

**A COURSE OF ENGLISH
READING: ADAPTED
TO EVERY TASTE AND
CAPACITY. PP. 1-282**

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A Course of English Reading: Adapted to Every Taste and Capacity. pp. 1-282 by J. A. Spencer & James Pycroft

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J. A. SPENCER & JAMES PYCROFT

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PREFACE.

IN acceding to the request of his friends the publishers, to edit the excellent manual of Mr. Pycroft, the American Editor begs leave briefly to state what he has attempted to do, in order to render it more worthy of the attention and confidence of the reader and students in general.

Mr. Pycroft's book, on its first appearance, proved highly acceptable to those who love the literature of our noble language, and the favorable estimate that was formed of it by the public was evident from the fact that an edition was rapidly disposed of. The vivacity of style of Mr. Pycroft's volume, his sterling common-sense way of treating his subject, his familiar but pertinent illustrations, and his effective

appeals and encouragements to his readers to use their time and labor to good purpose, showed clearly that he was both an experienced instructor and a judicious guide; and although the Editor could not but see that a number of things in the volume was open to criticism, and that the author's judgment, to say the least, was far from infallible, yet, at the same time, he was persuaded, that hardly any one fond of reading, or desirous of improvement, could take up the volume without becoming interested in it, and being induced to adopt some of its valuable practical suggestions. Recently a second edition has been issued in England, and several improvements have been made by the author in his work. This edition is the basis of what is now presented to the public.

The most marked defect in Mr. Pycroft's book, and one which would seriously interfere with its use in America, is its almost entirely ignoring our country, our history, institutions, authors, &c. To an American this is a matter of material moment, and one which could not be passed over in silence. It became necessary, therefore, for the Editor to endeavor to supply

this deficiency by various additions and emendations, which should adapt the volume, in a measure, at least, to the wants of our countrymen, and assist them in the effort to attain sound and correct knowledge of the history and position of the United States, and of the present state and condition of literature and science in our midst. This he has done, as well as he was able, in the intervals of a spare hour or two from his daily avocations; he has not scrupled in every part of the volume to use a free hand in making such alterations, omissions, additions, and the like, as deemed needful in his judgment; and as it has been a labor of love with him, he ventures to claim that he has essentially improved the work of Mr. Pycroft, for use more especially in America. He does not pretend that it is perfect, or that it covers all the ground which the reader might expect that it should. He does not imagine that in the lists of books on special subjects, any thing like fullness or completeness has been attained; yet, although sensible of the imperfections of the volume, he is clear in the conviction that it will serve a good

purpose in the community of our day, when the utilitarian tendency is so powerful in all directions, and the increase of trashy, worthless literature is so alarming to the philanthropist and the Christian.

Let then the young men and the young women of our country, resolve upon reading and studying such things as will benefit them every way, mentally and morally. Let them read good books, standard books, on history, natural science, general literature, religion, &c.; and be sure they will find their account in it, in the saving of time, in the strengthening the intellect, in the cultivation of the moral perceptions, in the fitting them for useful and happy lives, while it shall please God to spare them to their country and friends, and in enabling them to prepare for an unending existence of peace and joy in the world to come.

J. A. S.

NEW YORK, *February 22d*, 1854.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND ENGLISH EDITION

MISS JANE C. divided her in-door hours into three parts: the housekeeping and dinner-ordering cares of life claimed one part; bearing two younger sisters say their lessons a second part; and during the third and most delightful remainder she would lock her chamber door, and move on the marker of Russell's "Modern Europe" at the rate of never less than fifteen pages an hour, and sometimes more.

Being so vexatious as to ask wherein her satisfaction consisted, I was told--in the thought that she did her duty; that she kept her resolution; that she read as much as her friends; that continually fewer histories remained to read; and that she hoped one day to excel in literature.

A few torturing questions elicited that neither the labor nor the resolution aforesaid had produced any sensible increase, or more than a vague but anxious expectation, of available information or mental improvement. A painful suspicion arose that there

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was some truth in the annoying remark of a certain idle companion, that she was "stupefying her brains for no good."

The exposure of an innocent delusion is mere cruelty, unless you replace the shadow by the substance; so a list of books and plan of operations was promised by the next post. Adam Smith attempted in a pamphlet what resulted in his "Wealth of Nations" after the labor of thirty years. My letter grew into a volume, now offered for the guidance of youth in each and every department of literature.

A large edition has been circulated, and a demand for a second enables me to notice many recent publications, and to profit by the suggestions of "gentle readers" and severer critics. In reply to repeated inquiries how the Author could have forgotten such and such works of undoubted authority, he replies, that no student would thank him for transcribing the Catalogue of the Bodleian, however much it might add to his reputation for extensive reading. Without aspiring to direct the future studies of Mr. Macaulay in History, of Dr. Buckland in Geology, or of the Duke of Wellington in Military Tactics, he is happy to say, that very learned men have expressed their regret that in their early studies they had not the benefit of such simple guidance as this volume affords.

J. P.

BARNSTABLE, 1850.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Preface	5
Preface to Second English Edition.....	9
Contents.....	11
Summary	13

PART I

CHAPTER I. The Kind of Work to be Done.....	17
" II. How to Begin and Go on.....	40
" III. Readers and Books: Use and Abuse	65

PART II

CHAPTER I. Encouragements to Study and Reading... ..	109
" II. On the Study of the History of the United States of America	131
" III. On the Study of English History.....	136
" IV. On the Study of the History of Modern Europe	148
" V. On the Study of Roman History.....	165
" VI. On the Study of Grecian History, and Ancient History generally	178
" VII. How to Remember what we Read.....	207