

**LOUIS AGASSIZ AS A
TEACHER: ILLUSTRATIVE
EXTRACTS ON HIS
METHOD OF INSTRUCTION**

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Louis Agassiz as a Teacher: Illustrative Extracts on His Method of Instruction by Lane Cooper

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LOUIS AGASSIZ

LOUIS AGASSIZ AS A TEACHER

ILLUSTRATIVE EXTRACTS ON
HIS METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY

LANE COOPER

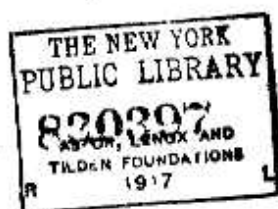
PROFESSOR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
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The beauty of his better self lives on
In minds he touched with fire, in many an eye
He trained to Truth's exact severity;
He was a Teacher: why be grieved for him
Whose living word still stimulates the air?
In endless file shall loving scholars come
The glow of his transmitted touch to share.

Lowell Agassiz.



Ms. A. 9. 2. 6/17.

PREFACE

IF it be asked why a teacher of English should be moved to issue this book on Agassiz, my reply might be: 'Read the Introductory Note'—for the answer is there. But doubtless the primary reason is that I have been taught, and I try to teach others, after a method in essence identical with that employed by the great naturalist. And I might go on to show in some detail that a doctoral investigation in the humanities, when the subject is well chosen, serves the same purpose in the education of a student of language and literature as the independent, intensive study of a living or a fossil animal, when prescribed by Agassiz to a beginner in natural science. But there is no need to elaborate the point. Of those who are likely to examine the book, some already know the underlying truth involved, others will grasp it when it is first presented to them (and for these my slight and pleasant labors are designed), and the rest will

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find a stumbling-block and foolishness—save for the entertainment to be had in the reading of biography.

I have naturally kept in mind the needs of my own students, past and present, yet I believe these pages may be useful to students of natural science as well as to those who concern themselves with the humanities. We live in an age of narrow specialization—at all events in America. Agassiz was a specialist, but not a 'narrow' one. His example should therefore be salutary to those persons, on the one hand, who think that a man can have general culture without knowing some one thing from the bottom up, and, on the other, to those who immerse themselves and their pupils blindly in special investigation, without thought of the *prima philosophia* that gives life and meaning to all particular knowledge. There can be no doubt that science and scholarship in this country are suffering from a lack of sympathy and contact between the devotees of the several branches, and for want of definite efforts to bridge the gaps between various disciplines wherever this is possible. It may not often

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be possible until men of science generally again take up the study of Plato and Aristotle, or at least busy themselves, as did Agassiz, with some comprehensive modern philosopher like Schelling. But it should not be very hard for those who are engaged in the biological sciences and those who are given to literary pursuits to realize that they are alike interested in the manifestations of one and the same thing, the principle of life. In Agassiz himself the vitality of his studies and the vitality of the man are easily identified.

In conclusion I must thank the publishers, Houghton Mifflin Company, for the use of selections from the copyright books of Mrs. Agassiz and Professor Shaler; these and all other obligations are, I trust, indicated in the proper places by footnotes. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor Burt G. Wilder for his interest and help throughout.

LANE COOPER

CORNELL UNIVERSITY,
April 7, 1917.