

# JOHN BECK.

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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Historical Society: I could wish that the duty of preparing the article I am about to read might have fallen into abler hands—into hands more capable of describing the character of the modest, God-fearing man, and the good work he has done during fifty years of unremitted labor as a faithful teacher of the many pupils that were intrusted to his care. That I might sit with you and listen to what to me, who knew the man, is an ever-pleasing story, instead of attempting the task myself. And as the matter is in part a simple history let me beg your indulgence in advance if some of it may appear prosaic and uninteresting.

The existence of Mr. John Beck's school ante-dates my earliest recollection some twenty or more years. When I was a lad, old enough to ride to the postoffice for letters, or go to Lititz once or twice a week as mill boy, Mr. Beck's educational army was already quartered in the different private families from one end of the town to the other. And when school left out in the evening the streets became alive with healthy-looking boys, who could be seen and "heard" hurrying towards their respective boarding places for their four o'clock piece. This usually consisted of a piece of good home-made bread, cut half around a big loaf, and spread with butter and molasses, applebutter or sometimes honey. Then, munching their pieces, they would be off for an hour's exercise, until supper time, to the play-ground for a game of ball or shinny; perhaps for a visit to the springs, or a romp over the neighboring fields, if it was fall time, in hopes

of starting a rabbit, or to fly their kites if the wind was favorable.

At that time the academy was already widely and favorably known, and patronized at home and from abroad. One generation had already passed through the institution, and at the time of which we speak many of the pupils were the sons of the fathers who had been there before them.

It must not, however, be supposed that the institution was one preconceived, or planned before hand, gotten up by the authorities of the town, or any company of leading citizens, who laid their plans, erected their buildings, employed learned professors and, when all was ready, issued their prospectus and gathered in the pupils needed to fill their houses. It had its origin in a far more humble, yet interesting, manner. A small seed of learning was dropped by a young man, in kindness of heart, to help along a few of his illiterate young companions and to earn a few shillings. The promising quality of the seed was discovered by some of his neighbors, who urged him to nurse its growth. To do this he finally consented, with many doubts and misgivings. The seed took root and sent up a healthy growth, which increased in size beyond expectation and spread its branches year by year higher upward into the sunshine. And the young master who had care of this tree of learning increased in knowledge and understanding himself as his tree grew.

But we will best let Mr. Beck himself tell this part of the story. He says: "I was born at Graceham, Frederick county, Maryland, on the 16th of June, 1791, and in my sixth year moved with my parents to Lancaster county, Pa., into the neighborhood of Mount Joy, whence, after a lapse of two years, we repaired to Lebanon county, near the Blue Mountains.

"There being no schools in that vicinity at that time, my parents de-

terminated to send me to Nazareth Hall. At this school I remained until my fifteenth year. I did not leave it as a very bright scholar, whether from lack of capacity or whether from want of proper training to suit my case, I know not, but the testimonial I received on leaving was an unfavorable one. Nevertheless, what little I had acquired served me well, as you all know. Whatever deficiency in the learning of the books may have been apparent, it is to this school that I am indebted for the first religious impressions made upon my young heart, a lasting source of gratitude which wells up within me whenever I visit old Nazareth Hall.

“My education being found deficient, it was determined by my parents that I should learn a mechanical trade, and my own inclination tended towards that of becoming a cabinet-maker; but my parents, who desired to place me in the care of a religious and strictly moral man, failing to find one in that occupation whose views in that regard accorded with their own, proposed to me to become the apprentice of a shoemaker whom they believed worthy of their confidence. I felt much disinclined, but, having learned the good lesson of filial obedience at Nazareth Hall, I complied, and accordingly was sent to Lititz in the year 1805 for that purpose. Here I was more fortunate in acquiring a knowledge of the business than I had been at Nazareth in my educational pursuits, and on the day of my freedom my master gave me a highly favorable testimonial. He pronounced me the best and fastest workman, as well as the most faithful apprentice boy, he had ever had in his employ, and, in order to testify still further his good feeling toward me, presented me with an elegant suit of clothes and fifty dollars.”\*

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\* From his valedictory to his pupils.

