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The life of Caleb Bingham.

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THE LIFE OF CALEB BINGHAM

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THE LIFE OF CALEB BINGHAM

BY

JEAN G. YERENANCE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science Degree

Massachusetts State College

1943
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THE LIFE OF CALEB BINGHAM
Introduction

There are very few persons living today to whom the name Caleb Bingham means anything; yet a century and a half ago it was familiar to schoolchildren throughout the United States. He was known chiefly as a teacher and as the author of textbooks which were used extensively in this country. So short is the human memory, however, that all but the barest traces of the life and work of this man have disappeared. What has remained are copies of his textbooks, brief family and official records, and a short memoir written in 1850 by his loyal friend and associate, William B. Fowle.

Caleb Bingham is usually given a paragraph or two in books dealing with education in the early days of the American nation, but he deserves more than this. Through his textbooks he had a direct effect upon the educational methods and the subject matter of many American elementary schools for several generations; through his own teaching he influenced for over twelve years the many children in his care; and largely through his efforts the Boston school system was reformed.

A man who has been as important and as influential as Caleb Bingham does not deserve to be forgotten. His
educational theories and activities should be studied for the light which they can shed upon early American education and for any suggestions which may be of use today. Because education is a social thing in which the whole life and personality of the educator is a vital factor, one should have a complete picture of the man. This I have attempted to do, to show Caleb Bingham not solely as a teacher, but as a man whose varied activities influenced the important part which he played in the educational development of our country.
CHAPTER I

THE YOUTH OF CALEB BINGHAM
Chapter I
The Youth of Caleb Bingham

Salisbury is a picturesque little town lying among small lakes and mountains in the very northwestern corner of Connecticut. Although there are some industries located there, it is primarily an agricultural district, and the population of the town is today only 2,767.¹

The first settlers of Salisbury were Dutchmen who came over from the valley of the Hudson and Englishmen who found the eastern part of Connecticut becoming too crowded for their tastes; and by the year 1740 there were about sixteen families, probably not over one hundred people, living there. In the following year, the town was incorporated.² At this time the Indians were still active in this area; and, though there were no actual conflicts, the frontiersmen attended church fully armed, and a guard was stationed at the door.³ Even as late as 1742 there were disputes with the Indians as to land claims in Salisbury, and one Daniel Edwards was appointed to purchase from the Indians two

¹. Workers of the Federal Writers' Project, Connecticut, p. 419.
². Historical Collections Relating to the Town of Salisbury, p. 132.
³. Ibid., p. 127.
square miles at the northeast corner of the town in exchange for two blankets.\textsuperscript{4}

The Indians gradually disappeared, however, and the town grew rapidly. In 1755, the taxable estate amounted to £9988. 4s. 6d.,\textsuperscript{5} and a year later the population was estimated at 1100.\textsuperscript{6} By 1774, there were 1,936 white and forty-four colored inhabitants.\textsuperscript{7}

It was in this little country town, still almost in the frontier stage of development, that Caleb Bingham was born, probably on the 15th of March, 1757.\textsuperscript{8} He came of sturdy English stock. Thomas Bingham had migrated from Sheffield, England to America in 1660 - at the age of eighteen - and had finally settled in Windham, Connecticut in 1671.\textsuperscript{9} The land records of the

\begin{enumerate}
\item Samuel Church, \textit{A Historical Address}, p. 12.
\item Ibid., p. 20.
\item Historical Collections, p. 132.
\item Ibid., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 21.
\item T.A. Bingham in \textit{The Bingham Family in America} gives Caleb's date of birth as either March 15, 1757 or April 18, 1760. The cause of this confusion is not clear. All other authorities (Fowle, Chapman, D.N.B.) give the 1757 date. The genealogy is also uncertain of the date of his death, but Fowle sets it definitely.
\item C.D. Bingham, \textit{The Bingham Genealogy}, p. 3.
\end{enumerate}
town of Salisbury show that on the 11th of December, 1745, Jabez Bingham (probably Thomas's grandson) of Windham County was granted 250 acres in Salisbury "near Thomas Knowles Grant and land of Elias Reed of Stamford". The "consideration" was £520. Three of Jabez Bingham's sons came to Salisbury and lived on this land under the mountain. Caleb Bingham was probably born here, for it was not until after his birth that his father, Daniel, the fourth son of Jabez bought a farm about three miles north of Salisbury between the beautiful Washinee and Washining Lakes. On his mother's side, Caleb was a descendant of Roger Conant, who came from England to Salem in 1624 to promote the settlement of the new country. His son Exercise had two sons, Josiah and Caleb, and moved to Connecticut. Caleb's youngest daughter, Hannah, married Daniel Bingham (probably in 1745) and came with him to Salisbury in 1750. As was customary in those days, the family of Daniel and Hannah Bingham was large; there were at least

10. Historical Collections, p. 27.
11. Church, op. cit., p. 79.
five boys and two girls who lived, and several more children died in infancy. The Bingham's were well known in the vicinity, and one historian has stated: "Of the Bingham's it was once said, that they and their kindred constituted half of the population in the northern section of the town.

Caleb was the sixth child and second son of Daniel. It is not difficult to imagine the type of childhood that he enjoyed at the farm; for with only two sons in the family there would be many chores and odd jobs to be done. The harder work was probably left to the older boy, Daniel Jr., however, because Caleb seems to have been a rather delicate child. His sisters recalled that "Caleb was a slender boy, while his brother Daniel was unusually robust." This early indication is significant, for throughout his life he had rather frequent lapses into ill-health and never seemed to be particularly strong. Daniel was seven years older than Caleb, and this fact, together with his rather poor health, probably caused the younger boy to resort frequently to

14. Historical Collections, passim.
15. Church, op. cit., p. 79.
16. Quoted in Fowle, op. cit., p. 325.
his books during his leisure rather than to the more strenuous games of the older boys. His youth was happy, however, and he had the type of affection for his native town that usually comes only from pleasant associations. Fowle states: "The homestead came into the possession of Caleb, whose local attachment induced him, much against his interest and the advice of his family, to buy out the other heirs, and erect a somewhat expensive house adjoining the old mansion in which he had spent his youth."\textsuperscript{17}

Caleb's early education was probably obtained at home and at the village school, but there are no records to prove this fact. There undoubtedly was a school in Salisbury, however, for Connecticut had required town schools for some years, and in 1750 had enacted a school law requiring that: "Towns of 70 families, having but one ecclesiastical society and ecclesiastical societies that have 70 families shall maintain, at least, one good school for eleven months of the year. Towns and societies of less than 70 families need continue their school only one-half the year."\textsuperscript{18} Caleb must have been a good student and showed even then a leaning toward the

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} E.G. Dexter, \textit{History of Education in the U.S.}, p. 83.
academic life. A letter written by him to Daniel in 1803 remarks: "I well remember, when I was a boy, how ardently I longed for the opportunity of reading, but had no access to a library." 19

Daniel probably did not go on beyond this elementary school training; but Caleb showed greater promise and was sent to Mansfield, Connecticut to be prepared for college by the Rev. Dr. Slater. How long this preparatory period lasted we can only guess, but it probably required at least several years. Ordinarily a Connecticut boy of this time would have gone to Yale, but Bingham was related - somewhat distantly - to the Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, 20 who had in 1770 established Dartmouth College and Moor's Indian Charity School in the wilds of New Hampshire. Dartmouth had had a precarious infancy, but when Dr. Wheelock died in 1779 he had had the satisfaction of seeing seventy-two students graduate. Caleb Bingham entered in 1778. At this time there were, besides Dr. Wheelock, two tutors on the faculty. 21


20. "Sarah, Dr. Wheelock's sister married a Joseph Bingham of Windham. Dr. Wheelock's second wife was Mary Standish. By her he had Mary, married to Jabez Bingham of Salisbury." David McClure, Memoirs of Eleazar Wheelock, . . . , p. 209.

There are no records of the requirements for entrance into Dartmouth at this time, but it is probable that they did not vary much from those of 1796, which McClure describes as follows:

The qualifications for admission into the Freshman class are, a good moral character, a good acquaintance with Virgil, Cicero's select orations, the Greek Testament, knowledge to translate English into Latin, and an acquaintance with the fundamental rules of Arithmetic.22

The course of study which Bingham must have encountered was also, probably, not unlike that of 1796, which required, for the freshmen, Latin and Greek Classics, Arithmetic, English Grammar and Rhetoric; for the sophomores, Latin and Greek Classics, Logic, Geography, Arithmetic, Geometry, Criticism, Trigonometry, Algebra, Conic Sections, Surveying, Belle Lettres; for the juniors, Latin and Greek Classics, Geometry, Natural and Moral Philosophy, Astronomy; and for the seniors, Metaphysics, Theology, Natural and Political Law. The study of Hebrew, Oriental Languages, and French was recommended.23

Judging from his activities in later life, one would suppose that the subjects most appealing to Bingham

23. Ibid., p. 154.
were the liberal arts, not the sciences, and the living languages rather than the dead. He must have learned French here, for there exists a letter written by him from Dartmouth to a young friend in the spring of 1783. It is written in the stilted, Anglicized French of the beginning student. Bingham's interest in French continued, and in later years he published a creditable translation of Chateaubriand's short novel of Indian life, *Atala*. Fowle says, "He was a good French scholar when French was not a common attainment." He was also known as an orator, and his classmates voted him the best speaker in the class. Here at Dartmouth, too, he showed evidence of being a good student, and Fowle states: "The respectful intercourse that always existed between Mr. Bingham, the Wheelocks, father and son, the professors of the college, and the venerable Eden Burroughs, clergyman of the town, to much of which the writer was a witness, abundantly proves the high estimation in which Mr.

24. See Appendix A.
25. See page 149.
Bingham was held as a scholar and a man."

If further proof of his good record were needed, it is to be found in the fact that immediately after he was graduated from Dartmouth in 1782 he was appointed Master of Moor's Charity School, the Indian school which was managed by the college. The enrollment of the school at this time is not known, but it probably was small because the recent Revolution had dispersed many of the Indian students.

Bingham was at Moor's School for two years, but in the spring of 1784 he made the momentous decision which led him into his real life work. He decided to go to Boston and open there an elementary school for girls. The details of the start of this venture and the feelings of the twenty-seven-year-old school-teacher are most expressively summed up in the letter which he sent back to John Wheelock from Boston on May 24, 1784.

Agreeably to your desire, I take this method to inform you, that I arrived safe to this place, after the usual term for performing the journey; and found matters, relative to my residence here, equal to my

28. Ibid., p. 326.
expectations.

The recommendation which you were generously pleased
to honor me with, has procured me the friendship of a
number of gentlemen of the foremost rank in this town,
who are not wanting to afford me all the assistance
which I need.

It is a week since I opened a School for the in-
struction of young ladies; the particulars concerning
which, if you wish to learn them, the bearer of this
can inform you.31

How I shall succeed in the business is, altogether
uncertain; yet I trust I shall be enabled to conduct
myself in such a manner as not to wound my benefactors
or bring disgrace upon myself.

As I was wanted in two different places in this
town, I had an opportunity of treating with the parties,
pretty much upon my own ground; which I am sensible was
more agreeable to your wishes, as well as my own.

For (whether it be a crime in me or not) I constant-
ly feel a sort of ambitious pride, which, I think, is
excited within me, rather from a sense of the reputation
of the Institution, of which I have the honor to be a
member, than from my own personal character.32

For all the remaining years of his life Caleb
Bingham was to be intimately associated with the educational
development of the city of Boston.

31. Unfortunately, the bearer was not identified.

15-16.
CHAPTER II

BOSTON AND THE BINGHAM SCHOOL
Chapter II

Boston and the Bingham School

The Boston into which Caleb Bingham stepped must have seemed like a metropolis to this youth from the country, but a modern Bostonian would scarcely have recognized his native city. Back Bay was still a bay, and along the Charles, mud flats appeared at low tide. The North End was the most fashionable section of town, where the Mathers, Reveres, Hitchbornes, Hutchinsons, and their friends resided. Cornhill was a thriving business center, and a favorite walk took one along the promontory known as Copp's Hill, where the famous cemetery was being started. Since in many districts there were no street numbers for houses to simplify things for the stranger, a perfectly straight street might change its name every few blocks. As a result of this system many of the street names have now been changed. An interesting picture of the town is to be found in a pamphlet relating to the Park Street Church:

When the church was built in 1809, Boston still retained the character of an old English market town. There were no curbstones to mark the line between sidewalk and street. The cows were still driven to the Common for pasture, the town-crier still performed his duties, and the old tavern signs still hung over the cobblestone streets.

There were only two houses of more than one story on Common Street. Colonnade Row had not been built.

With the many Additional Buildings, &c. New Streets, &c. to the Year 1762.
Boston was then a city of gardens. There were only a few residences on Beacon Hill: the western slope was a series of terraces. The present commercial business section of the city still retained its residential character, with its old-fashioned gardens, trees, and churches.¹

The appearance of Boston was not the only thing which was vastly different at this early date; the school system was also in its infancy. There were no public elementary schools in the town where young children could be prepared for the grammar schools, to which they were admitted at the age of seven or older. Such preparation was to be taken care of at home or, as was more usual, at a private school. As for secondary education, there were two Latin schools and three writing schools.² In these writing schools the emphasis was placed upon penmanship and elementary arithmetic. Reading, spelling, and the Catechism were "of little importance and almost incidental."³ The schools were supervised by a board of selectmen consisting of from three to nine citizens elected annually by the town. These selectmen served as a school committee and

¹. Committee for the Preservation of Park Street Church, The Preservation of Park Street Church, p. 9.


had charge of hiring teachers, supervising their work in a general way, and providing the necessary funds. The salaries of the Masters of the five schools were low. In 1784 the two masters of the Latin Schools, Samuel Hunt and Nathan Davis, each received $230; and the three other masters, John Tileston, James Carter, and John Vinall, each received $200 for the year's work. There was, in addition, a small house rent allowance. In these public schools only boys were admitted.

At this time, the theory that the woman should confine herself to her household duties had not yet been seriously challenged. These duties the young girl could learn through an apprenticeship to her mother, and the dutiful wife had no necessity for knowing anything of learning or business since her legal and economic status was practically nil. The wife and all her estate, with the exception of her personal clothing, was the property of the husband, to be disposed of as he desired. Moreover, as Woody has pointed out,

The idea prevailed that an educated wife was, after a fashion an infringement upon the domain of man, that the wife of Winthrop lost her mind because she left her proper domestic duties and indulged herself in literary pursuits; and that, at any rate, to

seek culture of the mind was to transgress the law of God, who had given her the home and fixed her in it.®

There were some, however, who rebelled against this narrow view of the position of women and spoke with considerable vigor for their education. One of the best known of these spokesmen was Abigail Adams, who wrote in a letter to her husband in 1778:

At the same time, I regret the trifling, narrow, contracted education of the females of my own country. . . . But in this country, you need not be told how much female education is neglected, nor how fashionable it has become to ridicule female learning; though I acknowledge it my happiness to be connected with a person of a more generous mind and liberal sentiments. I cannot forbear transcribing a few generous sentiments which I lately met with upon this subject. 'If women,' says the writer, 'are to be esteemed our enemies, methinks it is an ignoble cowardice, thus to disarm them and not allow them the same weapons we use ourselves; but if they deserve the title of our friends, 'tis an inhuman tyranny to debar them of the privileges of ingenious education, which would also render their friendship so much more delightful to themselves and to us. Nature is seldom observed to be niggardly of her choicest gifts to the sex. Their senses are generally as quick as ours; their reason as nervous, their judgment as mature and solid. To these natural perfections add but the advantages of acquired learning, what polite and charming creatures would they prove; whilst their external beauty does the office of a crystal to the lamp, not shrouding, but disclosing, their brighter intellects. Nor need we fear to lose our empire over them by thus improving their native abilities; since, where there is most learning, sense, and knowledge, there is always observed to be the most modesty and rectitude of manners'.®


Somewhat later, these liberals had gained ground; and Benjamin Russell, in *Thoughts Upon Female Education*, written in 1798, could state that the principal part of a woman's education should consist of a mastery of the English language; ability to read and write well; knowledge of figures and book-keeping; an acquaintance with geography; some instruction in chronology, vocal music, dancing; and the reading of history, travels, poetry, and moral essays. Such a curriculum was even then obviously an example of wishful thinking, but it shows that attention was being given to the matter of female education.

There are conflicting reports as to the actual extent of the educational opportunity for girls in Massachusetts about 1784. Although it is true that the state laws were so worded as to include girls in the compulsory elementary school training, it is doubtful that these laws were so effective as some histories of education would lead one to think. After an exhaustive study of the records of two hundred New England towns, Small ad-


8. See the Massachusetts School Ordinances of 1642 and 1647.
mitted that only in twelve were there even implied permissions for girls to attend the local schools.\(^9\) Meriwether reported, "A schoolmaster who also wrote a textbook placidly drops a word or two relating to the fair sex - 'it is generally remarked that they are so unhappy as seldom to be found either to write or cipher well' - and this just before 1800."\(^10\) In 1773, the town of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, invited one David McClure "to take care of a public school for Misses." In his diary, the master recorded it as his belief that "this is...the only female school (supported by the town) in New England, it is a wise and useful institution."\(^11\)

Despite this evidence of the scarcity of opportunity for girls all over New England, it is still strange to find the lack of any real provision for their education in a town as large and as wealthy as Boston was in 1784. As a partial correction of this deficiency, and to augment their own slender earnings, many public school teachers in


Boston resorted to "keeping" private schools for girls between the forenoon and afternoon sessions of their writing schools. Fowle says of this practice: "How insignificant this chance for an education was, may be gathered from the fact, that all the public teachers who opened private schools were uneducated men selected for their skill in penmanship and the elements of arithmetic."\(^{12}\)

In discussing the status of female education in Boston in 1782, Woody has included this letter written by John Eliot to Jeremy Balknap:

> We don't pretend to teach ye female part of ye town anything more than dancing, or a little music perhaps, (and these accomplishments must necessarily be confined to a very few,) except ye private schools for writing, which enables them to write a copy, sign their names, &c, which they might not be able to do without such a privilege. & with it I will venture to say that a lady is a rarity among us who can write a page of commonplace sentiment, the words being well spelt, & ye style and language kept up with purity and elegance.\(^{13}\)

Such, then was the situation in the Boston schools when Caleb Bingham arrived to open his school for girls.

