and verse, including Michael Bruce's "Cuckoo." It is a wide and morally irreproachable selection, and the English style is much above the usual for schoolbooks. With *Rudiments of Knowledge* there is an attempt to write interestingly for children on an extraordinarily wide range of serious subjects: some of the titles are, for example, "God and the Works of Creation"; "Inanimate Objects--Stones, Slate, Coal, Clay, Brick, Glass, Metals"; "The Senses"; "Colours and Tints" [with hand-colored cuts]; "Art of Printing"; "Buying--Selling--Money"; "Health--Recreation--Amusement"; "Civil Government--Emblems--Ranks"; "Faculties and Emotions of the Mind." There is an enormous amount of useful information which the intelligent teacher could use, but the book is pretty solid, lacks humor or attractive narrative, though it is, as the preface claimed, "a simple and brief explanation of a variety of things familiar to the experienced mind, but which, in ordinary methods of instruction, are for the greater part left to be picked up by chance" (pp. 3-8).

The same idea pervades the *Moral Class-Book*, to convey "intelligible views of the more important moral and economic duties" (preface), but here the method is to deal with subjects like conduct towards animals, behavior towards inferiors and superiors, presence of mind, modesty, temperance, benevolence, truth, and heroism, principally by means of narratives. Accordingly we find in this book many of the stories all are familiar with. Here are the rats in the Bastille, Alexander

the Great and his mother, Frederick the Great and his page, Socrates and Xantippe, Benjamin Franklin, Isaac Newton with his apple, Gelert, Southey's "Father William," many fables, Uncle Toby, Diogenes, the Inchcape Bell, Grace Darling, Themistocles, and the burghers of Calais. These, with Robert the Bruce and the spider, Sir Philip Sidney, and Helen Walker (prototype of Jeanie Deans in Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*), became the accepted mental furniture of children and adults of the Victorian age.

The Introduction to the Sciences is an outline of these subjects--astronomy, natural philosophy (in its Scottish sense of physics), geology and physical geography, meteorology, electricity, magnetism, chemistry, botany, zoology, human physiology and mental philosophy. Each extract--some are quite long--is accompanied by notes and definitions, and there are good illustrations. It is interesting to note that this book came out almost at the same time as Robert Chambers's anonymously published *Vestiges of Creation* of 1844, which suggested evolution of species and prepared the way for Darwin. In the preponderance of scientific subjects in its schoolbooks the firm of Chambers was different from the other Scottish publishers. A Swedish scholar, Dr. Ellen Alwall, has studied the content of many schoolbooks of the period 1851-61, and found that "the number of non-religious items issued by Chambers was greater than that of any other firm," but that "In contrast, their interest in religious instruction was slight."²

A later schoolbook of Chambers, in 1872, talks of the success of the above three books in spreading "secular knowledge ...and ethics...in elementary schools" (*Lesson Book of Common Things*, Edinburgh, 1872, Preface, p. i), but admits the need for another small volume on "common and familiar things, giving the philosophy of them--that is, tracing their connection with principles in nature...[and in explaining]...leading truths of physical and of political science" (p. 1). Lessons are under four headings: personal matters; industrial matters; duties of citizenship; and general maxims. Under personal matters are short essays on sleep, cleanliness, clothing (including the importance of wearing flannel next to the skin), temperance, exercise, and a poem on personal purity. Industrial matters have headings like "We must all Work," "What to do," "Some Produce--Other Distribute," and "Labour and Capital." The duties of citizenship are concerned with matters like "The Social State," "Laws and Taxes," and "Voting." The general maxims are, as might be expected, of a more moral cast and treat of "Love to Neighbours," "The use of Time," "Against Wasting," "Cruelty," "Foresight and Sav-

ing," "Adversity and Grief," "Judging," "Censure" and "Humility." Each lesson is accompanied with a list of definitions. There is much common sense here, along with more than a pinch of the Puritan ethic, which is perhaps not surprising from Protestant Scotland. "The idle," one excerpt says, "seldom can sleep well. Still less can those who have much care or anxiety, or who may have passed the evening in drinking, or any other kind of excitement" (Sect. IV).

A volume with similar intent, but aimed at a younger age-group, is Nelson's *Reading Lessons No. V* (London, Edinburgh and New York, 1858). There are four sections, on plants &c, on "The house I live in (the human body)," on the animal kingdom, and on birds. The tone is religious: in the pages on flowers is the passage, "God has kindly provided us with beautiful things to look upon, in the garden and in the field, during all the warmer months of the year. Let us thank Him for his goodness" (p. 18). Describing leaves, the author writes:

Leaves may be said to be continually breathing moisture into the air. This moisture helps to make the air soft, and the fragrance of the flowers makes it balmy. Each leaf, it is true, yields but little water, and so does but little good in this way; but there are so many leaves that a large quantity of moisture is continually escaping from them into the air. Those who desire to do good in the world may learn a lesson from the leaves. A large amount of good may be done when each does a little. Let each do all the good he can; and though it may not be noticed by others, God sees it all, and remembers it. (p. 35)

There is a good deal of verse in this little book, most of it in the pietistic strain of so much early nineteenth century poetry. Only rarely does a smile break through in either the Chambers' or the Nelson's books, though there is a faint suggestion of something almost approaching humor in the Nelson account of the body: "A chain or column of twenty-four bones, placed one above the other, form what is called the *spine* or backbone of the body. When we make a bow, there is a little motion between each two of the whole twenty-four bones; and this makes the motion easy and graceful" (p. 20).

When Dickens, in *Hard Times* in 1854, satirized schools that dealt in "Facts," he may have had in mind ideas like those of John Wood, with his "explanatory" method of the 1820s, and the schoolbooks of the following decades. "Now,

what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts" is the opening sentence, spoken by Mr. Gradgrind to his new schoolmaster, Mr. McChoakumchild, whose name, incidentally, hints at a Scottish connection. And when we look at the reading-books described in this and the preceding article we must admit that there is something in the gibe. They stress the meanings of words, and add masses of information on all manner of subjects--the books of the Old Testament and their stories, lives of famous people, facts about astronomy, geology, botany, zoology. But what Dickens does not mention is the almost universal emphasis in these books on morality and good behavior. This is an old tradition from the Middle Ages and earlier, and it seems to be at least as important in the schoolbooks as the accumulation of facts. It is often combined with religious teaching, thereby carrying out the intention expressed in one of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland "to sow the seeds of religion even in childhood." Nor is Dickens aware of the sincere attempt of many teachers and authors of schoolbooks to arouse interest. Dr. McCulloch in the 1820s had many of the same ideas as the writers of Chambers' and Nelson's schoolbooks of the 1870s and 1880s, to tell a good story, to excite, encourage, and occasionally even to amuse their readers.

Edinburgh

NOTES

¹John Kerr, *Memories Grave and Gay* (Edinburgh: Nelson, n.d.), p. 53. (Dr. Kerr was one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.)

²Ellen Alwall, *The Religious Trend in Secular Scottish School-Books* (Lund, 1970), p. 133.