### How He Became a Teacher.

A short time after he had gained his freedom he was asked to take charge of the village school at Lititz. The offer was made because of his great fondness of children, as well as their partiality toward him. This offer he was constrained to decline, being well aware of the deficiency of his education and loath to leave a trade he had mastered so thoroughly. At two subsequent periods he was again asked to take the school, but refused for the reasons stated.

In the year 1813 it happened that there were five apprentice boys in the village whose masters were bound by indenture to send them for some months to school, but the regulations of the village school at that time precluding the admission of boys over twelve years of age he was called upon to teach them three evenings in a week and offered two shillings and six-pence a session. He consented to make a trial, but tells us "it appeared to him very much as when the blind undertake to lead the blind." Fortunately for him, he says, he found them very deficient, and when he realized that he could teach them something his labor became a pleasure, and at the expiration of the term he received much praise from both masters and boys. The report of his success spread through the village, and he was once more asked to take charge of the village school, this time by a letter signed by all the parents who had sons to send to school. His final conclusion, whether to accept or refuse, caused him much consideration. He consulted a number of his friends, among them his former master, the shoemaker, who encouraged him to make a trial, saying to him: "Who knows to what it may lead? You may possibly become a more useful man than if you remain a shoemaker," giving as one of his reasons young Mr. Beck's great love of children and their attachment to him.

## He Takes Charge of His First School—A Description of the School House.

He finally accepted the charge, and on the 2nd day of January, 1815, he was introduced to the twenty-two boys who formed the school by the Rev. Andrew Benade, the then pastor of the Lititz congregation, under whose care and direction the school at that time stood.

The house in which he commenced his career as teacher stood on the site of the present two-story brick Boys' Academy building, on the west end of the church square, facing east. It was originally built for a blacksmith shop, although in later years it served as a potash manufactory, while its age, judging from the figures on the vane—1754—must have been sixty-one years. The size of the building was about 30 by 24 feet, but the room itself was about 24 feet square and poorly lighted by four small windows and its roof covered with tiles, the ceiling very low, the inside walls exceedingly rough and dark, and on one side a fireplace, a receptacle of the blacksmith's bellows in former times. Immediately at the entrance there was a small board-constructed corridor, partly to keep the cold out and in part to serve the boys as a place to hang up their hats. The school apparatus consisted of a flat table, about 16 feet in length, the legs of which, being tressels, did not stand steadily, but rocked backward and forward through the least movement of the boys, who were seated around it on two long benches. The pupils were boys from seven to twelve years of age, a few of them considerably well advanced for those times. They were German children, and one of the duties of the master was to teach them to speak English.

### Objects of the Teacher.

The objects of the teacher, he tells us at the outset, were, first, to gain the affections of his pupils; secondly, to

improve himself, and, finally, to instruct them as far as lay in his power, and with energetic faithfulness, in English and German reading, spelling and writing, arithmetic, geography and grammar, those being the branches required to be taught.

At the close of the first term a public examination was held, as was customary in those days, in the church. All the parents and others present expressed themselves much pleased with the work done, and he was encouraged to undertake a second term. This also proving satisfactory, he had by this time become so thoroughly attached to the school and children that he resolved to continue a teacher.

Many methods were introduced for the improvement of his pupils and to place the school on a better footing, as well as to improve himself. This required a considerable outlay, and at the end of the year he generally was in debt, his salary of \$200 being by no means sufficient to defray all expenses.

Having his Saturdays free, he employed them in earning something extra towards increasing his yearly income. Once out of the routine of shoe-making, he never made another pair, but adopted another expedient, that of engraving tombstone epitaphs, which was more profitable, and, from a slight knowledge he had of painting, also undertook to paint signs and to ornament chairs for chairmakers. In this way he was enabled to earn something toward his own advancement and that of the school.