Bingham finally decided upon a location for his school, rented a room at Number Three State Street,\(^{14}\)

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and applied for his teaching license. This was granted him on May 12, 1784, and the Selectmen noted in their minutes for that date: "Mr. Caleb Bingham approbated by the Selectmen to keep a private school for the instruction of young Ladys in the useful branches of Reading, writing, etc." Unfortunately, there does not exist a contemporary description of the school; the only available one is that written by Fowle, who no doubt derived his information from Bingham himself. Fowle states that the subjects taught were writing, arithmetic, spelling, reading, and English grammar. The school was apparently very successful, and the pupils came from the most respectable families of Boston. There were no real competitors, in the form of other private schools for girls; and the young school master found himself on the road to prestige and fortune. Bingham's school was probably designed for girls of the age of our modern elementary school students, and the plan was undoubtedly to give them some useful knowledge rather than to try to make scholars of them. This

15. Reports of the Record Commissioner of the City of Boston, Vol. 25, Selectmen's Minutes (1776-87), p. 244.
was certainly a practical step forward. The minds of Bostonians were not sufficiently advanced to embrace the idea of the college-educated woman, and a school which strove to prepare for or to emulate the Latin School would never have met with financial success. As it was, the merchants of Boston saw an opportunity to give their daughters the fundamentals of an education and to prepare them to become better helpmates to their future husbands. It is also of interest to remember that at this time in New England it was not unusual for a widow to continue her husband's business with the aid of sons or apprentices, and some elementary training would undoubtedly be invaluable in such a situation.

Fowle states that Bingham's introduction of the study of English grammar into the curriculum marked the first pretentious effort to teach that subject in Boston; but after a thorough study of the question Lyman concluded that this statement was somewhat exaggerated, as there had been a few isolated attempts to teach grammar, some of which antedated 1775. It seems probable, however,

that Bingham's teaching of the subject was more serious than the other attempts, if only because he compiled a book to be used in his school, entitled *The Young Lady's Accidence*, and first published in 1785.\textsuperscript{19}

It was about this time, when the school had been well started and was running smoothly, that Bingham invited a former classmate from Dartmouth, Elisha Ticknor, to come to Boston to assist with the private school. On October 12, 1785, Ticknor was granted a license to teach youth grammar and arithmetic.\textsuperscript{20} Ticknor is described as a "tall, thin, erect and grave man, a deacon of old South Church, and more stiff and ceremonious than his remote relative, Mr. Bingham."\textsuperscript{21} Ticknor was later a master of the South Reading School in Boston and was prominent in New England educational circles for many years.

It seems likely that it was about this time also that Bingham became connected with the Phillips Academy at Andover. There are a number of conflicting reports concerning this connection and at just what period in

\begin{enumerate}
\item[19.] For a more complete discussion of this book and the methods used in teaching it see pages 95-102.
\item[20.] P. Holmes, *A Tercentenary History of the Boston Public Latin School*, p. 453.
\item[21.] Fowle, *Memoir*. . . , p. 335.
\end{enumerate}
Bingham's career it took place. Fowle and Heck have tried to place it in 1784, before Bingham came to Boston, but this does not fit in with other verified dates. The town records of Boston prove beyond doubt that Bingham went straight to Boston in 1784; his letter to Wheelock substantiates this fact. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence to prove that Bingham was at Andover for several months during 1786; and it would seem plausible that he might have left Boston then, entrusting the care of his school to the capable Mr. Ticknor.

Bingham's stay at Andover was brief and not particularly important. Phillips Academy at Andover had been started in 1778 and had flourished despite, or perhaps because of, the strict disciplinary methods of the first principal, Dr. Pearson. Late in 1785 or early in 1786 Dr. Pearson resigned to become the professor of Hebrew at Harvard, and Bingham was apparently invited to fill the vacancy until a permanent master could be found. He was in charge for several months, and was even invited to remain as the permanent principal; but his strength was not equal to the task of managing the growing institution. On March 2, 1786, Judge Phillips wrote to Mme. Phillips: "Mr. Bingham had better attend the Academy as health will permit though it should be
but half the time than to overdo and render himself unable to attend at all."\textsuperscript{22} One of the pupils at Andover at this time was Josiah Quincy, later to be famous in Boston political life, who had entered the academy at the age of six. Quincy later wrote of the Bingham interlude:

As the subject lies in my mind, in the autumn of 1785, Mr. Bingham succeeded Dr. Pearson, in the care of the academy, but did not remain longer than the April of 1786. While there I was his pupil, and recollect well that his kind and affectionate manner of treating the scholars gained their attachment, so that his determination not to become a candidate for the permanent instructorship was a subject of great disappointment to the boys.\textsuperscript{23}

After this brief venture at Andover, it would seem that Bingham returned to his teaching in Boston. This supposition is further substantiated by the fact that he now had a family to support. On January 30, 1786, the Rev. John Lothrop had married Caleb Bingham and Hannah Kimbel of Boston.\textsuperscript{24} They made their home, after Bingham had returned from Andover, on Bennet Street, a short

\textsuperscript{22} Quoted in C.M. Fuess, \textit{An Old New England School}, pp. 96-7.

\textsuperscript{23} Quoted in Fowle, \textit{Memoir. . .}, p. 320.

\textsuperscript{24} Reports of the Record Commissioner of the City of Boston, \textit{Boston Marriages 1752-1809}, Vol. 30, p. 144. The marriage intentions gave the bride's name as Hannah Kemble.
street running southeast off Orange Street (now Washington Street) to the harbor.\textsuperscript{25} A year after their marriage their first daughter, Sophia, was born. Their second daughter was born in 1790.\textsuperscript{26} Whether by fate or by choice, Caleb Bingham seems never to have been able to escape the feminine touch.


\textsuperscript{26} T.A. Bingham's \textit{The Bingham Family in the U.S.} (Vol. II, p. 15) also lists two other daughters who died in their infancy, but the Boston Town records show no evidence of this fact.
CHAPTER III

BINGHAM AND THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Chapter III
Bingham and the Boston Public Schools

All went well with the Bingham school until 1789. This was a year of change in education in New England. The previous Massachusetts school legislation had looked very efficient on paper, but it was not being enforced because the provisions were quite impractical in certain communities. A new plan was needed which might look at first like a retreat but which would actually be an improvement in that it would be possible to enforce it. Agitation for such a law culminated in "An Act to Provide for the instruction of Youth and for the promotion of good Education" which was passed by the Massachusetts State Senate on June 25, 1789.¹ This act legalized the district school system; required towns of fifty families to support an English school at least six months of the year (instead of twelve); made proportionate provisions for larger towns; enlarged the curriculum to include reading, writing, the English language, arithmetic, orthography, and instruction in "decent behavior"; required teachers to be citizens and

to be college graduates or to have certificates from learned ministers; provided fines for towns failing to comply; made some slight provisions for elementary schools and for local supervision of schools.\(^2\)

By this same year of 1789 there was also agitation about education in Boston. The thrifty Yankees there investigated their finances and found that they were paying a good deal of money in school taxes to educate their sons. Then they had to pay more to Bingham to educate their daughters. Indignant protests began to be heard throughout the city; some reform was obviously called for. In fact, a complete reorganization of the Boston school system was imminent. A distinguished committee of Bostonians, including Samuel Adams, drew up a recommendation entitled "A New System of Public Education" and presented it at the town meeting on October 15, 1789. It was immediately adopted.\(^3\)

The Reorganization Bill, as it was commonly called, provided for a number of changes and innovations. In the first place, the problem of the education of the girls


\(^3\) P. Holmes, *A Tercentenary History of the Boston Public Latin School*, p. 18.
was tackled. During the summer months, from April 20th to October 20th the girls were to be permitted to attend the reading schools and the writing schools. But since coeducation was then something to be regarded as an instrument of the devil, the girls attended one school while the boys were in the other. By 1790, there were 539 girls and 762 boys in all the schools.4

Secondly, the new act rearranged the schools themselves. Instead of two Latin schools there was to be only the Boston Latin School, and its curriculum was reduced from a seven- to a four-year course.5 Four new schools were established. Three of these were to be reading schools which would offer instruction in reading, spelling, grammar, and geography. The fourth was to be a writing school, additional to the two which already existed. These reading and writing schools were in separate buildings and under independent masters, but each pair was connected in that the pupils alternated between one reading school and its corresponding writing school. For one month the boys would attend the writing school in the


morning and the reading school in the afternoon while the girls attended the reading school in the morning and the writing school in the afternoon. The next month the schools would be reversed to even things up, for Thursday and Saturday afternoons were holidays.

With the legal basis for reorganization established, there was still work to be done to put the system into operation. Most of the schools which were to be continued remained substantially the same, but some new buildings and instructors had to be secured. By unanimous vote of the school board, four days after the Reorganization Bill was accepted, Caleb Bingham was chosen to be the master of the Center Reading School.

To Caleb Bingham his appointment must have appeared something of a triumph. Within six years this young man from the country, educated at one of the nation's youngest

6. As finally set up the schools were:
   South Reading School under Mr. Ticknor.
   South Writing School under Mr. Vinall.
   Center Reading School under Mr. Bingham.
   Center Writing School under Mr. Carter.
   North Reading School under Mr. Cheney.
   North Reading School under Mr. Tilestone.
   Latin and Grammar School under Mr. Hunt.

colleges, had come to the city and, through his own initiative and ability, made himself a well-known and respected educator. His pleasure, however, was perhaps not unmixed; he now had a family to support, and the salary of a public school teacher was not excessive. At this time a master received $666.64 a year plus a living allowance of $200. From his private school Bingham had undoubtedly received more than this; but the honor of the position offered him, together with the prospect of losing many of his pupils to the public schools persuaded him to accept the offer. His letter of acceptance, addressed to the Chairman of the School Board, John Scollay, is typical in its modesty and restraint. It reads:

Gentlemen,

I thank you for the honor you have done me, in electing me master of the Center Reading School in this town.

The task you have assigned me, I am sensible is arduous, and I am not without my fears, how I shall

8. Schedule of the expenses of the town of Boston from May 1, 1798 to May 1, 1799.

This was a rather good salary for a time in which the average teacher of Massachusetts earned about four hundred dollars a year and one could buy a bushel of apples for eighteen cents, a bushel of potatoes for seventeen cents, butter for seventeen cents a pound, eggs for seven cents a dozen, milk for three cents a quart and beef for four cents a pound. 16th Annual Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, 1885, pp. 333-422. These prices were average for the state, but in Boston costs may have been slightly higher.
succeed in the execution of it; yet, relying on your readiness, at all times, to assist me with your advice and direction, I will endeavor to serve the town according to the best of my abilities. I am apprehensive I shall make a small sacrifice, in point of interest, by relinquishing my present school; but should that be the case, the hope of contributing more extensively to the public good will be my consolation.

I am,

Gentlemen

with all due respect,

Your most obedient

and very humble servant,

Caleb Bingham.

The location of the Center Reading School still remained to be settled. A committee was appointed to look into the situation, and they reported to the school committee

that they have viewed the School House in States' Street, now occupied by Mr. Bingham and find that in its present state, it will admit of 150 scholars; and that it can be so enlarged, as to hold 200; that they have convened upon the subject with Col. Dawes [10], who has the letting of the place, and he appeared desirous of accommodating the Town with it, and make such alterations in it, as are necessary, provided it can be done without injury to Mr. Bingham, who now hires it. They would also inform the Committee, that they suppose, the large brick Stable fronting Bromfields Lane, belonging to the State, might be procured if the General Court was sitting; and, with a small expense be made a large and convenient School House. [11]

A letter dated December 12, 1789, made definite the

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9. This letter is in the possession of the Boston School Committee.

10. Quite possibly William Dawes, who warned the farmers of the British approach in 1775.

arrangement with Dawes, who was to rent the building to the town for £20 a year. This contract continued for only one year, however, for in 1790 the Center Reading and Writing School was built on School Street, where the City Hall is now located. Although the two schools were then combined in one building, they kept their respective identities; and the students alternated between them as before. The upper room was the reading school and the lower the writing school, and the masters never changed rooms.

By the beginning of 1790, therefore, Caleb Bingham was a full-fledged master of the Center Reading School and involved in all the activities - the triumphs and the petty squabbles - which such a position entailed. The school sessions and the hours were long. There was no long summer vacation and only a few holidays, and Saturday was only a half holiday (as was Thursday). From the third Monday in April to the third Monday in October school began at eight o'clock and continued until eleven. The afternoon session ran from two to five. During the winter months the school day started

at nine and continued until five, with two hours off for lunch. During November, December, and January, a con-
cession was made to the cold, dark afternoons, and school was over at four-thirty.  

The enrollment in the Center School in July 1790 was four hundred - 220 boys and 180 girls.  

By April of the next year the number of boys had increased to 266 and the girls numbered 210. These pupils were all sup-
posed to be between the ages of seven and fourteen, but occasionally a younger child was admitted by mistake. 

When he applied for admission into the school, the child was examined by the master as to his age and qualifica-
tions. Lists of students enrolled in the school and of applicants for admission were sent in to the school committee at regular intervals by the masters. Three lists signed by Caleb Bingham and dated June, March, and October, 1790, showed that twenty-five boys were ad-
mitted into the Center Reading School during this period 


16. List of Male Members in the Center Reading School, taken April 26, 1791. The boys are listed by name. A note at the end of the list gives the number of girls attending.
and that six were rejected, four because they were deficient in reading and two because they were under age.\textsuperscript{17}

One phase of school government which caused considerable confusion and trouble was the admittance of Latin school scholars into a writing school for part of the day and the permitting of some pupils to spend all day in the writing school instead of attending the reading school for half of the time. Under the reorganized system boys were admitted to the Boston Latin School at the age of ten; but no provision was made for their instruction in English, in penmanship, or in any of the common branches. To remedy this serious defect, the Latin scholars were allowed to attend the writing school two hours forenoon or afternoon, and about thirty availed themselves of the privilege, although they were obliged to neglect one school to attend the other, and unpunctuality and disorder, in all the schools were the natural consequence.\textsuperscript{18}

More serious, perhaps, than this question was the other difficulty which is most ably described in a letter from Caleb Bingham to the School Committee dated December 30, 1790. It reads:

\begin{quote}
Gentlemen,

I have long labored under the embarrassments respecting the government of my school, and have been silent; and, did I not think that longer silence
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} These lists are in the possession of the Boston School Committee.

\textsuperscript{18} Fowle, \textit{Memoir}, . . . , p. 330.
would be criminal in me, I would gladly continue to hold my peace.

I am certain that it is the design of the committee to support good government in all the schools. For this reason, I am confident they would not willingly grant indulgences to any individual school, which should infringe upon the rights of the others. The practice of granting permits to individual scholars to attend all day at the writing school, however well meant, has been attended with very bad consequences with respect to the reading school. If the gentlemen had examined these pupils, critically, before they had granted them permits, they would have found but a few, who could have offered a reasonable excuse for leaving the reading school. The greater part of them have run away to escape punishment, justly due for their crimes. And I have the greatest reason to think, that the confidence they have had of finding refuge in the writing school, has induced several to conduct in a much more disorderly manner, than, otherwise, they would have done.

This practice, Gentlemen, you are sensible, tends greatly towards laxing the reins of government in the reading school; and you need not be told, that, if continued will finally prove its ruin.

My present situation is particularly disagreeable. It is well known to all the pupils, that they can find an asylum in the writing school, let their offences be what they may. All this opens a door for the most aggravating insults, both before, and after they leave me.

The prosperity of all the schools is an object too dear to me, to suffer me to remain a silent spectator of the destruction of any one, especially that with which I am so nearly connected.

It was not my design to enter into particulars; being fully sensible that these few hints would be sufficient to call your attention to the subject; and I doubt not your readiness to afford me relief. 19

Bingham was not the first master to complain of this situation. In March of 1790 Elisha Ticknor wrote to the

19. This letter is in the possession of the Boston School Committee.
committee of his annoyance at the fact that one Charles Brailsford had been permitted to leave his school (the South Reading School) and spend all day at Mr. Vinall's (the South Writing School) despite the fact that he had been "refractory" and expelled. It is not difficult to read between the lines of these letters and picture the type of disorder with which the masters were forced to put up. Probably a good proportion of the boys were only too eager to be expelled so that they could spend the day in the writing school, where they could spend most of the time in mending pens and in developing artistic handwriting, instead of being required to study their grammar and reading. Bingham's letter must have had the desired effect, because the fact that there is no evidence of further complaints would indicate that some sort of adjustment had been made.