In 1818 he had an offer to take charge of the parochial school at Bethlehem at a salary of \$300, but, his Lititz patrons not wishing to part with him, and the school at Lititz having considerably increased by accessions from the surrounding neighborhood since under his charge, was now beginning to yield the congregation more than two hundred dollars. To retain him they offered

to turn the school over entirely to him, with permission to make his own terms. This induced him to remain.

### **New Methods Introduced to Stimulate the Ambition of His Pupils.**

He adopted various methods to stimulate the ambition of his pupils. One of them he mentions in particular, because he considered it led to the conversion of his village school to a Boarding Academy. He says: "I had prepared a number of 'Badges of Honor' of various sizes and colors, each one containing a motto of praise in bright gilt letters and otherwise beautifully ornamented. When hung up along the wall of the school room they presented a handsome appearance, and contrasted most pleasingly with the rough and dark walls. On each a number, such as 10, 20, 30, 40, &c., was painted, whilst a strap, with a button attached, served to suspend them to the breast of any boy who had recited best in the various branches of his class, and enabled the recipient conveniently to carry the badge of distinction to his parents. A regular account was then kept, and at the close of the morning and evening exercises each of those who had received one of them obtained a credit for the number on its face. At the expiration of a month all such credits were added together, and the boy who had the highest number was gladdened with some such prize as a book, knife, &c. Any one who conducted himself improperly lost all that he had gained. This method had an astonishing effect upon every boy, and they applied themselves to their lessons early and late, each one energetically striving for the highest numbers.

"Now, it so happened one day in the year 1819 that two gentlemen from Baltimore visited Lititz, and, casually passing through the village, met the boys bearing some of these badges. Attracted by the novel appearance, they

stopped the boys and asked an explanation, which the boys promptly gave them, but they did not come to see me in the old shop.

“On their return to Baltimore it happened that a certain Mr. V., having a son whom he wished to place somewhere in a school, consulted those gentlemen on the subject, and they recommended him to Lititz, alleging, from what they had seen, the probable existence of a good school there. Mr. V. at once determined to come to Lititz on a reconitering expedition. He arrived on a Saturday and found me engaged in painting, assuredly not in a plight to make a favorable impression on a parent who was seeking a teacher for his son.

“His first inquiry, ‘whether the teacher resided here,’ having been responded to affirmatively, was followed by a second—‘Could I get to see him?’ To which I replied, ‘I am the person.’ ‘Well, sir,’ said he, ‘I have come from Baltimore to see whether you will receive my son as a pupil.’ ‘My dear sir,’ I rejoined, abashed, ‘I have no boarding school; I merely instruct the village boys. You have been misinformed. There is a ladies’ seminary here, but none for boys.’ ‘No, sir, I have not been misinformed,’ said he; ‘your school is highly spoken of in Baltimore, and I have been recommended to you.’ ‘Why,’ said I, in utter astonishment, ‘who should know anything there of me or my school? I have never been there, nor do I know a single person in that city.’ He then recounted to me what the two strangers had related to him, expatiating at length upon their strong recommendations of the school as well as of the village. He insisted upon the admission of his son, and I as steadily continued to refuse. After a long conversation upon the subject he finally said: ‘Mr. Beck, think the matter over. I shall meanwhile go to the hotel and dine. Will you call there

this afternoon for further conversation on the subject?’

“Upon my arrival at the hotel he met me at the door and exclaimed: ‘It is needless for you to say no. I have taken a liking to you, and you must receive my son if you ask \$500 a year. I will pay it to you.’

“Still shrinking from so great a responsibility, I proposed to show him my Academy, hoping that a glance at the old blacksmith shop would change his mind. Arrived there, my first remark to him was, ‘This is my Academy. Surely you would not fancy your son’s admission into so mean a building!’ His reply much astonished me. ‘You need no better recommendation than this humble building and the sequestered village about it, where my son may be safely removed from the temptations and perils incident to life in a metropolis.’