Such incidents as these lead one to wonder why it should have been necessary to have two schools where today one does the work of both. To understand the cause of this seeming anomaly, one must have a more detailed knowledge of the work of both schools than has yet been

20. This letter is in the possession of the Boston School Committee.
given. The books used in the reading schools of the 90's were the Bible, Webster's Spelling Book, Webster's Third Part (selections for reading and speaking), and Bingham's Young Lady's Accidence. The Children's Friend and Morse's Geography were allowed but not required, and newspapers could be "Introduced at the discretion of the masters."21 The best descriptions of these schools are to be found in the writings of Fowle. He attended the Boston schools from 1801 to about 1810, and his interest in and knowledge of school work make his notes all the more valuable. He wrote as follows:

In the reading schools, the course was for every child to read one verse of the Bible or a short paragraph of the Third Part. The master heard the first and second, that is, the two highest classes, and the usher heard the two lowest. While one class was reading, the other studied the spelling lesson. The lesson was spelled by the scholars in turn, so that the classes being large, each boy seldom spelled more than one or two words. In grammar, the custom was to recite six or more lines once a fortnight, and to go through the book three times before any application of it was made to what was called parsing.22

When I was in school, composition was not taught, and, although I received the Franklin medal for English Grammar, especially, I am not aware that I ever wrote a word of composition until I left school,


22. Ibid., p. 334.
and I am sure that I never wrote one as a school exercise. I entered what is now called the Eliot School in Boston, at the early age of six years, easily passing for a child of seven... We read one verse, and spelled one or two words every day. My class consisted of twelve forms or long benches, each holding six or eight boys. Each form, on successive days, said grammar, as it was called, and my turn came only once a fortnight, unless I got above the others in spelling, which elevation, of course, brought the grammar lesson somewhat earlier than if I had remained stationary. Six lines of the grammar were the least quantity that was taken for a lesson, but we might say more if we pleased, and he who said the most went to the head of the form. Such was the horror with which this exercise was held, that boys, whose turn it would be to say grammar the next day, would miss words in spelling so as to drop into a lower form, and put off the evil day.23

The writing schools were almost entirely devoted to penmanship, with a smattering of arithmetic. By about 1840, one or two other branches were added to these taught in the writing school; but spelling, grammar, and composition were still taught in a separate room by other teachers, who were not required to teach penmanship. The great advantage of combining penmanship and composition was not fully admitted until after the middle of the last century.24 The separation of the two schools was probably due largely to tradition. The writing schools had developed first and no doubt resisted any attempt to merge them with newer and more

24. Ibid., p. 141.
utilitarian (or so it was then considered) reading schools. There was also the question of masters for these schools. The writing masters were usually chosen for their flowing handwriting rather than for their intelligence or knowledge of any other school subjects. Indeed, well-educated masters were at a premium, and perhaps it was just as well that some of the writing masters had as little contact as they did with any intellectual subjects. Penmanship, however, was given an exceedingly high place in the colonial curriculum; and it was no doubt considered by many to be more important and to deserve more attention and space than the other subjects.

The French language was not taught regularly in these schools; but there was considerable interest in it at this time, and private schools for this subject were common. On four evenings a week Bingham’s school was given over to such an enterprise, conducted by one Joseph Nancrede, who had obtained the permission of the selectmen and of Bingham. In all probability, Bingham was only too glad to foster the spread of this language of which

he had long been fond; and perhaps he even took a few lessons himself.

A triumph for Bingham's school came when it was visited by Marshall Bertrand Bonaparte - the favorite officer of the Emperor - who was in this country to improve relations between his government and ours. The Marshall expressed himself as being "greatly pleased with the recitations of the pupils of the...school." 26 It is not difficult to picture the visit of the famous Frenchman - the tall thin master, courteous, impressed, but dignified - the awed pupils, eager to do their best - and the visitor, interested but hurried, perhaps, and anxious to continue his tour of the city. It is interesting to note that it was at Bingham's school that he stopped, rather than at any other. It may have been that Bingham's interest in and sympathy for the French was one of the reasons for this singular honor.

The Marshall was not the only visitor to the school. In fact, visitors were not at all uncommon. At least once a year the members of the school committee (twelve men appointed annually in accordance with the

Reorganization Bill of 1789) conducted their visitation to check upon the conduct of the school in general and upon the work of the teachers. This visitation, which usually came in July, was the signal for a general exhibition, climaxcd by speeches and recitations by the pupils. The board took its duties seriously and did its best to discover any weaknesses. Controversies between the board and the masters were not infrequent.

One of the questions which came up at a joint meeting of the masters and the school committee was that of discipline. Ordinarily the discipline in the schools at this time was severe. At this meeting, in December, 1789, the masters were requested to give their opinions on corporal punishment and the use of rewards and punishments. All the masters expressed their belief that the former was necessary. Caleb Bingham's reply was the mildest of all. He is reported to have said that he "makes use of ye ferrule and rod, and thinks by a promiscuous collection of boys that he cannot govern a school without corporal punishment - but if he could be permitted to select a number of boys he might proceed without." He also was reported to have made little use of dishonorary badges but to have degraded the boys for negligence or disobedience. He questioned the advisabil-
ity of using medals for rewards. The Franklin Medals were first introduced in 1792, but apparently Bingham did not entirely approve of the practice because of the fact that of the small proportion of the students who tried to win them nearly all were doomed to disappointment.

A further example of Bingham's opinion on discipline is to be found in a letter written by him to a former Boston instructor in 1792. It reads in part:

I know you will participate in my joy, when I inform you that I have gained a complete victory over my schoolboys. They are now nearly as still in the school as the girls. I was obliged to relinquish my method of detaining them after school, on account of Mr. C's conduct. I resolved then to bring the matter to a crisis, and know whether I was master or not. I laid aside all books for the day and spent it in preaching. The next day I undertook to find what virtue there was in the old 'maple whig of seventy-six'. I belabored them from day to day, till they finally gave me the victory. Now and then an old woman, and a few who are not worthy the name of men, and who oppose the doctrines of our forefathers, have murmured, and complained, to the committee. But the boys are silent in school, and that is the main object with us, and I hope we shall be able to silence


28. Benjamin Franklin left a sum of money in his will to be used for such rewards as the Boston School Committee thought best. It was decided to use the money to provide medals to be given to the best scholar in the highest class of each public school for boys above the primary grade.

29. Fowle, Memoirs., p. 335.
This latter description sounds quite unlike Bingham as Fowle would have the world see him, and this is the only report of such severity. He wrote the following of an incident to which he was an eye-witness. Bingham was mildly punishing a colored boy for repeated misconduct. The boy screamed loudly but "did not shed one tear, but Mr. Bingham shed so many and suffered so much, that he soon concluded that, as he could bear no more of it, the boy could not, and the offender was released upon just such a promise as he had made and broken a hundred times before." Fowle also described Bingham's discipline as steady but not severe. In view of these and a few other reports (such as that of Josiah Quincy), it would seem that Bingham was probably a mild-mannered man, not given to asserting himself with the rod unless it seemed absolutely necessary. With a course of study such as that depicted above, it is not to be wondered at that the students became restless and uninterested, and so

30. This letter is quoted in Colesworthy, D.C., John Tileston's School, p. 37.
32. Ibid., p. 344.
resorted to misconduct.

One of the most frequent bones of contention between the masters and the school committee had to do with finances. Before 1791, many of the public school masters had conducted private schools after or between hours. A new ordinance in September, 1791, forbade this practice, and thus caused a loss of income for the teachers, whose salaries, as was mentioned above, were not too large for men with families. Apparently some of the masters did not obey the new rule; but in reply to a question on the subject Bingham wrote to the school committee in August, 1791, that he, at least, had no private scholars. The position of the masters who did have private schools was ably defended by James Carter, who wrote to the school committee on November seventh of the same year. His letter reads in part:

I complied with your order in a Vote passed in the Committee dated September 23 and dismissed my private scholars. But finding myself deprived of an ancient privilege, and reduced to depend on a bare Salary, too small for the support of my family, I have since opened an Evening School, and propose to open my other private School by day. As usual, in both of which I wish to meet your approbation.

To the Town, Gentlemen, my character as a Master,

33. This letter is in the possession of the Boston School Committee.
my diligence, my professional ambition, and my long unremitting services, are fully known. If they are not sufficient to entitle me to your notice, it will be unavailing to plead my condition as a man, as a citizen, and as the parent of a numerous family.

Abhoring a life of Idleness, and being unaccustomed to hours of leisure, I wish to devote my own time to the service of the Town; for surely, if in the intervals of School, I am adding to the knowledge of our youth, in the important branches of Writing, and Arithmetic, the Town is an essential gainer, and if my services are valuable, the discontinuance of them will be attended with loss.

For myself, I ask to be in the same situation in which I was before your vote, - Without it, 'tis impossible for me to live free from embarrassment.

Hard at best is the lot of a Public Writing Master in the Centre of the Town, having constantly a very large school.

The day after this letter was received a meeting was held to consider the question. The notes of the meeting give a clear picture of the controversy. The schoolmasters themselves had requested the conference, and all of them except Mr. Carter attended. Each master was asked to give his opinion upon the subject. Bingham said that he had never conducted a private school since his appointment as master. His opinion, along with that of the other masters, was that a private school would interfere with a public one. The school committee then proposed to raise the salaries of the masters if they would give

34. This letter is in the possession of the Boston School Committee.
up their private scholars. To this compromise all were agreeable; but Mr. Ticknor suggested that, should the addition be made to their salaries, it might be considered as compensation for giving up an established right.35 This arrangement was eventually accepted even by Carter, who agreed, one month later, to give up his private scholars.36 This question was settled, but in 1795 another controversy arose.

On this occasion Caleb Bingham, shaking off his customary retiring modesty, proved himself a courageous champion of the rights of the teachers. It was then customary for the town treasurer, either because he lacked the funds, or because he profited from the speculation which he created, to give the teachers a piece of paper, known as a "Town Order", certifying that the town owed them a certain sum. Many of the teachers, needing money immediately, were forced to sell these certificates at a considerable discount before they were redeemed by the town. On Saturday, March 21, 1795, a note appeared in the Boston Centinal advertising the

35. These notes are in the possession of the Boston School Committee.

36. This letter is in the possession of the Boston School Committee.
sale of Town Orders. The outraged selectmen, claiming that it was "the sense of the town that such a publication was greatly injurious to its interest," called a meeting on Monday and sent for the printer of the paper, Benjamin Russell. The latter, upon being questioned by the Moderator, declared that Mr. Bingham had inserted the advertisement. Bingham was immediately sent for, and he admitted the charge. At this point in the story, the two existing accounts vary. According to the Boston Town Reports: "After considerable evidence had been offered by the Town to show the destructive tendency of such publications, and practices - it was moved, and Voted, that this matter subside."

Fowle's report of the incident is considerably fuller and does not treat the outcome so enigmatically. He states that when the master was asked to apologize for the insult to selectmen the following scene took place:

37. Fowle, Memoir.., p. 331.
39. Ibid., p. 391.
40. Ibid.
Mr. Bingham, nothing daunted, stretched himself to his full height, and, in a voice that no one failed to hear, gave a brief history of his experience, with which the citizens were, probably, unacquainted, and then concluded with these words: 'I have a family and need money. I have done my part of the engagement faithfully, and have no apology to make to those who have failed to do theirs. All I can do is to promise, that, if the town will punctually pay my salary in the future, I will never advertise their orders for sale again.' The treasurer immediately slapped him on the shoulder and said, 'Bingham, you are a good fellow; call at my office after the meeting and I will give you the cash.' Mr. B. had little trouble after that in collecting what was due him for his services.\footnote{Fowle, \textit{Memoir}, ..., p. 331.}

The latter account certainly appears to be accurate, and it is not difficult to understand the reluctance of the town fathers to record for posterity the evidence of their own neglect or dishonesty in this matter. There is no further evidence of a renewal of the conflict, and it may safely be assumed that Bingham won the day.

There is one other mention of similar activities on Bingham's part, but significant only as a spur to a researcher's curiosity and speculation. A brief note in the Boston School Committee Records for December 5, 1794, states that Bingham attended the meeting as requested and, "A conversation ensued on the conduct of Mr. Bingham at the public visitation in July last, a free description
of the subject being had. Voted that, the apology made by Mr. Bingham [for ?] his expressions to the chairman at the public visitation in July is not satisfactory to the Committee."42 What it was that Bingham said is nowhere recorded (perhaps it is just as well), nor is the outcome of the incident hinted at. It is probable that further apologies were made to the insulted chairman and the matter settled out of the committee. At all events, the incident could not have been very serious, because the committee had allowed five months to elapse before mentioning the insult; and Bingham was not publicly reprimanded further.

It was not until the year 1796 that Caleb Bingham finally decided that the life of a public school master was too unrewarding and too strenuous for him. It may have been that he was not on very good terms with the school committee; it may have been that he desired to try educational innovations which the committee would not allow; it may have been that he was tired of teaching grammar out of the book and forcing his pupils to memorize everything; it may have been just his poor

42. City of Boston School Committee Records, 1792-1814, pp. 40-1.
health, or a combination of all of these reasons, which finally persuaded him to hand in his resignation. The school records for June 17, 1796, reported simply: "A letter was received from Mr. Bingham resigning his place as Master of the Center Reading School after the Annual Visitation."⁴³ So ended the public teaching career of one of Boston's most respected masters.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 57.
CHAPTER IV

THE BOOKSTORE AND SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS, AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.
Chapter IV
The Bookstore and Social, Religious, and Political Activities

Caleb Bingham's retirement from the Boston Public School system did not mean that he relinquished his ties with the educational world. On the contrary, his interest in educational progress was keener than ever. Shortly after his retirement, which finally became effective in September, 1796, he went on a trip to study the school systems of New York, Philadelphia, Worcester, and Albany. It is this evident interest in educational reform which leads one to believe that Bingham's resignation was prompted not only by poor health, but by his desires to improve the schools through spreading the doctrines of new educational movements and to protest against the strait-laced and conservative Board of Education of Boston.

It must have been just about this time, perhaps after he had returned from his tour, that Bingham and his family moved from Bennet Street to Essex Street in Boston. Presumably they rented a house there and liked

the location, for in 1799 Bingham bought a house on Essex Street for three thousand dollars. The lot had a fifty-foot frontage and was eighty-six feet deep. It had formerly belonged to some children under the guardianship of Elisha Ticknor, who had held the auction at which Bingham acquired the property.³

Fowle has given posterity a picture of Bingham as he looked about this time.

His height was about six feet, and his frame well proportioned and well developed. His face was pleasant but rather short. His eyes were light blue, his nose short and rather sharp, his hair was dressed with earlocks, powdered, and braided behind, exactly in the style of Washington's. He wore almost to the last, a cocked hat, black coat, and small clothes, with a white vest and stock, and black silk hose. In winter he wore white topped boots, and in summer, shoes with silver buckles. His appearance and manners were those of a gentleman; he was respectful to all; affable, gentle, and free from any of the traits that are apt to cling to the successful pedagogue.⁴

Such was the man who was now to exchange a teaching career for a literary one.

Late in the year 1796, Caleb Bingham rented a small store at Number Forty-Four, Cornhill, in the heart of Boston's commercial section and set himself up as a book-


seller. This store was to be his business for twelve years, until his death in 1817. The store itself was a small, dark shop, only twenty by twenty-five feet, and probably lined from floor to ceiling with books. Perhaps there was a stove in the middle around which Bingham and his friends could sit while they discussed the latest books, for Bingham was no common storekeeper. He selected his stock with care for the educational and moral value of the books; and he liked nothing better than to read and to discuss the theories – especially the educational theories – which he found in the new books coming from abroad.

This was a period of great educational ferment in Europe, and the news of the experiments was just beginning to filter through into America. It was the beginning of the modern era in education. In 1762, Rousseau published *Emile*; and from this work had radiated the whole progressive movement with its emphasis upon the child rather than the subject-matter and the stressing of the importance of interest and motivation in learning. Pestalozzi's *Leonard and Gertrude* appeared in 1781 to

give many of Rousseau's theories a practical presentation, to emphasize vocational as well as intellectual training, and to recommend pleasure instead of pain as the motive of the process. In 1798, Lancaster's Monitorial System appeared to provide a solution for the overworked teacher: it suggested employing the older students to instruct the younger. Shortly after the turn of the century came Herbart's General Pedagogics (1806) and the introduction of the famous Herbartian steps in learning. Obviously, this was a period of great educational activity - one in which intelligent, practical men were engrossed in educational problems. The transfer of these ideas from Europe to America was not immediate. In the years following 1800 the new theories were being introduced here by just such men as Caleb Bingham. He would receive the new books from abroad, read them carefully, and then discuss them with the many friends who dropped into the store. In 1810, at the age of fifteen, William Fowle was apprenticed to Bingham in the bookstore. Fowle later became a well-known educator himself, and one author described his early days with Bingham as follows:

His [Bingham's] bookstore was the favorite resort of all the Boston teachers of that day, and education was the great theme under continual discussion. Mr. Bingham was no believer in the perfection of the prevalent mode of instruction. His visits to New
York and Philadelphia had satisfied him, that a great principle formed the basis of the system of mutual instruction formulated by Joseph Lancaster, while his acquaintance with persons, who had visited the schools of Pestalozzi in Switzerland, had convinced him that something more than book-learning was desirable, and that much of the old routine might and should be laid aside. Manuals published by Lancaster and his friends and by the disciples of Pestalozzi were procured and studied by the apprentice, and the essays of Milton, Priestly, and other philosophical writers on education, were even at that early date, in his library. 6

As will be seen later, the theories of these educators had some influence upon the books which Bingham himself found time to write during the later years of his life.

The publication of these books, as well as the operation of the bookstore, forced Bingham to become a businessman. It was Bingham's practice to allow publishers to print his books and pay him a premium for the privilege. Sometimes this was paid off in books which Bingham wanted either to read or to sell. His income was increased by this method, and he was spared the trouble of many business transactions. 7 As a businessman Bingham was, above all, honest and fair. He never


7. Fowle, op. cit., p. 342. Fowle reports that Bingham received from publishers six or eight hundred dollars annually, even as late as 1816.
tried to take advantage of his customers and refused to incur any debts. He was a firm adherent of the one-price system, and it was undoubtedly due to his influence that all of the Boston booksellers were organized into an association. This association was formed in October, 1801, and it adopted a set of rules and regulations which were written out by Bingham, the secretary of the organization. The rules provided for uniform prices and fixed rates of discount, ostracized those booksellers who refused to join the "union". The association lasted about twenty years.

Along with this interest of Bingham's in books of all kinds went his concern for libraries and his persistent efforts to increase their effectiveness. This interest was apparent as early as 1792, when he was one of the chief agents in establishing the Boston Library Society. The first meetings of the society were probably held at his home. The records of the society

8. Ibid.
9. Rules and Regulations of the Boston Library Society. See Appendix B.
10. G.E. Littlefield, Early Schools and Schoolbooks of New England, p. 188.
were carefully studied by S. S. Shaw, who compiled its history. In describing this first meeting he wrote:

The 'Subscribers of the Boston Library Society,' at a meeting held on the first of November, 1792, adopted a constitution, providing for a Treasurer, a Secretary, a Librarian, and a Board of Trustees, all to be elected at annual meetings in March of each year. The Act of Incorporation, passed June 17, 1794, adopted in substance these original Articles of Association; but neither in that nor in the two acts in amendment thereof was any distinction made between the office of Librarian and the other offices in respect to their being elective. . . . In point of fact, the Librarian was elected at every annual meeting until that of 1816 when it was voted that in future the power of appointing the Librarian be vested in the Trustees. The only names which appear in connection with this meeting are those of the Rev. John Clark, Chairman, Dr. Redford Webster, chosen Treasurer pro tem; the Rev. John Eliot, Mr. Charles Vaughan. At a meeting held December 13 Mr. Caleb Bingham was chosen Librarian and the Rev. Joseph Eckley served on a committee. Shares were to cost ten dollars and conferred a life interest. 11

The society got under way slowly. During the winter of 1792-3 some preliminary arrangements were settled and provisions were made for keeping the books and holding the meetings at Bingham's house. By April some books had been delivered there, and a more permanent organization had been set up. The library was to be open only Thursday afternoons at first. Among the

first trustees were such well-known Bostonians as Dr. Parker, Rev. John Eliot, Samuel Hall, G.R. Minot, and Joseph Eckley. The Society flourished. By 1802, the subscription price had been raised to fifteen dollars, and the library had been moved to "the Hall directly over the Arch, in the Crescent, Franklin Place." The library was now opened on Saturday as well as Thursday afternoons. The Catalogue listed 838 books of all types. When Fowle was writing in 1856, the Society was still active; the subscription price had been raised to twenty dollars, and dues of two or three dollars a year were charged. It had a library of some eighteen thousand volumes. In evaluating the importance of the library, Shaw has written:

Our Society has been surpassed in growth and reputation by others of contemporary origin, but at the time the weight and influence of its founders must have given it a relative importance above any that would now be attributed to it. In a description of Boston, written soon after its establishment, the Rev. Jedediah Morse classes it with the Marine Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as one of the notable

12. Rules and Regulations of the Boston Library Society, p. 3.


institutions of the town.\textsuperscript{15}

At a later date the society was moved to Newbury Street in Boston. Perhaps the last reference to the Society is that in the \textit{Boston Athenaeum Report of the Library Committee and the Librarian for the Year 1939}. The Athenaeum is also a private library society of Boston, established in 1807. The Report reads: "The great event of the year has been the execution of a contract with the Boston Library Society, an ancient institution which had been forced by diminished income and other causes to face the necessity of dissolution if it could not secure the help of the Athenaeum.\textsuperscript{16}"

According to this contract the books of the Society are housed in the Athenaeum building and the members of the older society have become members of the Athenaeum. The identity of the Boston Library Society has not been lost, however, since the contract can be broken at any time. It is interesting to note that this small society with which Bingham was so intimately connected has had, until the last few years of de-

\begin{footnotes}
\item[15] Shaw, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 5-6.
\item[16] \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 3.
\end{footnotes}
pression, a successful career; and it has earned an en-
viable reputation as a center of culture and intellectual
activity.

Bingham's interest in libraries carried him even
further. In January, 1803, he selected 150 books from
his store and presented them to the town of Salisbury
for the use of all children between the ages of nine and
sixteen. The books consisted largely of histories,
biographies, and works of a religious and educational
character.\textsuperscript{17} With the gift he sent the following letter,
a portion of which was quoted above:

I well remember when I was a boy how ardently I
longed for the opportunity of reading, but had no
access to a library. It is more than probable that
there are, at the present time, in my native town,
many children who possess the same desire, and who
are in the like unhappy predicament. This desire,
I think I have it in my power in a small degree to
gratify, and however whimsical the project may ap¬
ppear to those who have not considered the subject,
I can not deny myself the pleasure of making the
attempt. I have selected from my shelves 150
volumes for the sole use of the children of Salis-
bury, from nine to sixteen years of age. To the
small beginning it is presumed the liberality of
your fellow townsmen will induce them to make such
additions from time to time, as that it will at
length become respectable. Should it happen that
the books be rejected, or there should be disagree¬
ment, so that the object in view is like to be de-

\textsuperscript{17} Charlotte B. Norton, \textit{History of the Scoville
Memorial Library}, pp. 8-11.

For a list of these books see Appendix C.
feated, please retain the books till you hear further from me.  

The gift was welcomed with enthusiasm by the town, for books suitable for children were a rarity in that time. The library received the name of the Bingham Library for Youth, and the town made additions to it with money obtained through taxation. Even today two hundred dollars is given annually to the library by the town. It was a small beginning, but "it infused into the youthful population a new impulse; and a taste for reading before unknown was soon discoverable among the young."  

One citizen wrote: "How often and with what delight did I go to Rev. Mr. Crossman's on the Library days to draw my book! Precious memories come thick upon me."  

Another patron said, "A venerable minister of the town attributed much of that intelligence, which he claimed for the citizens of Salisbury, to the influence of their library, and the lady of a reverend librarian said with much feeling, 'I recollect the joy we girls felt at having a library of our own; books to read of our own."

18. Ibid., p. 8.
What happy times. What friendly contests for this or that book on delivery days."

It should be realized that such a gift as Bingham's was not a common occurrence in those days, as it might have been a century later. There were few, if any, town libraries in existence at that date. One competent authority states: "Town and school district libraries began to flourish early in the century, the first tax supported town library being probably that of Salisbury, Connecticut, founded in 1803." Another earlier, and perhaps less accurate, writer tells of a free town library left to the city of New York by John Sharp in 1700. It was little used until 1772 and had to be reorganized in 1788. The second library he mentions as being started in the first half of the nineteenth century, and he makes no mention of the Salisbury library. Other writers claim the honor for the Peterborough (New Hampshire) library. The controversy will probably

never be finally settled, but it is fairly certain that the library started by the gift of Caleb Bingham was one of the earliest, if not the first, free town library in the country. It was, beyond doubt, the first library devoted exclusively to the use of children.

Unlike many a teacher and librarian, Caleb Bingham was no mere bookworm. He was extremely interested in the world about him as well as in his books, and in all of his activities can be seen a sincere desire to help his fellowmen. This aim is well illustrated in both his religious and his political activities.

Bingham was a devout, orthodox Congregationalist. The moral character of his textbooks is convincing testimony of the importance which he attached to the rigid doctrines of the Puritans. At this time religion was changing rapidly in Boston; and many of the Congregational churches were swinging over to the Unitarian faith, chiefly because of a changed attitude toward religion and the discovering of new scientific facts which seemed to contradict the older faith. Caleb Bingham had little respect for Unitarianism as a religion; indeed, he and some of his friends believed
that something should be done to check its rapid spread. The Old South Church, of which these men were members, was unwilling to make any concessions to the spirit of innovation.

At last, in 1809, spurred on by the visit of a Baptist Revivalist, this small group, led by Caleb Bingham, split off from the old church (with good will on both sides) and formed, "a new enterprise which should be founded on principles directly opposite to those accepted in the fashionable thought of the day."\(^{25}\) The Covenant of this new organization, to be known as the Park Street Church, was signed by both Caleb and Hannah Bingham, among others. The group was amazingly successful in obtaining funds and soon raised over forty thousand dollars.\(^{26}\) In April, 1809, Caleb Bingham and two other leaders were entrusted to purchase, for twenty thousand dollars, the plot of land described as:

on Common Street the length of the Granery, about eighty feet, then turning on a street formerly called Centry Street, and now called Park Place, there measuring one hundred and eighteen feet, then running

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\(^{25}\) Quoted in Rev. A.Z. Conrad, Commemorative Exercises at the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Park Street Church, p. 90.

\(^{26}\) The Preservation of Park Street Church, p. 24.
from said Centry Street, on land of Arnold Welles, to the burying ground, there measuring about eighty feet, then by the burying ground as the line runs down to the corner where the granery meets and same burying ground and to Common Street."

By September of the following year the stately Park Street Church was completed and dedicated. In the years since that date this church has had an enviable record. It has been identified with no less than six important movements in American history: The revival of Trinitarianism or Calvinism; the inauguration of foreign and home missions; the growth of church music; the anti-slavery agitation; the peace movement; the introduction of Sunday-schools; and several other educational and reform movements.28

After he had helped to start this new church, Caleb Bingham took an active part in its affairs. He was especially fond of good music, and he sang in the church choir.

In politics, as well as in religion, Bingham proved himself a friend of reform. Boston was at this time very definitely divided into two political camps, the Federalists and the Jeffersonian Republicans. The


28. The Preservation of Park Street Church, p. 7.
former of these two parties, and by far the stronger, has been well described by Professor Morison.

New England Federalism believed that the main object of government was to protect property, especially commercial and shipping property; and it supported nationalism or states rights according as the federal government protected or neglected these interests of maritime New England. It aimed to create and maintain in power a government class of educated, well-to-do men. Regarding Jeffersonian democracy, a mere misbegotten brat of the French Revolution, New England Federalism directed its main efforts toward choking the parent, hoping thereby either to starve the progeny, or to wean it from an evil heritage.29

In Boston this Federalism was strong, especially among the upper classes. Furthermore, it was considered a mark of gentility to be a Federalist; and the democrats were looked upon with disdain and even a certain amount of fear. Napoleon and the leaders of the French Revolution were feared and hated by the Federalist clique, who were only too anxious to restore commerce and good feeling with their recent enemy, Great Britain. As one author stated it: "Napoleon was probably more hated in Boston than anywhere else except London... The Boston Federalist press joyfully announced every defeat of Napoleon and sympathized with the acts of England."30


There were some leaders among the Republicans, however, who refused to be subdued by political or social ostracism and who continued to hold their own political beliefs and to work to establish their theories of government. Elbridge Gerry, Percy Morton, and John Quincy Adams (after 1808) were the leaders of this group.31

Caleb Bingham, too, was of this small group of loyal Republicans; and his political career, although far from illustrious, was indicative of an honest and humanitarian political philosophy. As will be seen more conclusively in the study of his schoolbooks, Bingham was a proponent of human freedom and democracy. Even as early as 1800 he proved himself to be an opponent of the slavery of negroes, Indians, and other down-trodden peoples. In his textbooks, a number of selections definitely oppose slavery, and others show sympathy for the plight of the Indians in the United States. His interest in France and the French people has already been noted, but it is significant to see that he included in his textbooks a number of Napoleon’s addresses. Bingham’s books were also among the first to include selections

from documents significant in American history, among them some of Washington's addresses.

Bingham's personal participation in government was slight. He served for a number of years as a justice of the peace in Boston, but, according to Fowle, he was seldom called upon to exert his powers. One incident, however, proves that when the occasion demanded it he possessed the necessary courage and sense of responsibility to carry out the duties of his office. A police officer named Reed who had tried to break up a large settlement of houses of ill-fame was attacked by a mob who pursued him through the streets. Ignoring the advice of his family and the angry temper of the mob, Bingham opened the door of his house to Reed and spoke to the mob.

'He had no hat on, and his white hair and dignified personal appearance for a moment quieted the rioters. He seized the happy moment, and, standing on an elevation where he was seen by the crowd that beset the house, he said in his powerful voice. . . .

'Fellow citizens, you are breaking the laws, and I command you in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to disperse. I am a magistrate.'

The mob obeyed; and the dignity, perhaps the very life,
of the officer was saved.

For a number of years Bingham was one of his party's candidates for the State Senate. In 1806, the first time he ran, he received one vote, whereas Josiah Quincy, the winner, received 1673. There were two other candidates who received respectively 902 and three votes. In 1808, when thirty-one men were to be chosen to represent the town in the General Court of Massachusetts, Bingham, although he received 1248 votes, narrowly missed out. In 1810, he ran for State Senator and received 2199 votes, losing to the winners, H.G. Otis and John Phillips, each of whom received 3079 votes. In the next five years he was defeated annually for this office. In 1812, he was also defeated for County Treasurer and for Representative to Congress.

34. Reports of the Record Commissioner of the City of Boston, Vol. 35, Boston Town Records 1796-1813, p. 205.
35. Ibid., p. 232.
36. Ibid., p. 265.
37. Ibid., pp. 283, 301, 333, and Vol. 37, pp. 5, 28.
38. Ibid., Vol. 35, p. 310.
39. Ibid., p. 327. The winner of this election was Artenus Ward who polled 1527 votes.
One could scarcely call Bingham's political career brilliant, but it must be realized that Bingham represented a political party which was known neither for its wealth, talents, nor influence. It was seldom that any Republican candidate had much chance of winning a Boston election at this time. In addition, Bingham was not a professional politician; and his successive defeats probably did not disturb him greatly. Fowle states that his political opinions were well-known although never offensively proclaimed.  

For a short time the Republicans did come into power, however, and Elbridge Gerry was elected governor. He appointed Bingham a director of the State Prison in 1812. Bingham served in this capacity for four years, continuing for several years after. Gerry and his party had been thrown out of office. The fact that the Federalists allowed him to retain his position indicates their respect for him. Little is known of Bingham's actual work at the prison. Fowle merely states that he showed kindness and tried to reform and procure employment for the prisoners.  

40. Fowle, op. cit., p. 345.  
41. Ibid., p. 345.
common spirit at this time. Some hint of his activities may be procured from the changes which took place in the prison during the years in which he served. In 1812, some changes were made in an effort to establish a graded system of convicts. Second offenders were dressed in three colored garments and had two warm meals a day. Third offenders were dressed in garments of four colors, had the hardest labor, received only one warm meal a day, and could see their friends only twice a year. Convicts who attempted to escape were forced to wear an iron ring and clog on the left leg. These innovations did not prove very successful, and they were abolished after a short trial.\textsuperscript{42} Some work was done in teaching convicts trades; and the prison reports show convicts employed in shoemaking, weaving, brushmaking, cabinet making, spike and nail making, stone hammering, tailoring, carpentry, tin plating, and filing.\textsuperscript{43} When the frigate \textit{Chesapeake} was to be repaired in Charlestown, the directors ordered the warden of the prison to try to procure some of the work for the men to do in the

\textsuperscript{42} G. Haynes, \textit{Pictures from Prison Life}, p. 25.

In 1814 the directors appointed Gameliel Bradford warden of the prison. The selection proved an excellent one, and Bradford served many years. His prison reports and descriptions prove interesting reading even today.\footnote{44. Haynes, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 27.}

It seems certain, from all we can learn of Bingham's character and actions, that he was the type of man who would take seriously his duties as a director, would do his best to alleviate the worst evils of prison life, and would provide the prisoners with useful occupations while they were in prison and after they had been released. In all of his activities, Bingham was loyal to his theories of democracy and humanitarianism.\footnote{45. See G. Bradford, \textit{Description and Historical Sketch of the Massachusetts State Prison}.}
CHAPTER V

EARLY AMERICAN TEXTBOOKS
Chapter V
Early American Textbooks

It was during this period of his life, while he was operating the bookshop and engaged in several literary, religious, and political movements, that Bingham found time to write most of his well-known textbooks. Fowle asserts that Caleb Bingham "was perhaps more extensively known than any other contemporary teacher in the United States." Although one must allow for a certain prejudice on the part of Bingham's biographer, this statement is not so extravagant as it might at first appear. Bingham's fame was spread throughout this young nation by the schoolbooks which he compiled. Estimates of the total number of Bingham textbooks distributed vary from 1,250,000\(^1\) to two million.\(^2\) These books were not only used extensively in New England, but found their way to the South and even to the western frontier. A wandering English schoolmaster, John Davis, who kept an academy on a plantation near Bull Run,


Virginia, mentioned, the textbooks of Bingham in his
*Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America*. Even though he referred to the selections as "tasteless," nevertheless he was acquainted with them and found them in use in Virginia.\(^3\) One edition of the *American Preceptor* is reported to have been printed in the frontier village of Lexington, Kentucky, before 1820.\(^4\) Therefore, it is not surprising to discover that Bingham was well-known far from his native New England.

Of the millions of copies of Bingham textbooks once spread throughout the country, however, probably not more than two hundred are extant today.\(^5\) Schoolbooks meet with hard usage and before many years must be relegated to the attic or destroyed. The known copies today are confined to the treasure rooms of large libraries or are in the hands of private collectors.\(^6\) Because of this impermanent character, we have little knowledge of most of the textbooks which were used in

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6. Heck reports (p. 617) the collection of Mr. G.A. Plympton to be the most perfect.
the early days of the American schools, with the exception of some of the classical texts used in the preparatory schools.  

As far as we can learn, the first book used by the child upon his entrance into the school was the hornbook. This type of book was known as early as 1450 and consisted of a piece of paper containing the alphabet and occasionally a few sentences pasted on a slab of wood and covered with horn as a protection.

After the letters had been mastered, the child usually progressed to the Catechism. This was the Shorter Catechism prepared by the Westminster Assembly and first printed in London in 1647. Sometimes the Catechism was taught by word of mouth even before the child had learned his letters.

Next came the New England Primer, which attempted to teach the alphabet using pictures and pious verses from

8. Ibid., p. 110.
In Adam's fall
We sinned all.
to
Zacheus he
Did climb the tree
His Lord to see.\textsuperscript{10}

The Primer continued with a number of verses and sentences to be memorized. Among these was the following cheerful thought:

\begin{verbatim}
I in the Burying Place may see
Graves shorter there than I;
From Death's Arrest no Age is free,
Young children too may die;
My God, may such an awful sight,
Awakening be to me!
Oh! that by early Grace I might
For Death prepared be.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{verbatim}

The edition of 1737 also contained the popular child's prayer, "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep." Following these selections came the Shorter Catechism. As an elementary book, the popularity of the New England Primer was great and long, continuing well into the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{12}

For many years children who progressed beyond the elementary text had no reading material other than the

\textsuperscript{10} New England Primer, quoted in H.R. Warfel, et al., The American Mind, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 66.
\textsuperscript{12} Littlefield, op. cit., p. 152.
Catechism, the Psalter, and the Bible. With these books the children were drilled in reading. Gradually, however, the feeling grew that the child should have a broader secular knowledge and should be allowed to read works from which he could derive more pleasure. This feeling was the natural outcome of the religious decline which followed the disappearance of the first few generations of pioneers. In the higher schools some English spelling books had been used, that of Dilworthy being by far the most popular; but these contained few selections for reading. With the advent of the Revolution, the difficulty of importing books, and the rising spirit of nationalism, there arose a demand for American-made school-books which could be used in the grammar schools in the teaching of reading, grammar, spelling, and, later on, various other subjects.