“Hereupon I finally, but reluctantly, agreed to receive his son, who arrived ten days later, accompanied by his mother. I tried my best to persuade her not to leave him here, but she, like Mr. V., at once became equally prepossessed, not only with Lititz, but with my humble school room, remarking, ‘In just such a school I want my son to be educated.’

“After imparting many parental admonitions to her son she left him in my charge on the 30th of August, 1819, on which day I entered him in the school, cherishing the fond hope that as he was the first he would be the last one I would receive from abroad. Little did I imagine on that day that my future destiny would be to become the educator of many hundred boys, who would be brought to me from nearly all the States of the Union.

“About four weeks after Master V. had entered five more came from Baltimore, all sons of highly respectable families. They arrived without preliminary application, and I was much

concerned what to do with them, for I was deficient in boarding accommodations. But it, nevertheless, really appeared as though a Higher Hand had regulated the matter, for family after family in the village offered to receive not only the newcomers, but a number of others, who soon followed. These five boys also came on the recommendation of the two gentlemen who had recommended the school to Mr. V.)\*

In proportion as the school increased the old building was found too small, and it was determined to tear it down and erect a larger one on its site. Accordingly, in the early part of 1822, the dingy blacksmith shop was taken down and on the 25th of September following he moved his school into the new building.

Spacious and comfortable as he now deemed his room, constant accessions to the number of his pupils rendered further extensions desirable. Experience, he tells us, had taught him that quite young pupils cannot be profitably consorted with those older and more advanced; and he proposed to the parents of the village who had small boys the establishment of a Primary school; but, as such an arrangement was unheard of in those days, in those parts, the project met with little favor. Thinking that the additional expense thereof was the chief objection, he offered to bear that himself, obtained their consent, and forthwith had a small building adapted to that purpose, and placed the widow of his master in the shoemaking trade in it as teacher, she being a well-educated lady; he feeling happy to be able to procure her an occupation by which she could make a living, which she really needed; and he, by this arrangement, gaining more room and lessening his labors.

In 1826 his health declined rapidly,

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\* From his valedictory.

through much speaking and over-exertion. He had to dismiss his school during this protracted spell of ill-health, but, when fully recovered, all the boys speedily returned.

### **Enlargement and Improvement of the School.**

Mr. Beck procured the best and most advanced books on the subject of schools and education and studied them. He provided means for the exercise and physical training of his pupils by purchasing a plot of an acre and a-half of open ground, a few squares west of his school house, enclosed it with a high board fence, where his boys could play their games and take exercise without molesting any one or being interfered with by others. He procured gardening implements and, together with the boys, did the work of leveling the ground, planting trees and making flower-beds. He had a ball-alley built and a riding course laid out; bought two ponies, saddles and bridles, to teach the boys to ride on horseback. He thus tried many ways of developing and advancing his pupils mentally, morally and physically. Such of the methods as he found on trial to be inefficient he abandoned, and such as answered their purpose he retained and improved.

When the grounds at the Springs were improved and beautified it became a rival place for recreation and pony-riding, and the flower-beds in the play-ground were then abandoned. But the manly games of corner-ball and base ball, then known as town-ball, held possession of the grounds to the end of the school, and the shouts and cheers of the players and enthusiastic lookers-on could be heard in that direction when a good hit or a good run was made. It happened some times, in fine weather, that all the school was out, and one of the assistant teachers

would have to go into the loft of the brick school house, pull the bell-rope himself and ring in school.