This new demand was first met by Noah Webster. He is reported to have said, "In the year 1782, while the American army was lying on the bank of the Hudson, I kept a classical school in Goshen, Orange County, New York. I there compiled two small elementary books for teaching

the English language. The country was then impoverished, intercourse with Great Britain was interrupted, schoolbooks were scarce and hardly obtainable, and there was no certain prospect of peace."\textsuperscript{14} Caleb Bingham also responded to the call for books, and for several generations Webster and Bingham supplied the great majority of textbooks, dividing the field almost equally.\textsuperscript{15}

The books which these two schoolmasters published would scarcely be welcomed by the modern schoolchild, for even in appearance they were dingy. Mr. Clifton Johnson, an authority on the subject, has described the early schoolbooks as follows:

The ordinary binding of all these colonial schoolbooks was full leather, even when the books were small and thin. Illustrations were used sparingly, and the drawings and engravings were very crude. The volumes of English manufacture were as a rule well printed on good paper; but the American editions were quite inferior, and they continued to make a poor appearance as compared with the trans-Atlantic books until after the middle of the nineteenth century. The most marked typographical contrasts to the present that one observes is the use of the long 's', that looks like an 'f', and the habit of printing beneath the final line of each page the first word of the page following. The catchwords and long 's' were employed up to 1800, but within the first decade of the new century they

\textsuperscript{14} Quoted in Littlefield, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 129.

\textsuperscript{15} Fowle, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 339.
were entirely abandoned."\textsuperscript{16}

In contrast with these old schoolbooks those of today appear as innovations. With their easily read type, frequent and well drawn pictures, attractive bindings, and contents designed especially to appeal to the pupils, they show unquestionably the great advances which have been made in the writing and publishing of schoolbooks. These advances can be realized only when comparisons are made.

The great advances which have been made in teaching methods since the late eighteenth century can also best be shown by comparison. Some knowledge of the teaching methods and materials advocated by the author can usually be gleaned from a study of his textbooks; in fact, much of the knowledge which the educational field today possessess as to the curricula and methods of the early American schools has been derived from just such studies of the textbooks.\textsuperscript{17} In the years following the death of Caleb Bingham in 1818, the schoolbooks showed more and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16} C. Johnson, \textit{Old Time Schools and Schoolbooks}, p. 68.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{17}For a good illustration of this type of study see Spieseke, A.W., \textit{The First Textbooks in American History and Their Compiler}, John M'Culloch.
\end{flushright}
more clearly the influence of the ideas of Pestalozzi and other progressive educators who stressed the importance of interest and action on the part of the learners. Fowle, in his *Teacher's Institutes*, a volume devoted to explaining to teachers the best methods of conducting their classes, shows well the transition between the older idea of beating the lesson into the child and making him memorize it, to the later conception of interesting the child so that he will learn of his own accord. For instance, Fowle advocated teaching the alphabet by connecting the names of the letters with their written forms in a way that "will engage the attention of the children and be highly interesting to them."\(^{18}\) The blackboard he described as an "indispensable part of school apparatus."\(^{19}\) He did not teach the whole alphabet before he began to use it but taught eight letters or so and then started combining them into words.\(^{20}\) It was also his custom to use an adaptation of the monitor system. He heard the child recite his letters for a few


minutes and then let some older pupil continue the recitation, allowing the younger child as much practice as he desired.\textsuperscript{21} He also recommended the use of a period of conversation between the teacher and his pupils to give the latter practice in grammar and oral English and to create a good class relationship.\textsuperscript{22}

Some of these theories were undoubtedly held by Caleb Bingham, for Fowle was his apprentice and received his first instruction in teaching from him; but since Bingham never wrote on his educational methods, there is no way of knowing exactly which of these theories of Fowle's he helped to formulate. Through a study of Bingham's textbooks, however, some light may be thrown upon the subject; and it may be possible to clarify the position of Caleb Bingham with respect to the old school of strict, unimaginative drilling and the new school of psychologically-minded, progressive educators. In time he placed himself almost exactly between the two, but in spirit he seems to have been more sympathetic with the latter group. His theories of discipline illustrate, and his textbooks should help to support, such a statement.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 139.
\end{itemize}
CHAPTER VI

GRAMMARS AND SPELLERS
Chapter VI
Grammars and Spellers

Since Bingham's first textbook dealt with grammar, his works on that subject will be taken up first. Before the Revolution, grammar was not taught extensively in the U.S., although the movement for practicality, led by Locke, had caused its entrance into the curriculum in England. By 1775 a few private schools in New England offered courses in grammar, but it was not a popular subject.¹ A few textbooks had been imported from England, notably Dilworth's, which was primarily a speller; Greenwood's, and Lowth's, a complicated grammar used at Harvard but generally considered too difficult for younger students. According to Lyman, two grammars were written and published in America before the Revolution, Johnson's and Byerley's; but all of the texts used here, of both native and English origin, probably numbered no more than ten by 1784.²

After the Revolution the rise of grammar as a subject and the increase in the number of textbooks were great. The Massachusetts law of 1789 encouraged

¹. R. Lyman, English Grammar in American Schools Before 1850, pp. 520-5.
². Ibid., p. 68.
but did not demand the teaching of grammar. It was not specifically required until 1835. The Boston law of 1790, however, in its prescription for Reading Schools, definitely stated that grammar was to be taught. Other New England states had laws requiring the teaching of the subject. Several of the middle colonies had made earlier attempts at teaching the subject. This fact gives strength to the theory that English grammar was introduced into the curriculum in an attempt to insure the continuance of English as the native language. The differences in nationalities were greatest at this time in the middle colonies, and it was natural that they should have been the first to combat the language barrier separating the various communities.

Since grammar was a new subject when it was introduced into the curriculum, the teaching was based almost exclusively upon the available textbooks. The influence which these textbooks exerted can scarcely be exaggerated. Most of the imported English and early American grammars were based almost entirely upon Latin

3. Ibid., p. 73.
4. Ibid., p. 32.
grammars. Many of these Latin grammars in turn ultimately found their origin in the *Ars Minor*, a Latin grammar compiled by the famous teacher Donatus. According to W. J. Chase, this was the most commonly used grammar between 400 and 1500 A.D. It was an elementary textbook using the question and answer method and taking up the parts of speech in the common order - nouns, pronouns, verbs, and so forth. A typical question and answer was:

**Question:** What is an Interjection?
**Answer:** A part of speech signifying a state of mind by an unusual tone of the voice.

Most of the English grammars adopted these devices. The form of the early English and American grammars and the heavy reliance which ill-prepared teachers were forced to place upon them led to the practice of wholesale memorization, of long, unintelligible passages. It was not unusual for a student to be required to memorize the whole grammar. Whether or not the rules were understood did not seem to be of much consequence. Little attention was paid to correct usage; indeed, little opportunity was given the pupils to demonstrate that they could speak or

5b. Ibid., p. 55.
write correct English, for there were no classes in oral English, in Boston, and writing was taught in another school entirely.

Modern theories of grammar hold that the aim of the subject should be to teach children to speak and write correctly and with ease. Fowle was one of the exponents of this belief at a time when many educators argued that the chief contribution of grammar was its disciplinary value. To accomplish the more modern aim grammar is frequently studied inductively through sentence analysis rather than through concentration upon isolated words. The rules of grammar are first understood and then mastered by means of constant application. Modern grammars stress this type of presentation and instruction; they are no longer large volumes filled with difficult abstract terms to be memorized and hair-splitting discussions of usage. Such volumes do exist today, but they are intended for the advanced student of rhetoric and grammar and not, as they once were, for the child who has just learned to read.

Somewhere between these two theories of grammar

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instruction lie the textbooks which were produced shortly after the Revolution. The first important one was that of Noah Webster, written in 1784. The full title of this work was *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language, Part II Containing a plain and comprehensive Grammar, grounded on the true Principles and Idioms of the language; with an analytical Dissertation, in which the various uses of the Auxiliary Signs are unfolded and explained. And an Essay towards investigating the Rules of English Verse*? In the Preface Webster stated that "No grammar that has hitherto appeared seems well adapted to answer this particular purpose," . . . to frame a grammar of our own language upon its true principles and calculate it for the benefit of common English schools." 8 He described Dilworth's book as too much of a Latin grammar and Lowth's as too difficult. 9 Despite his avowed intention of composing a book suitable for school children, Webster did not hesitate to include some theories and abstract arguments of his own. In the question of gender,

7. Part I was a speller, part III a reader.


for example, he argued that neuter was not a gender but rather a destitution of gender. He also thought the subjunctive mood obsolescent. He advocated the use of two common teaching devices, false syntax and parsing, both of which were frequently used in the teaching of Latin. In the final analysis, his book was found to be far over the heads of the children and even of the masters, whom Webster himself described as "illiterate men" with "no instruction in grammar." The grammar was the least successful of the three books which Webster published under the title of the Grammatical Institute, although he wrote of it: "My Grammar passed through many editions and continued to be used, till Murray's appeared, but the number of editions and copies cannot be ascertained."

For years the foremost competitor of Webster's grammar was the tiny volume entitled The Young Lady's Accidence, written by Caleb Bingham about 1785. This was the least successful of the three books which Webster published under the title of the Grammatical Institute, although he wrote of it: "My Grammar passed through many editions and continued to be used, till Murray's appeared, but the number of editions and copies cannot be ascertained." The grammar was the least successful of the three books which Webster published under the title of the Grammatical Institute, although he wrote of it: "My Grammar passed through many editions and continued to be used, till Murray's appeared, but the number of editions and copies cannot be ascertained."

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10. Exercises in false syntax involved the correction of sentences containing grammatical errors.

11. Quoted in H.R. Warfel, Noah Webster, p. 84.


13. It is interesting to note that in 1790, in Boston, Noah Webster published anonymously a book very
THE YOUNG LADY'S ACCIDENCE:

OR,

A SHORT AND EASY INTRODUCTION TO

ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

Designed, principally, for the Use of Young Learners, more especially those of the Fair Sex, though proper for either.

BY CALEB BINGHAM, A. M.

"Delightful talk! to rear the tender thought,

To teach the young idea how to shoot"—

THE THIRD EDITION, CORRECTED.

PRINTED AT BOSTON,

BY I. THOMAS AND COMPANY;

1808.
small book (it has only fifty-seven pages) was probably first compiled by Bingham for his own use in conducting his girls' school. When he published it, its success was immediate. Its popularity continued until about 1820, after which date it declined rapidly, but only after it had gone through five editions and after one hundred thousand copies had been printed. Although the book measures scarcely more than three by five inches, its type was surprisingly good and uncrowded.\textsuperscript{14}

In the short preface to this book Bingham described his reasons for writing it and some of his theories concerning the teaching of grammar. He wrote:

The author of the following pages is far from flattering himself, that he is about to present the public with anything new upon the subject of Grammar. On the contrary, he frankly confesses, that the principal part of this little compend is collected from the latest and most approved grammars; which he has ranged in such a manner as he thinks will be most beneficial to those for whom it is designed.

Nothing but experience has taught him, that something of this kind is wanted. And he appeals to

similar to Bingham's called The Young Gentleman and Ladies Accidence. (Lyman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 79.) It apparently met with slight success.

\textsuperscript{14} Lyman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 81, W.H. Small, \textit{Early New England Schools}, p. 107. In the volume which I used in the Harvard Library there was the following inscription on the fly-leaf:

\begin{quote}
Steal not this book for fear of shame
For here you see the owner's name.
William Bellamy Meriam of Bedford, 1791.
\end{quote}
the judgment of all those who are experienced in the instruction of youth, to determine, whether the prolixity of our English Grammars has not been as great an embarrassment as they have met with. His principal design, therefore in reducing the fundamental principles of grammar to so small a compass, was to encourage young learners, and render their task more easy. What he esteemed an important reason for this, was the great disadvantage the young Ladies of this country are, particularly, subjected to, viz. the scantiness of time afforded them for acquiring an education. This, he thinks, is sufficient to induce any, who are not lost to all the feelings of humanity, to use every possible exertion to expedite the progress in literature which those happy few may make, to whom this small allowance is made... The Author's plan would not admit of his making many critical observations upon the nicer points in grammar. Those who may have an opportunity of making further progress, can peruse more general and comprehensive treatises on the subject. [Webster's Grammar, Lowth's Introduction, Priestley's Grammar, and Beattie's Theory of Language are recommended.] This accidence in his humble opinion, is sufficient to qualify any person to speak and write correctly. He has not inserted a sentence but what he thinks is necessary for the learner to commit to memory. The rest may be supplied by the instructor. After all were there ever so much written, great dependence must be made upon him; and it appears to be a hardship to require children to learn by heart, what he may as well explain to them.15

The book itself plunges right in with the sentence:

"The English Language consists of 10 sorts of words, called parts of speech, viz. the Article, Noun, Pronoun, Adjective, Verb, Participle, Adverb, Conjunction, Preposi-

tion, and Interjection." Then each part of speech is defined and its use explained with illustrations. For example, under "Verbs" is the explanation:

A Verb is a part of speech which signifies doing or being; without which there can be no perfect sentence.

Verbs may properly be divided into two kinds, transitive and intransitive.

A transitive verb is known by admitting an objective word after it; as I write a letter.

An intransitive verb is known by not admitting an objective word after it; as, I run, he sleeps, we stand.

After this section come the rules of syntax starting off with "Rule I. The Nominative case comes before the verb." There are twenty-two such rules. Then the student is shown how to parse a sentence. Eleven pages are devoted to exercises in false grammar such as the following:

Example: You was there
Corrected: You were there

Then follow some rules for capitalization; and accent, emphasis, and cadence are defined. At the end there is

17. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
19. Ibid., p. 40.
a brief discussion of essential rules of punctuation which conclude with the remark: "This punctuation is better learned by practice and observing than by any precise rules; indeed there are none; for almost every author, in some measure, follows his own taste in this respect." 20

In his treatment of grammar Bingham used a few of Webster's milder innovations (without going into dissertations about them); and throughout he appeared to be simplifying the subject as much as possible. The great advantages of the Young Lady's Accidence were its small size; good type; brief, clear explanations; frequent examples; elimination of all but the most elementary and essential material; inclusion of parsing and false grammar which appealed to the students; intelligent treatment of such a controversial subject as punctuation then was. On the whole, the Young Lady's Accidence was an admirably concise outline of the essentials of English grammar, well suited to the use of children. The difficulty arose, however, when it was placed in the hands of inexperienced teachers who used it as a Bible, rather

20. Ibid., p. 55.
than as an outline of the essential facts to be supplemented from the teacher's own knowledge. The result was that grammar reverted to the mere memorizing of the whole book. Fowle reported that it was customary at his school for pupils to learn the book through three times without any explanations by the teacher.\textsuperscript{21} When finally something was done about this stupid procedure, it was the substitution of a new book, usually Murray's grammar, rather than the correction of the difficulty at its source - the teacher.

Murray's grammar, which was based (like Bingham's) on Lowth's and Webster's, had 160 pages of etymology and rules of syntax and also used parsing and false syntax. This grammar was extremely popular; and in the half century following its publication in 1795, it is estimated that it went through two hundred editions totaling between 1,500,000 and two million copies.\textsuperscript{22} Murray's book was a compromise between Webster's and Bingham's, offering more detail than the latter and less argument than the former.

\textsuperscript{21} Fowle, Teacher's Institutes, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{22} E.W. Baker, The Development of Elementary English Language Textbooks in the United States, p. 5.
Despite its relatively rapid decline in popularity, Bingham's *Young Lady's Accidence* was a step forward in grammar text. Had it been used intelligently and as Bingham in his Preface recommended, greater advances might have been made. Its large, readable type was one contribution, but its simplicity was an even more important one. It decreased, theoretically at least, the amount of memorization required; and it attacked the subject with the sensible aim that grammar was a tool of language, rather than a difficult subject to be mastered for the sake of mastery. It can scarcely be doubted that in his approach to the subject of grammar Bingham was on the side of the progressives and shared many of the views held by Fowle and by modern teachers of grammar.

To the subject of spelling, Bingham brought only a few innovations. Unlike grammar, spelling had been taught in the earliest schools of the colonies from hornbooks, the *New England Primer*, and spellers imported from England. The most popular of the imported spellers Fenning's, Moore's, Perry's (*The Only Sure Guide to the English Tongue*), and Dilworth's (*New Guide to the English*
The last mentioned was extremely popular and was reprinted and used in New England until after 1800. It contained a series of spelling and reading lessons and a short grammar section. Some of the reading selections were overly religious and moral in tone, but there were also eight short fables which would appeal to the children. Dilworth's, however, was soon crowded out of the picture when Webster published his speller in 1783.

The full title of Webster's book was, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language, comprising an easy, concise and systematic method of education, designed for the use of English Schools in America*. Part I, Containing a new and accurate standard of Pronunciation. This has been called the most popular school-book ever published in America. Before 1880, eighty million copies had been sold, and in 1900 hundreds of thousands of copies were still being sold annually. Webster explained in his Preface that in addition to his desire to promote a truly American type of spelling and pronunciation, he was


also attempting to correct some of the older spellers.

He wrote:

Among the defects and absurdities found in the books hitherto used, we may rank the want of a thorough investigation of the sounds of the English language and the powers of the several letters - the promiscuous arrangement of words in the same table, in which the same letters have several different sounds - the unnatural and arbitrary method of dividing syllables, which separates letters from the syllables where they belong, supplying the defect by artificial marks, and which, in several hundred words, makes more syllables than are pronounced - and particularly the omission of a criterion by which the various sounds of the vowels might be distinguished.

The book itself contains fourteen pages of introduction, including an analysis of the sounds in the English language, and a "scheme exhibiting the deficiency, redundancy, and irregularities in the orthography of the English language." Then comes the alphabet and the list of words which starts with two letter words and becomes increasingly longer and more difficult. Then there are lists of irregular words, proper nouns divided and accented, abbreviations, names of kingdoms, islands, states, counties, and towns, and symbols of punctuation. In all there are 5800 words. At the end there are forty-seven


pages of easy reading lessons with morals - some of them fables. Webster himself said, "The introduction of my spelling book, . . . produced a great change in the department of spelling; and, from the information I can gain, spelling was taught with more care and accuracy for twenty years or more after that period, than it has been since the introduction of multiplied books and studies."

In trying to compete with this extremely successful book of Webster's, Bingham had a hard time; and his speller, which he entitled The Child's Companion, was never so popular as its rival. At times, however, since it was not so advanced, it was used as an introduction to Webster's. As late as 1818, when twenty primary schools were opened in Boston, The Child's Companion was authorized as one of the textbooks. After its first publication in 1792, it went through twenty editions; and it is estimated that 180,000 copies were printed.

According to the title page of this small, thin

27. This letter by Webster is quoted in "Schools As They Were Sixty Years Ago," American Journal of Education, vol. 13, p. 123.


speller (it has but seventy-two pages measuring three and a quarter by six and a quarter inches) there is the line, "Simplicity is all the Author's Aim." He restated this aim in his Preface, which reads:

Experience in the instruction of youth has taught me, that the Books used in schools should be concise, accurate and cheap as possible. Most of the late editions of Spelling Books, now in use, are very incorrect, and, in my opinion, too prolix, and, consequently, too dear.

I have endeavored to prepare a collection of Words, suitable for the present day, and to arrange them so as to facilitate the progress of youth in spelling, and in the rudiments of reading.

As for the book itself, it starts off with the alphabet in Roman and Italic print and proceeds to two-letter syllables and three-letter words, arranged in sections so that only the first letter of the word is changed in each section. Then there are some two-syllable words arranged according to whether the accent falls on the first or second syllable. This is followed by an "Easy Lesson" in reading, this first one consisting only of monosyllables to be read without being spelled. Then come the three-syllable words and a more advanced "Easy Lesson."

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31. Ibid., p. 2.
the four-syllable words which follow are to be found "admiralty," "infamous," "operative," "sedentary." The five-syllable words include such sticklers as "academical," "syllogistical," "tacturnity," "volatility," and "pusilanius." Among the longer words are "antitrinitarian," "apostolically," "consubstantiation," "disingenuousness," "supernumerary," "superciliousness." The more advanced "Easy Lessons" in reading are largely verses of moral advice and passages adapted from the Bible. Among them are the following:

Lesson 1. My child, love God with all they heart, Let it be thy joy to do his will. O do not go in the way of sin. Turn thy feet from the road to death.

Lesson 2. Do not lie, nor cheat, nor steal. Call no ill names; and do not fight. The way to sin is the way to death. Try to shun all kinds of vice.32

Lesson 5. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones; not one of them broken. Evil shall slay the wicked; and they who hate the righteous shall be desolate. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them, who trust in him, shall be desolate.33

33. Ibid., p. 30.
At the end of the book there is a short catalogue of proper names of persons and places - going from Adam, Abraham, and Agnes to Xenophon, Yarmouth, Zedekiah, Zephaniah, and Zimri. Following this is a portion of the Sermon on the Mount; a list of words alike in pronunciation but different in spelling and meaning (ail means to be troubled; ale is a malt liquor); an explanation of punctuation; abbreviations; and a list of numerals. There is also a section devoted to "vulgarisms", arranged in columns and corrected as in the following examples:

- afraid not afeared
- such not sich
- potatoes not taters
- sausages not links
- girls not gals

There are also examples of improper sentences to be corrected by the children such as:

- I gin it to him.
- I dun it myself.
- He is the most wickedest man.
- He teached a school.
- He rid and I walked.

The last twenty-two pages of the book are devoted to short stories and fables which offered practice in reading and none of which failed to have a well-underscored moral. Among the fables are several from Aesop, which Bingham may have gotten through a study of LaFontaine. These in-

From this outline of the contents of The Child's Companion it can be seen that Bingham's speller did not vary greatly from the others of his day. His avowed aim of simplicity was carried out only to a limited degree. His method of arranging the words did, perhaps, simplify the child's task somewhat; but some of the words which he included seem to the modern reader far too difficult. In all fairness, however, it must be remembered that spelling was then given much greater attention that it is today; and children were expected to be able to spell
**Fable I.**

Of the RAVEN and the FOX.

A Raven, having found a piece of cheese, perched on a tree to eat it. A Fox, seeing her, longed to partake of the sweet morsel. He immediately began to entertain her by praising the beauty of her shape, and the brilliancy of her plumage. The Fox, perceiving that the Raven listened with attention, and was highly pleased with his encomiums, observed, that it was a great pity that her singing did not better agree with her other rare qualities. The Raven, desirous to convince the Fox that her voice was not disagreeable, immediately began to sing. The moment she opened her mouth, down fell the cheese to the ground. This was just what the Fox wanted. He immediately seized it, and devoured it before the eyes of the Raven; who, fat, confounded at her own stupidity; and vexed, that she should be so foolish as to listen to the false flattery of the treacherous Fox.

**Moral.**

This teaches us to beware of flattery; and not to pretend to possess charms, which nature has denied us.

**Fable II.**

Of the City RAT and Country RAT.

A City Rat once paid a visit to a country Rat, who entertained him with a frugal repast, composed only of roots and nuts. After the repast, the city Rat had the complaisance to invite his friend to visit him in his turn. On his arrival in the city, he found a splendid table laid for him, loaded with the most dainty dishes—with sweet meats, cheese, fruits, and many other delicacies, unknown to the stranger. During the entertainment, the country Rat observed that the servants were constantly running out and in, and causing frequent alarms, and confusion among the guests. At length, being overcome with fear, he departed in haste, repeating these words, "I prefer my little cottage, in the midst of the lonely village, where I can eat my frugal repast in peace, and enjoy my liberty, to all the splendor and magnificence of the city, where one is constantly exposed to inquietude and danger."
such words as these even if they had no idea of their meaning. Then, too, many of the most difficult words were religious terms in much more common use then than now. The moral qualities of the reading lessons continued this emphasis upon religion. Bingham apparently considered it the duty of the elementary school teacher to drill moral and religious lessons into the child at every opportunity. In this he copied the doctrine of the Puritans and, incidentally, continued the policy of the earlier textbook writers. Besides his improvement in the arrangement of the words, Bingham also contributed to the later spellers by introducing more secular reading material. Webster had included eight fables; Bingham included seven fables, three stories, and three dialogues. Although the subjects of these tales are all moral to an extreme, they were, nevertheless, undoubtedly fascinating to young readers who had been accustomed largely to Biblical material in difficult literary styles. One of the greatest of Bingham's innovations was the use of pictures; one woodcut was used to illustrate each of four fables.

To the methods then used in teaching the children to spell, Bingham added little. The form of his book
was very similar, on the whole, to the forms of most of the other spellers; and indeed, the spellers of today are not very different, except that they contain more illustrations (made possible through printing improvements) and except that the words do not increase in difficulty so rapidly. Bingham did, however, make the transition from the speller to the reader easier for the child by introducing him in the speller to the type of reading he would meet in the more advanced book.
CHAPTER VII

READERS
Chapter VII

Readers

With his more advanced readers Caleb Bingham had his most outstanding success. It had been customary in the early days for the children to practice reading by using the Catechism, the Psalter, or the Bible as a text; but after the Revolution new ideas which led to a change in reading material, took root in the minds of the people. In the first place, the more worldly-minded realized that the child could not acquire a taste for reading from material which, for the most part, he did not understand and in which he was not naturally interested. Secondly, from such sources the child could learn little of history and the world in which he lived. Thirdly, there was arising in the people a spirit of nationalism; they were proud of their struggle for independence. They therefore wanted their children to know of the land which they had made free and to spread the doctrine of that freedom. Fourthly, there was a decline in interest in the Calvinistic doctrines. Many new sects were springing up, and the members of these sects objected to the schools' teaching doctrines to which they themselves no longer adhered. As a re-
result of all of these forces, "there was a marked increase in the number and variety of school-books, and in these the nature of the child, his inclinations, tastes, and desires became more and more dominant in the choice and arrangement of the subject-matter."¹

The nationalism which was one of the leading factors in this change was not the aggressive, exaggerated nationalism one might expect to find in such a new country. One author has described it as follows:

The early national period shows no conception of education as a means of creating definite political culture by means of the schools. Such is most certainly the case with reference to practice. There was, as we have seen, no concerted action on the part of any central authorities to accomplish such an objective because such authorities did not exist. And so far as the local efforts were concerned, they related to teaching the children to read, write, and figure. The curriculum was universal in tone even as the spelling of words and the doing of sums are universal. It was unnational rather than international. It reflected a state of political development that preceded any strong consciousness of nationality."²

The first of these new readers to be published in America, Webster's Third Part (1787), was an exception to this "unnationalism." The actual title of this reader

¹. Clifton Johnson, Old Time Schools and School-books, p. 265.

². Edward H. Reisner, Nationalism and Education Since 1789, p. 359.
was *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking*, calculated to improve the Minds and refine the Tastes of Youth. And also to instruct them in the Geography, History, and Politics of the United States. To which is prefixed Rules in Elocution and Directions for expressing the principal Passions of the Mind. Being The Third Part of a Grammatical Institute of the English Language. In the Preface to this work Webster stated:

In the choice of pieces, I have been attentive to the political interests of America. I consider it a capital fault in our schools, that the books generally used, contain subjects wholly uninteresting to our youth; while the writings that marked the revolution, which are perhaps not inferior to the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes, and which are calculated to impress interesting truths upon young minds, lie neglected and forgotten. Several of these masterly addressed of Congress, written at the commencement of the late revolution, contain such noble sentiments of liberty and patriotism, that I cannot help wishing to transfuse them into the breasts of the rising generation.

These nationalistic selections include two orations on the Boston massacre by Warren and by Hancock, the "First Petition of Congress to the King of Great Britain," "Declaration Concerning the Taking Up Arms," Governor Livingston's "Address to the Legislature of New Jersey," and Barlow's "Oration on the Anniversary of Independence."

To complete the lessons in speaking there is part of Cicero's "Oration Against Verres" and speeches of Scipio and Caius Marius. For lessons in reading there are short stories and essays, some of which are "The Story of the Cobbler and His Son," "Honesty Rewarded," "Rules of Behavior," "Family Disagreements the Frequent Cause of Immoral Conduct," "Discovering and Settlement of North American," "Geography of the United States," and "A Brief History of the Late War in America." Among the dialogues are a long and extremely dull discussion between General Savage and Miss Walsingham dealing with a mistaken courtship; a discussion between Shylock and Tubal; an argument, in verse, between Wolsey and Cromwell; a quarrel between Brutus and Cassius; and several other conversations pointing out the evils of dueling, Catholicism, miserliness, and so forth. The poetry section includes two selections from Pope, "The World Compared to a Stage" (from As You Like It), Freneau's "Columbus to Ferdinand," Dwight's "Description of a Storm of Hail," Livingston's "Address to the Diety," and "A Morning Hymn," and Barlow's "Hymn to Peace."

The very foundation, nationalism, on which Webster had based his book proved its downfall; some of his se-
lections contained bitter denunciations of Great Britain. With the decline of the revolutionary fervor and the excesses of the French Revolution, which caused many to look to Britain for aid against the French, the public sentiment turned against the overdose of patriotism which Webster's *American Selection* offered.⁴

In the search for more suitable reading materials, attention was focused on the readers of Caleb Bingham; and they sprang into immediate popularity. The *American Preceptor*, published in 1794, came to take the place of *An American Selection*; and the more advanced reader, the *Columbian Orator*, published two years later, was frequently substituted for the Bible which came to be read only by the master at the opening and closing of the school day.⁵ By 1832, sixty-four editions of the *American Preceptor* had been published and 640,000 copies printed.⁶ There were two hundred thousand copies of the *Columbian Orator* (1797) printed.⁷

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⁶ E.L.W. Heck, in "Caleb Bingham and His Textbooks," *Education*, vol. 47 (Feb. 1927), p. 616, says there were sixty-eight editions.
⁷ Littlefield, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
The *American Preceptor* is a collection of selections for reading and speaking, moralistic to a fault, and patriotic without being so intensely nationalistic as Webster's work. On the title page is the sentence, "Train up a child in the way he should go." Apparently Bingham put much faith in such a statement and did his best to see that his readers were trained to be, above all, moral and religious citizens. His Preface maintains this idea. It reads:

In making selections for the following work, a preference has been given to the productions of American genius. The Compiler, however, has not been wholly confined to America; but has extracted from approved writers of different ages and countries. Convinced of the impropriety of instilling false notions into the minds of children, he has not given place to romantic fiction. Although moral essays have not been neglected; yet pleasing and interesting stories, exemplifying moral virtues, were judged best calculated to engage the attention and improve the heart. Tales of love have not gained admission.

The compiler pledges himself, that, while this book contains nothing offensive to the most rigid moralist, neither a word nor a sentiment shall be found, which would "raise a blush on the cheek of modesty."

In the arrangement of pieces the usual order has not been observed. But, with design to render it more entertaining to children, dialogues, orations, dialogues, orations, orations,

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8. One *American Preceptor* contained the following verse:

"Patty Olcott's *American Preceptor*
See these leaves and torn apart
Before this book is learnt by heart."

Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
THE
AMERICAN PRECEPTOR;
BEING A NEW
SELECTION OF LESSONS
FOR
READING AND SPEAKING.
DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS.

BY CALEB BINGHAM, A. M.
Author of the Young Lady's Accidence, and Child's Companion.

"TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO."

Published according to Act of Congress.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY MANNING AND LORING,
FOR THE AUTHOR, AND FOR S. HALL, NO. 53,
CORNHILL.—1794.
historical anecdotes, etc. with the different kinds of reading in prose and verse, are variously interspersed through the whole work.

For the convenience of large classes, the several pieces are divided into paragraphs of a moderate length; the utility of which those conversant in the instruction of youth will readily discover. Instructors are assured, that the inconveniences arising from the frequent alterations in the different editions of schoolbooks will never be experienced in this.

The compiler is far from wishing to establish the merits of this, by making objections to other performances. Improvement has been his object. How far he has succeeded, a candid public will decide. 9

The public, as represented by the schoolmasters of Boston, decided favorably; for they voted in the same month that the book was first published that "We, having perused The American Preceptor, consider it a judicious and valuable selection of pieces on a variety of subjects, well calculated to arrest the attention and improve the heart; and particularly adapted to the use of schools." 10

Like Webster's, the reader starts out with a few pages of "General Directions for Reading and Speaking," in this case taken from Blair's lectures. Then come some "Select Sentences" for warming up exercises. They include such bits of advice as "The tongue of a viper is

10. Ibid.
less hurtful than that of a slanderer; and the gilded scales of a rattlesnake less dreadful than the purse of the oppressor." The selections themselves, which, as Bingham mentioned in the Preface, are arranged in no particular order, start off with "A Hint to Parents" by Knox, followed by "On the Duty of Schoolboys" by Rollin. Among the rest of the selections are four pieces on religious themes, such as "St. Paul's Speech Before King Agrippa;" nine pieces designed specifically to impress upon the children the importance of certain character traits, among them Hume's "True Patriotism," Livingston's "The Child Trained up for the Gallows," "The Brave Soldier's Revenge," "Filial Duty and Affection." Eight or ten selections are devoted to historical subjects such as "Description of Babylon," by Middleton, Dwight's "Account of Columbus," Lyttleton's descriptions of Fernando Cortez and William Penn. There are several animal tales such as "The Faithful American Dog," and "The Sailor and the Monkies." It is especially interesting to note the inclusion of Jefferson's "Story of Logan, a Mingo Chief." This is an Indian story illustrating the fine character of one chief and the treachery of the white men he befriended. It is significant to
THE VICTIM.

AN INDIAN STORY.

"The American Preceptor."
find such a story included at a time when the trouble with the Indians on the frontier was by no means ended, and it illustrates well the sincerity of Bingham's humanitarianism. This humanitarianism and courage are also shown in the inclusion of Mercier's "The Aged Prisoner Released from the Bastille" (an article sympathetic to the French Revolution) at a time when the majority of influential Bostonians were already beginning to fear its radicalism. There was also an "Oration on Female Education," an effort, no doubt, to popularize this one of Bingham's favorite theories. Many of the selections included in the *American Preceptor* are unsigned, and their author is unknown. Bingham may have written some himself; but there is no way of proving the authorship, and Fowle says the book contains "few original pieces by him."  

The literary standard of the book is not high, but neither were the tastes of its readers; and the pieces chosen undoubtedly appealed to them. The language for the most part is very simple and direct. It is little wonder that the *American Preceptor* was eagerly seized

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upon as interesting reading by the young American public; for it was one of the first readers to cater, even in a small way, to the natural interests of the children in animals, Indians, and contemporary events.

Bingham's second reader, the Columbian Orator, was also extremely popular; and it offers more material which can be used to illustrate the author's views on important topics. This was designed as a more advanced reader than the *American Preceptor* and was especially well suited to be a continuation of the earlier book. Unlike those of the *American Preceptor*, the paragraphs are not numbered; and they tend to be longer, as befits a more advanced work. This book, too, was designed to develop the powers of declamation and oratory rather than merely those of reading. Bingham expressed his intention in the Preface thus: "The Art of Oratory needs no encomium. To cultivate its rudiments, and diffuse its spirit among the Youth of America, is the design of this book."12 As in the *American Preceptor*, there is no particular arrangement for the various types of material.