The annual examinations of the school had by this time become a holiday for the villagers and neighbors. Old and young crowded the church on those occasions to see the performance and listen to the recitations and declamations. Finding this, however, to materially interrupt the regular studies of the pupils, and entail an almost useless expense to himself and some of the parents, he abandoned public examinations and added largely to his apparatus used in illustrating his lectures. An air-pump, with accompanying instruments; an electrical machine, with battery; electrical bells, etc., magic lantern, with a large number of slides; natural history charts, with some specimens of rare fish and animals, and lastly, a fine telescope, to assist in the study of astronomy, were secured.

During the winter sessions he delivered a course of weekly and semi-weekly evening lectures, on one or the other of these subjects. These lectures he made very attractive. He was quite an orator, fluent in speech and happy in his illustrations; his discourse was interesting and instructive, and when he became warmed up to his subject he held his young audience spell-bound without break or interruption to the end. Let me say here, that of all the lectures that I have listened to in my after-years, I can remember of none that so completely captivated and held the attention as some of the best of Mr. Beck's did.

### **Condition of the Schools in the Thirties and Beginning of the Forties.**

At the time of which we now write Mr. Beck had four assistant teachers, and school was kept by them in as many different rooms—one in the brick academy building and three in

the stone "Brethren House." Mr. Fetter had the youngest boys, Mr. Ferdinand Rickert the second class—both in the stone building—Mr. Augustus Christ the third class in the brick building, and Mr. John Rickert the fourth, or mathematical class, in the stone building upstairs.

John Rickert was the bright mathematical genius of the institution at that period. With a face of a classic mould, thick, short, curly hair, clustering closely around his Byronic head, he had been the pupil of Mr. Beck, and all his life his constant friend and faithful head assistant, and yet, in nature and disposition, was the very opposite of Mr. Beck. He was mild mannered, cold and distant, a man of few words, while Mr. Beck was open-hearted, demonstrative and impulsive. It was interesting to see how their different natures fitted harmoniously into each other.

Mr. Beck told Mr. Rickert he was the wisest and most foolish man he knew. At which Mr. Rickert took no offense, because he knew it was true.

At one time a serious offense was committed at one of the boarding houses. It was reported to Mr. Beck, who called all the boarders of that place into his private room and demanded to know the offender. The guilty party would not confess, and his companions refused to tell on him. Mr. Beck argued, remonstrated and threatened, but all to no purpose. At last, baffled and disappointed, he turned the key and left, telling them he would keep the whole party locked up until they would tell.

He went over to Mr. Rickert, much irritated about the matter.

Mr. Rickert suggested that he would see the boys, and Mr. Beck handed him the keys.

Mr. Rickert entered the room in his quiet way, told them what he had

heard, that they were locked up because they refused to make known the offender. He told them he rather admired their conduct; it was honorable, it was manly, it was courageous not to tell on their friend. The boys who had expected a reprimand were surprised. It was putting the affair into a new light. He would not ask them to tell. "But," continued Mr. Rickert, "I would not like to be the boy who did the mischief, and brought my friends, who are innocent, into trouble, and not have the courage to confess and take the consequences; that is cowardly." There was a short silence, when one of the boys arose, saying: "Mr. Rickert, I can't stand that. I am the one who did it."

Mr. Rickert went back, handed Mr. Beck the key, saying such an one is the guilty party.

Mr. Beck, surprised, asked, "Did they tell?"

"No," said Mr. Rickert. "He confessed."

Mr. Rickert related this circumstance with a quiet smile, as much as to say, "That time I rather got the better of Mr. Beck."

With all his bright talents, Mr. Rickert was not the good teacher that Mr. Beck was. He had but little patience with the dull boys, probably because the problems seemed so simple and easy to him that he could not well understand why the pupil should not also see it, and hence was apt to become impatient, ridicule him, and discourage the already disheartened boy.

Not so with Mr. Beck, who took particular care of those who most needed it—of the weak, the diffident and the dull.

If the task for them was hard, he was at their side, showed them, helped them, encouraged and cheered them on in their studies.