Many of the pieces were new ones written especially

for the *Columbian Orator* by David Everett, a graduate of Dartmouth and later the founder of the *Boston Patriot*.\(^{13}\)

To Everett is attributed the most popular passage of verse in the book, one which nearly every schoolboy of that day was compelled to recite at Friday afternoon literary sessions or at the annual visitation. It went:

You'd scarce expect one of my age,
To speak in public, on the stage;
And if I chance to fall below
Demosthenes or Cicero,
Don't view me with a critic's eye,
But pass my imperfections by.
Large streams from little fountains flow;
Tall oaks from little acorns grow:
And though I now am small and young,
Of judgment weak and feeble tongue;
Yet all great learned men, like me,
Once learn'd to read their A.B.C.
But why may not Columbia's soil
Bear men as great as Britain's isle;
Exceed what Greece and Rome have done,
As any land beneath the sun?
May'n't Massachusetts boast as great
As any other sister state?
Or, where's the town, go far and near,
That does not find a rival here?
Or where's the boy but three feet high,
Who's made improvements more than I?
These thoughts inspire my youthful mind
To be the greatest of mankind;
Great, not like Cesar [sic.] stained with blood;
But only great, as I am good.\(^{14}\)

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As for the material which he put into the book, Bingham declared that he selected "such as should inspire the pupil with the ardour of eloquence, and the love of virtue."\textsuperscript{15}

Before being given a chance to read, however, the student had to study the "General Directions for Speaking." Among these rules are the following:

It is the orator's business, therefore, to follow nature, and to endeavour that the tone of his voice appear natural and unaffected. . . \textsuperscript{16}

The motions of the body should rise, therefore, in proportion to the vehemence and energy of the expression, as the natural and genuine effect of it. . . \textsuperscript{17}

The left hand should seldom move alone, but accommodate itself to the motions of the right. In motions to the left side, the right hand should not be carried beyond the left shoulder.\textsuperscript{18}

In promises, and expressions of compliment, the motion of the hands should be gentle and slow; but in exhortations and applause, more swift. The hands should generally be open; but in expressions of compunction and anger, they may be closed.\textsuperscript{18}

Such admonitions as these immediately bring to mind the picture of the embarrassed youth with his awkward stereotyped movements. Nevertheless, there is progress to be noted in Bingham's declaration that the aim of all was

\textsuperscript{15} Op. cit., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 24.
naturalness.

As the student progressed further into the book he found a number of selections of a patriotic nature. These selections are reminiscent of Webster's reader, but they differ in that they are much more moderate in tone and much fewer in number. Their presence proved, however, that Bingham was patriotically inclined and alive to the rising spirit of nationalism. His selections were designed to instill into the young a deep sense of patriotism but even more a love of liberty and democracy. One of the essays, a portion of an oration delivered in Boston by Jonathan Mason, reads in part:

The rising glory of this western hemisphere is already announced; and she is summoned to her feet among the nations of the earth... Let this sacred maxim receive the deepest impression upon our minds, that if avarice, if extortion, if luxury, and political corruption, are suffered to become popular among us, civil discord, and the ruin of our country will be the speedy consequences of such fatal vices. But while patriotism is the leading principle, and our laws are contrived with wisdom and executed with vigour, while industry, frugality, and temperance are held in estimation, and we depend upon public spirit and the love of virtue for our social happiness, peace and affluence will throw their smiles upon the brow of individuals; our commonwealth will flourish; our land will become a land of liberty, and America an asylum for the oppressed.\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 300.
Of even more importance, however, are the speeches delivered by eminent British and American statesmen in behalf of democracy and independence. Among these is Colonel Barre's speech on the Stamp Act in which he indignantly denied the assertions of Townshend that "the colonies had been planted by the care, nourished by the indulgence, and protected by the arms of the mother country."20 There are also seven of Pitt's speeches in Parliament opposing the British pre-revolutionary policies. There are similar speeches by Erskine, Sheridan, and Fox. Also included are the "Oration at Festival of Gratitude," by Carnot, a speech celebrating the establishment of the French Republic, Odet's congratulatory address to the President of the United States; and Washington's reply. Bingham's admiration for Napoleon had apparently not been subdued, and he ventured to include two of the French general's speeches to his army. Two of Washington's speeches are also there, one being a part of his Farewell Address. There is also a "Eulogy on Franklin" and Barlow's "Description of the First American Congress."

There are several speeches advocating political

reforms and greater justice, among them being the "Plea in Behalf of Thomas Muir;" part of O'Connor's speech in the Irish House of Commons in favor of the bill emancipating Irish Catholics, Lord Mansfield's speech in 1770 designed to speed justice; and one of Cato's speeches for reform. "The Speech of P. Emilios to the Roman people" and the "Epilogue on Addison's Cato" are both selections denouncing war.

Bingham also took the part of the slaves and the American Indians in a "Dialogue Between the Ghosts of a Duellist, a Savage, and Mercury," which shows the Indian to be cruel but honest. The "Speech of an Indian Chief to the Massachusetts Congress in 1775" shows the loyalty of one tribe toward the colonists at the time of the Revolution. In another dialogue between an Indian and a white settler the Indian begs for peace and justice. A two-act drama entitled "Slaves in Barbary" supported the rights of man and argues against slavery. In a "Dialogue Between a Master and a Slave" the slave warns his master of an uprising which will soon come unless his people are released from bondage. In these and a number of other selections in the *Columbian Orator*, the author indirectly begs for political reform, democracy,
Nor was the spiritual life neglected in Bingham's selections. Many essays stress the importance of morality, religion, and "the good life." Among these are an "Exhortation on Temperance in Pleasure;" "Scene from the Farce of Lethe" denouncing divorce and flighty women; "Self-Conceit;" "The Conjurer;" and "The Dissipated Oxford Student." More narrowly religious pieces were "Judah's Plea for Benjamin Before Joseph," Blair's "On the Creation of the World," a poem by Cumberland entitled "Christ's Crucifixion," Davies' "On the Day of Judgment," "Christ's Triumph over the Apostate Angels" from Paradise Lost; and "On the General Judgment Day" from Dwight's Conquest of Canaan. Most of these religious pieces show some improvement over the typical literature given to children at this time. It was still common then to use the "hell-fire and damnation" theme to convert the young to the proper way of life. One Boston schoolgirl of about this time reported the following as the gist of one preacher's message:

"While you are without holiness your beauty is deformity - you are all over black and defiled, ugly and loathsome to all holy beings, the wrath of the great God lies upon you and if you die in this condition you will be turned into
hell with ugly devils to eternity."  

Compared with this message and with other similar ones, the religious pieces in the *Columbian Orator* are mild. Nevertheless, an author has criticized it in the following words:

A venerable lady has told me with a remembrance half amused, half painful, of having, as the eldest child of the family, and the most proficient in her studies at the district school, been called by her grandmother on the occasion of the minister's visit at the house, to stand up and read to him from the *Columbian Orator* the fragment beginning 'Let us endeavor to realize the majesty and terrific of the universal alarm on the final judgement day.'

While it is true that a modern reader would never include such a statement, one must realize that the children and the parents of that day were accustomed to it; and the people took their religion extremely seriously, especially during this period of religious revival in Boston.

From the point of view of the educator, one of the most interesting features of the *Columbian Orator* is the mention of educational practices. One selection is a dialogue between a schoolmaster and the school-committee. It is prefaced by the note: "The author [probably Bingham] is happy in believing, that the following dialogue is

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applicable to but few towns and few teachers in this country; but so long as there are any remaining to whom it may apply, he thinks a sufficient apology exists for its publication." 23

In this dialogue Ignoramus, who lives up to his name and is in addition a deserter and a drunkard, applies for the position of schoolmaster of the town, demanding a salary of five dollars a month and his board. Although one member of the school-committee objects, the others are anxious only to save money, even at the expense of the education, character, and well-being of their children. Ignoramus gets the position. This dialogue is quite reminiscent of a portion of H. H. Breckenridge's satirical novel, *Modern Chivalry*, first published in 1792. In this work the hero, Captain Farago, goes to the University in an attempt to locate his servant, Teague O'Regan. He describes Teague as follows: "He is somewhat troublesome in pretending to places of appointment for which he is not qualified; a thing, by the bye, too common in this country; where men, without the aid of academic knowledge trust themselves into places requiring great learning and ability." 24


Apparently such conduct by schoolmasters was not uncommon. Johnson quotes one advertisement of this time which read: "Ran away: a servant man who followed the occupation of a Schoolmaster, much given to drinking and gambling."  

The second selection on education which Bingham included in the *Columbian Orator* was entitled "Modern Education – A Dialogue Between a Preceptor of an Academy, and Parent of an Offered Pupil" and was very probably written by Bingham himself. In it the schoolmaster says:

> I am heartily sick of this modern mode of education. Nothing but trash will suit the taste of people at this day. I am perplexed beyond all endurance with these frequent solicitations of parents to give their children graceful airs, polite accomplishments, and a smattering of what they call the fine arts; while nothing is said about teaching them the substantial branches of literature. If they can dance a little, fiddle a little, and make a handsome bow and courtesy, that is sufficient to make them famous, in this enlightened age. Three-fourths of the teachers of those arts, which once were esteemed most valuable, will soon be out of employment, at this rate. For my part, I am convinced, that, if I had been a dancing master, music master, stage player, or montebank, I should have been much more respected, and much better supported, than I am at present.

This complaint is one which might very well have been made in our own day, and one which seems to be the classi-


cal argument of the scholars and the teachers. It is probable, however, that Bingham had even more justification in his day than has the modern educator.

In the *Columbian Orator* Bingham also paid tribute to the infant subject science by his inclusion of several pieces of a scientific nature. Especially notable are the "Eulogy on Dr. Franklin," which deals at some length with that great man's scientific experiments; Hervey's essay "On the Starry Heavens;" and a "Dialogue on Physiognomy," which shows the worthlessness of this method of recognizing character.

In a lighter vein are such pieces as Franklin's "Paper - a Poem," a few scenes from Garrick's "The Farce of Lethe," "The Oppressive Landlord," and a portion of Miss Burney's *Camilla* retitled "The Dissipated Oxford Student."

On the whole, the selections in the *Columbian Orator* are much more advanced than those in the *American Preceptor*. Today many of them would undoubtedly be considered too advanced and rather dull. Before great censure is made, however, one must realize that the *Columbian Orator* was designed for a group of people who would probably go no further in their studies. They
would have no college education, no courses in history, science, religion, or literature and probably no knowledge of these fields other than that which they acquired from such a book as the *Columbian Orator*. Under such conditions it is not surprising to find that the educators and the public hailed Bingham's reader as an excellent collection of selections - not biased and containing a good proportion of historical, ethical, literary, religious, and entertaining pieces. The comparison of such a book as the *Columbian Orator* with a modern reader is scarcely fair, because today, with our separate courses and more extensive educational system, we have no exact counterpart of this type of textbook. It was an advance over the other books of the period, not only in the variety of the subjects represented, but also in the fact that there were more dialogues and short plays to make the reading interesting and balanced.
CHAPTER VIII

OTHER BOOKS
Chapter VIII
Other Books

One of the most important of Bingham's textbooks was a small volume which he called *The Astronomical and Geographical Catechism*. In the early days of the nineteenth century geography was not the popular subject which it is today. Indeed, there is evidence to show that it was given little consideration. Littlefield states:

Geography and History had an insignificant place in the curriculum of the common schools, and the little that was learned was found in the reading lessons of the spellers, grammars and readers. The grammar schools and colleges had courses of study in these branches, but they were confined almost wholly to ancient geography and history and mythology.¹

The first American to write a geography was Jedediah Morse, known as "the father of American Geography." He prepared his book, *Geography Made Easy* while, in 1784, he was a tutor at Yale.² This is a small, thick book of almost four hundred pages. It contains two maps as illustrations, one of the world and one of North America. The book itself has been well described by Johnson:

² Ibid., p. 305.
The earlier pages treat of the 'Doctrine of the Spheres, of Astronomical Geography, Of Globes and their Uses,' etc. But soon we come to the 'History of the Discovering of America,' and then to a 'General Description of America.' In the latter chapter is much that is interesting and picturesque. It includes, as do all the early geographies, a good many imaginative travelers' tales picked up from newspapers and other chance sources without any pains being taken to verify them or to inquire as to the reliability of their authors.  

A few years after the publication of Morse's book, which immediately became extremely popular, geography was introduced into the Boston reading schools, probably about 1789. One author has found records to show that paragraphs of "Morse's Geography Abridged were committed to memory."  

It was probably about this time that Bingham published his little Astronomical and Geographical Catechism. While Morse was read in the highest class, this book of Bingham's was designed as an introduction to the subject for the younger pupils. It proved successful enough to go through twenty-two editions of five thousand copies each.


AN
ASTRONOMICAL
AND
GEOGRAPHICAL
CATECHISM.

For the Use of Children.

BOSTON:
Printed and sold by S. Hall, in Cornhill.
1795.
The title page of the *Astronomical and Geographical Catechism* contains the quotation, "The Earth, the Heavens - are fraught with Instruction." Bingham, however, did not try, in thirty-six small pages to divulge much of the wisdom of the universe. The first subject taken up is astronomy. As the name "catechism" implies, the question and answer method is used throughout; and the subject is introduced in this manner:

Question: What does astronomy treat of?
Answer: Astronomy treats of the sun, stars, planets, comets, and other heavenly bodies.

Question: Who first attended to this science?
Answer: The shepherds of the plains of Egypt and Babylon.

Question: How many primary planets are there?
Answer: Seven, which revolve around the Sun in the following order: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Herschel.

Next there are some questions on general geographical terms. Pages sixteen to thirty deal with the geography of America and include also questions on nature and history. The concluding six pages take up general geographical questions on other continents, among them being:

Question: What is the direct route to Kamchatka?
Answer: Sail down the Eastern Coast of South-America, double Cape Horn, or pass through the straits of Magellan, and then steer north-west.

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Actually Bingham's book was an extremely condensed version of Morse's, but it omitted the long descriptive passages and included only what was then accepted by all as fact.

Although the Astronomical and Geographical Catechism, like the Young Lady's Accidence, was evidently intended by Bingham as an outline of essential information to be supplemented by the instructor, it apparently came to be used as the only textbook and was memorized and recited literally without embellishment by pupil or teacher. Bingham followed Clarke's recommendations to teach first the general terms and then the locations, a good method to insure a firm basis of understanding. Although Bingham's geography could scarcely be compared to a modern geography with its numerous maps and illustrations and many pages of scientifically proved facts, it was a step forward. It condensed and reduced to a minimum the most important facts found in Morse's more pretentious work. Had it been used properly, it should have proved a valuable source of essential information for the student and a point of departure for the comments of the teachers.

Even used as it was, it was valuable, in that it brought some facts to the students unable to go on to the higher class and reduced the amount of memorization required. No doubt the whole little book was drilled so thoroughly into each pupil that to the end of his days he could direct anyone to the shortest route to Kamchatka, even though he could not find his own way to Faneuil Hall.

Shortly after 1800, Bingham and his elder daughter Sophia published a children's book entitled *Juvenile Letters*. This was not actually a textbook; it was designed more as a copybook and contains thirty-six letters supposedly written by children from eight to fifteen years of age to parents, relatives, and friends. These letters were to serve as models which the child could follow in writing his own letters. There is no evidence to prove that *Juvenile Letters* was ever used as a textbook in the schools. But it was popular; it passed through seven editions of three thousand copies each,\(^{10}\) and was probably bought by many a proud parent to assist his youngster with his correspondence. In his very brief Preface Bingham spoke thus of his purpose in

\(^{10}\) Heck, *op. cit.*., p. 616.
writing the book:

Perhaps nothing is more animating to a child than the receipt of a letter, unless it be a consciousness of being able to return an answer. But the first essays of this kind are always attended with anxiety and generally prosecuted with reluctance. Hence the necessity of some kind of an assistant.

The utility of a book of forms, to encourage children in their first attempts in this pleasing and important art, must be obvious to all. How far the author of this little work has succeeded in such a design, the public will decide.

Books of this type are published even today, and many schools have their own collections of sample letters for the pupils to copy. The chief difference between Bingham's book and those written today is the different use of expressions and the far more natural tone of the modern letters, even after the usual formality of the older time is taken into account.

The letters of Bingham's book deal with a variety of subjects. Some are written by young travelers describing places of interest which they have visited; others are written by the child away at school to describe his new friends and activities. The children of Bingham's imagination were well read; and they make frequent references to children's books and even textbooks which

they have enjoyed and which they recommend to their brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends. In this way Bingham frequently had the opportunity to slip in a good word for one of his own books. In writing to his sister Lucy, Samuel Thoughtful remarks: "You remember you told me, that when I had learned the Young Lady's Accidence by heart you would make me a present. I hope it will be a book. I like book presents the best of any. Simeon Sobriety tells me that the Token for Children is a choice book, giving an account of good children."

Another letter written by Timothy Thinkwell to his cousin Master Philip Plainheart goes as follows:

I thank you for your friendly letter; and will answer your queries according to the best of my abilities.

I have the honor to belong to one of the public schools in this town; institutions founded by our wise and pious ancestors and venerated by their posterity. Here 'The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.' Every citizen has an equal right to send his children to these schools; and notwithstanding the largeness of the number, it is generally allowed that their improvements are equal to those of private schools which consist of smaller numbers. After the first annual visitation, I will endeavor to forward you some of the specimens of penmanship, which will then be exhibited by both sexes. You will then examine and decide for yourself. It is not for me to judge in my own cause; but I assure you we boys are by no means ready to concede that 'the girls beat us in writing.' It is but justice, therefore, to say that the young ladies, by their behavior and improvement in the various branches of science, do honor to the institutions.
The books used in our schools are such as I believe you are acquainted with, except the Historical Grammar, which has been but lately introduced. Morse's Geography, the American Preceptor, and the Columbian Orator, I presume are used in your schools. Among the other letters are found quotations from Bruce's Travels, Philis Wheatley's poems, and Wordsworth's "We Are Seven." This small book of Juvenile Letters is now interesting only for its quaintness, but in its day it was undoubtedly useful as a model and (although this was not its chief function) perhaps as an instructor.

The moral qualities apparent in Juvenile Letters and in fact in most of Bingham's books are climaxed in a book which he re-edited and published in 1803. It was probably written by Elizabeth Somerville, an Englishwoman, and its full title was A Birthday Present, or a New Year's Gift, being 9 Days' Conversation between a Mother and Daughter, on interesting subjects for the use of Young Persons, from 10 to 15 years of age. According


13. In Juvenile Letters the first line of "We Are Seven" reads "A simple child dear brother Jem." This line is found only in the first edition of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads. See Rosenbach, Early American Children's Books, p. 115.
to his preface, it was Bingham's hope that "every Miss and Master in the United States might read it; and not only read, but practice the excellent lessons therein contained." The book itself consists of extremely moralistic essays on Happiness, Cheerfulness, Good Humor, Benevolence, Industry, Moderation, Prudence, and Religion and concludes with a portion of the Birthday Ode, by Pope. The success of this little volume has never been recorded, but it was probably slight; and it seems very doubtful that, even though the parents may have welcomed it, it was ever received with much enthusiasm by the children.

Of some of the other books written or published by Bingham, little is known. The chief reference to Copy Slips is to be found in Fowle, who says of it:

Soon after Mr. Bingham left the school in 1796, he published a set of copy slips, probably the first engraved slips ever published in America. The coarse and fine copies were in separate books, the former being engraved from patterns of his own writing, and the latter from those by the daughter before mentioned [Sophia]. They were both engraved by Samuel Hill, one of the earliest Boston engravers, but, though well done for the times, they would not be much esteemed now as patterns.  


15. W.B. Fowle, Memoirs... p. 340. A copy-slip is a slip of paper on which a writing copy is written.
Fowle is also the only one who offers any information on a book known as The Hunters. Of it he says:

The Hunters was an anecdote of an accident that happened to Hugh Holmes, an Indian boy at Moor's school. Mr. Bingham, for his amusement, wrote the story on a large slate, and the writer of this note copied it on paper, drew one or two embellishments for it, and printed it as a picture book for children. It never sold, although true, and very interesting. 16

Bingham's translations have survived the years better. While he probably did not actually translate La Croze's Historical Grammar, he "revised, corrected and greatly enlarged" the translation of Lucy Peacock. The full title of this work was A Historical Grammar, or a Chronological Abridgment of Universal History - to which is added, Questions and Answers in history from the creation of the world to the 18th century, an abridged Chronology of the most remarkable Discoveries and inventions relative to the Arts and Sciences, and a List of Eminent and Remarkable Persons. This book was primarily a textbook, and there is some evidence to show that it was used in the Boston schools. 17 In the Preface to this book Bingham stated:

16. Ibid., p. 341.

17. See the reference to it in the quotation from Juvenile Letters on page 146.
In historical reading, repeated interrogatories are necessary to excite recollection and preserve unbroken the regular series which should be formed in the mind. Works of this kind cannot be properly considered in any other light than as elementary; the information they contain comprehend little more than names and dates; and if the labour of the pupil is supposed to end here, his historical acquaintance will prove of small importance; but though not competent to form the judgment, they are useful to exercise the memory.¹⁸

From this one may gather that, like the Young Lady's Accidence and the Astronomical and Geographical Catechism, this book was designed primarily as an outline to be learned by the pupil, while the teacher supplied additional material. It is probable that the result was the same in all three cases — the lesson became a simple exercise of memory, without explanation and supplement by the teacher.

Bingham's only purely literary work was a translation, in 1802, of Chateaubriand's story, Atala; or the Love and Constancy of Two Savages in the Desert. It is a typical "noble savage" love story taking place west of the Mississippi River and showing the author's great admiration for the courage of the Indian brave and his beloved. The translation itself is able and fluent; and although at times the changes of tenses are confusing,

it reads easily and simply.

It is quite possible that Bingham wrote or edited a few more books. If so, these were never very popular; and they have now vanished, leaving scarcely a trace. The American Journal of Education for 1863 listed among the textbooks of Bingham The Practical Reader and the Young American's Speaker, but this is the only reference to any such books. In the last analysis, the contributions of Caleb Bingham as an author, editor, and publisher must be determined from his most popular textbooks, the Young Lady's Accidence, The American Preceptor, The Columbian Orator, The Child's Companion, and An Astronomical and Geographical Catechism.

In all of these books Bingham's principles of democracy, freedom, honesty, and morality are upheld. Through such books he advocated the teaching of such principles to the young. He also stressed memorization, but not for its own sake. He believed in forcing the children to learn the essential facts in any subject and then exposing them to supplementary material to aid them in understanding and obtaining a more complete mastery of each branch of knowledge.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION
Chapter IX
Conclusion

Toward the end of the year 1816 it became apparent that Caleb Bingham had not many more months to live. He was spending less and less time at the bookstore, leaving most of the work to his trusted friend and assistant, William B. Fowle. He had done little writing for some time. Although still a loyal member of the Park Street Church, he was no longer able to take a very active part in its affairs. He had even resigned his directorship of the prison and had settled down to a quiet life at home with his family and friends. He had begun to stoop a bit, and his nerves were unsteady; but he was not disabled. According to Fowle, he was able to dress himself and walk around the room twenty-four hours before he died.\(^1\) The exact nature of the disease with which he was afflicted is difficult to determine. It was then known as "dropsy of the brain."\(^2\) On Sunday morning, April 6, 1817, at the age of sixty years, Caleb Bingham

\(^1\) W.B. Fowle, Memoir of Caleb Bingham, p. 332.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 347.
died.\(^3\) He had been well-known and respected throughout the city, and his passing was mourned by many.

Caleb Bingham had not lived in vain. He had made some contributions to the progress of the world, especially in the educational field. At the beginning of his career he gave impetus to the cause of female education by conducting the first important private school for girls in Boston. He was also influential in forming and passing the Reorganization Bill which provided for the public education of girls. By condensing and simplifying the material in his books and by making them more appealing to children, Bingham led the way to more modern schoolbooks. His quiet manner and mild discipline contrasted favorably with the harsh methods so common in his day. Through his library work he also contributed to education by establishing the Boston Library Society and by starting what was probably the first free town library and certainly the first children's library in this country. There are only a few innovations,

\(^3\) According to Fowle, Bingham was buried in the family tomb of his wife in the Copp's Hill Cemetery. There is today no trace of his grave nor of this tomb; but many of the graves have been destroyed or moved, and it is quite possible that Bingham's was among this number.
however, which can be traced directly to Caleb Bingham; he was a transmitter and distributor rather than an originator of new ideas. His work was important, nevertheless, in that he attempted to put some of the more progressive suggestions into action, publicizing them and providing another stepping stone from the old to the new for the men who were to follow him.

There are two main conclusions which may be drawn from this study. The first is that Caleb Bingham was more of a progressive than a conservative in all of his varied activities and especially in his educational work. His interest in the promotion of more extensive and better female education is one indication of this conclusion, and the fact that one of his reasons for resigning his public school post was probably to protest against the conservatism of the Board of Education strengthens the contention. Other indications are to be found in his political progressivism, his interest in prison reform, his responsiveness to new ideas in religion, his business methods, and his interest in the promotion of libraries. His interest in educational reform was shown not only in his emphasis upon female education and in his resignation, but also in his investi-
igation of new educational theories through the study of other school systems, through discussions with other educators, and through the reading of the latest books. To a certain extent, the teaching methods which he advocated were modern also. His emphasis upon the memorization of only essential, well-understood facts supplemented by outside material may have been a foreshadowing of the modern theory of the differentiated assignment, whereby everyone learns certain essential material and only the ambitious students go on to study the more complex aspects of the subject. His emphasis upon naturalness in oral reading is also a modern idea. His progressivism showed up also in his textbooks, with their more attractive bindings, better print, illustrations (in the Child's Companion), condensation, and more appealing and modern subject matter. Bingham's most conservative tendency was in the inclusion of much material of a religious and overly-moralistic nature. This emphasis was undoubtedly due to the impact of the religious revivalism of the time and to the author's sincere desire to improve the behavior of the younger generation. Even in this field, however, Bingham was not given to excesses, and his essays were much milder in tone than
others of his day. For all of these reasons, it seems safe to say that Caleb Bingham was a man interested in progress of all kinds, a man who was not so blinded by theories and methods of his own day but that he could see beyond and realize that educational reforms were possible and desirable.

The second general conclusion which may be drawn is that such a study as this of the life of an educator can have some practical value today. In the first place, one obtains a more complete picture of the early schools, the teaching methods and the textbooks of New England, an insight which may prove useful in evaluating supposedly new ideas and in comparing and evaluating the changes which have come in education since that time. Such a study as this shows the emphasis once placed upon the importance of memorization, a subject which may become more important in the near future in educational work. It is possible that in the future in certain courses all the pupils may be required to memorize some essential facts as a basis for understanding the broader implications of the field. Of interest also are the methods of character education used by Bingham and his contemporaries. An analysis of the results which they
achieved is beyond the scope of this study, but with the increasing emphasis being put upon character education today, it might prove worthwhile to study the methods used by these early educators.

In the final analysis, however, the primary result of this study should be to give one the picture of a man. Caleb Bingham was a simple man living in a small Bostonian world, asking neither fame nor fortune; but the principles by which he governed his life are still worthy today, and he may well be taken as an example of a good teacher and a successful man.
Je vous apprendois, que J'espere, Dieu voulant, de vous faire une visite in deux ou trois semaines. Je sortirae de cette ville le 28 Avril avec Monsieur Ripley et sa femme; et peut-etre nous y arriverons in 4 ou 5 jours apres cella et sans dout Je vous ferae beaucoup de trouble; et vous bien feriez de sous vous en preparer. Je determine, s'il est possible, faire un voyage sur la mir pour ma sante et je crois que Mr. Ripley veut faire le-meme aussi.

Je souhait que vous allex a Boston avec moi.
Appendix B

Rules and Regulations of the Association of the Boston Booksellers

Boston, October 30, 1801.

We the Subscribers, Booksellers of the town of Boston, sensible of the great importance, both as it respects ourselves and the public at large, that our trade should be carried on under proper regulations; and being convinced that abuses have arisen, and must necessarily arise, where there is a want of system in business; and wishing at the same time to cultivate a good correspondence between ourselves, and establish confidence in each other, while we promote the public interest, do agree to form ourselves into a Society, by the name of the "ASSOCIATION OF THE BOSTON BOOKSELLERS."

And we do solemnly pledge ourselves, faithfully to observe, and be governed by such rules and regulations as shall be adopted, from time to time, by said Society.

Samuel Hall,
John Boyle,
James White & Co.,
West and Greenhof,
Ebenezer and Samuel Larkin,
William P. and Lemuel Blake,
John West,
Joseph Nancrede,
William Pelham,
William T. Clap,
Manning and Loring,
Francis Nichols,
Caleb Bingham.

At a Meeting of the Association of the Boston Booksellers, held at Concert-Hall, October 30th, 1801, Samuel Hall in the chair, The following Votes passed unanimously.

I. Voted, That, on American publications, no discount shall be made from the retail price established by the publisher, for any single copy sold to a transient person or retail customer.

II. Voted, That a uniform discount be made to purchasers of Social Libraries, and that this discount be Ten per cent. and no more, either on American or European publications.

III. Voted, That the following be the rates of discount from retail prices, at which books may be supplied.

1. To purchasers of additions to Social Libraries, which were originally supplied in this town, where the amount shall be ten dollars or upwards, Ten per Cent.

2. To purchasers of books for Private Libraries, or individual use, or for additions thereto, where the amount is ten dollars, and under twenty dollars, Five per Cent.
3. Where the amount is twenty dollars, and under thirty-five dollars, Seven and a half per Cent.

4. Where the amount is thirty-five dollars and upwards, Ten per Cent.

5. In no instance shall any discount be made, either to purchasers of Social Libraries, or others, or any amount of books under ten dollars, except to wholesale customers; and it is recommended to the trade not to encourage discounts on small sums.

IV. Voted, That not less than half a gross, nor less than half a dozen of any article shall be sold at the established gross or dozen price for such article, and that no discount from the retail price shall be made on a less number than half a dozen, except to persons who take a variety of articles in quantity.

V. Voted, That where books are wanted for the supply of a Social or Private Library, and have been offered to the purchaser or purchasers of such library at the established discount, Ten per Cent at least, shall be discounted to each of the trade. And in no instance shall such books be refused to be supplied in these terms, even for the only remaining copy on hand.
VI. Voted, That it shall be the duty of every Member of this Association to make a complaint to the Secretary (in writing) of any breach of the Rules and Regulations of the Society which may come to his knowledge, and that the Secretary shall lay the same before the Association, at their next regular meeting, or shall call a special meeting on this subject, if required by the complaint.

VIII. Voted, That any Bookseller in this town who shall refuse to sign these Regulations, shall in no instance receive the advantages allowed to others of the trade; nor shall any Member of this Association be allowed to make any exchanges of books with such person, or in any instance make him a discount from the retail price of any book or books which he may want.

IX. Voted, That these articles, together with a comprehensive abstract of the rates for furnishing Social Libraries, and books for private use, be printed, and that every Member be furnished with a copy.

X. Voted, That there shall be quarterly meetings of this Association.

XI. Voted, That all regulations respecting the trade
of the Association, which shall hereafter be made, shall be by the unanimous consent of the Members, who shall sanction them by signing their names.

XII. Voted, That the first quarterly meeting of the Society be on the first Monday in December next; and that the Secretary notify the hour and place.

Attest,

Caleb Bingham, Secretary.
Appendix C

Books Presented to the Town of Salisbury by Caleb Bingham in 1803.

Address to a Young Lady
Alexander the Great, Williams
American Preceptor, Bingham
American Tract Society, Publications of Arabia, Crichton
Barbary States, Russell
Bible, (vols. 1-2)
Brainerd, Edwards
Charles the Fifth, Robertson (vols. 2-3)
Chivalry of the Crusades
Christian Researches in Asia
Cook's Voyage
Egypt, Russell
English Grammar, Murry
Evidences of Christianity, McIlvaine
Excursions to the Holy Land, Jones
History of America
History of the Bible, (Gleig (2 vols.))
History of Charlemagne, James
Human Prejudice, Mann
Improvement of the Mind, Chapon
Improvement of Society, Dick (2 copies)
Journal of a Tour, Woodruff
Lectures of Garnett
Lectures on Female Education, Garnett
Lectures on Poetry, Montgomery
Letters of Bigland
Letters on Ancient and Modern History, Bigland
Letters on Missions, Horne
Life of Cowper, Hayley (2 vols.)
Life of Haynes, Cooley
Lives of Edwards and Brainerd, Sparks
Lives of Wilson and Smith, Sparks
Memoir of Dr. Taylor, Rice
Memoir of Payson, Cummings
Memoir of Francis Hyde
Memoirs of Wilson, Griffin
Modern Travels, Doddridge
Nature and Art (vols. 2, 4, 7)
Newton, Posthumous Works of (2 vols.)
Palestine, Russell
Philosophy of Living
Philosophy of Religion, Dick
Physiology, Combe
Plutarch's Lives, Langhorne (vols. 2-5)
Principles of Philosophy, Coombe
Redemption, Phillips
Remains of Nevins
Rise and Progress of the Soul
Sacred History, Hall
Sermons to Young People, Doddridge
Songs in the Night
Venetian History, (2 vols.)
View of the World, Goldsmith
Visit to the South Seas, Stewart
Washington, Life of, by Bancroft Pauling (2 vols.)
Wilson, Sparks
World Without Souls, Cunningham

1. Charlotte B. Norton, History of the Scoville Memorial Library, p. 11. Only a few of these titles were added after 1803; nearly all are from the original Bingham gift.
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*Atala; or the Love and Constancy of Two Savages in the Desert*. Boston: David Carlisle, 1802.

*A Birthday Present; or a New Year's Gift*. Boston: David Carlisle, 1803.

The *Child's Companion*, being a Concise Spelling-Book, containing a Selection of Words in Modern Use, properly arranged and divided in such a Manner as will most naturally lead the learner to a right Pronunciation: Together with a variety of Lessons for Reading etc. Boston: Samuel Hall, 1792.

The *Columbian Orator*, containing a Variety of Original and Selected Pieces; together with Rules; calculated to Improve Youth and Others in the Ornamental and Useful Art of Eloquence. Boston: Manning and Loring, 1800.

*A Historical Grammar; or a Chronological Abridgement of Universal History*. Boston: David Carlisle, 1802.

*Juvenile Letters*: being a Correspondence between Children from eight to fifteen years of age. Boston: David Carlisle, 1805.
Letters and miscellaneous documents dated 1784 to 1796 in the possession of the Boston School Committee.

The Young Lady's Accidence: or a short and easy introduction of English Grammar, Designed, principally, for the use of Young learners, more especially those of the fair sex, though proper for either. Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1791.

Bingham, C. D.


Bingham, Theodore A.

The Bingham Family in the U.S. Easton, Pa.: The Bingham Association, 1927.

Blake, William P.


Boston.

Abstract of Votes and Proceedings of the School Committee, April 5, 1784. Manuscript in the possession of the Boston School Committee.


Catalogue of Books in the Boston Athenaeum; to which are added the By-laws of the Institution and a list of its Proprietors and Subscribers. Boston: William L. Lewis, 1827.


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Statement of the Expenses of the Town of Boston from May 1, 1798 to May 1, 1799. Manuscript at the Old State House.

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Hansen, Allen O.


Haynes, Gideon


Heck, Earl L. W.


Holmes, Pauline


Jenks, Henry F.


Johnson, Clifton


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Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut


Lyman, Rollo LaVerne

Magruder, Mary

"Early Textbooks in Reading."

Martin, George H.


Massachusetts


Mayo, A. D.


McClure, David and Parish, E.

Memoirs of the Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, D.D., Founder and President of Dartmouth College and Moor's Charity School with a Summary History of the College and School to which are added Copious Extracts from Dr. Wheelock's Correspondence. Newburyport: Edward Little and Co., 1811.

Meriwether, Colyer


Monroe, W. S.


Morison, Samuel Eliot


Nason, Elias


Nietz, J. A.


Norman, John


Norton, Charlotte B.


Porter, Edward G.


Quincy, Edmund

Life of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1867.

Quincy, Josiah

Figures of the Past. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883.


Reid, Adam

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An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking, Calculated to Improve the Minds and Refine the Tastes of Youth and also to Instruct them in the Geography, History, and Politics of the United States, to which are prefixed, Rules in Elocution and Directions for expressing the principal Passions of the Mind. Being the Third Part of a Grammatical Institute of the English Language. Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1787.

West, John


Wharton, Anne H.


Winsor, Justin


Woody, Thomas

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Vernon P. Helming

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