## How the Schools Were Conducted in Those Days.

Mr. Beck, being the proprietor, received all applicants, placed them in the proper classes, and ordered and directed their studies. In that respect he acceded to the wishes of the parents as to what branches they should study as much as possible.

He had a class in penmanship and one in elocution that he taught himself on stated occasions in the week in Mr. Ferdinand Rickert's or Mr. Christ's room, the assistant giving place to the master for that hour. The studies were so regulated by the hour as the hours were told by the clock in the church steeple near by.

When a new class was to be started or a new study to be commenced, Mr. Beck would also be present to help his assistant, and, when not otherwise engaged, he was generally in or about the school houses, or not far off. He would visit each of the rooms to see if anything was wanted, and inquire whether the boys were all industrious. Of the boarders he had charge all the time, in school and out of school; of the day scholars from the village and neighborhood, who went home in the evenings only, while they were in school or on the school grounds.

When he held his class of penmanship or elocution, which was in the first hour in the afternoon, he had the boys at work five or ten minutes before the clock struck. "Boys, time is precious," he would say, and there was no lagging behind or shirking the work when he had charge of the class.

He used copy-books of plain, unruled paper, in blue covers, and when a boy ruled the lines far apart, to lessen the number he would have to write, Mr. Beck would promptly reprove him, saying: "You rule as if your father owned all the paper mills in the country."

Quill pens were then used, and it kept the teacher busy mending the pens. He would set the copy himself, let the pupils write a few lines and bring it up for the master to look at. He would then point out the faults, and tell the boy to write a few lines more and try and improve it. "The great art to learn is to unlearn our faults," he would say. He was very successful as a teacher of penmanship. There was then no printed scrip to copy, at least none to suit him, and ideas had to be picked up whenever opportunity presented. We heard him say that on one occasion he sat for a long while on an inverted half-bushel measure, with slate and pencil, learning to make the capital letter "D" as it was chalked on the grain-fanning mill in the barn back of the school house, and would not give up until he had fully mastered it.

Hearing the elocution class recite also seemed a pleasure to Mr. Beck, and sometimes afforded amusement to both teacher and class. One time a pupil was declaiming a most melancholy piece of his own selection in the most vigorous and energetic style of oratory. Mr. Beck, with book in hand, sat listening intently until he was through; then said quickly: "Mr. Martin, this kind of a piece does not suit you at all. You must have something more on the order of a stump speech, with a 'Hurrah for VanBuren!' in it." The pupil was a Democrat, and had been shouting lustily for VanBuren, his candidate for President, in 1840. The teacher's remark was received with a good-natured laugh by the class, in which Martin joined. A more suitable selection was given him, which the fiery-crested young orator recited the following week in grand style to the satisfaction of his teacher and the pride of his class.

## Reception of Country Boys—Special Lessons for New Pupils.

Mr. Beck gladly received country boys from the neighborhood into his school, even though they attended only during the fall and winter months, and found no trouble in associating them with his regular boarders and have them pursue their studies together peaceably.

To new boys he would give special instruction to help them along with those more advanced. Some fine afternoon he would call the new boys into a room upstairs, where he would have his telescope ready to take observations of the sun, point out the spots and give them general information on the subject. At another time he would take them into his private room and start them in the study of geography or philosophy, and on still another afternoon he would spend several hours experimenting with his electrical apparatus, the pupils taking part in the work, turning the machine, getting shocked, generating gas in a retort, loading a wooden toy cannon and discharging it by an electric spark, to the amusement as well as the instruction of his pupils. He seemed delighted to have the knowledge of science spread in his own neighborhood. Some of his teachings were at that time new and startling to many people, but always found ready advocates in his pupils wherever they had opportunity to be heard. That the sun was the centre and the earth moved around it and revolved on its own axis, that some of the stars were worlds, was in those early days not universally accepted; and when the great meteoric shower fell in 1833 many people were alarmed and thought the world was coming to an end; and when the information went out from Mr. Beck, stating what really did fall, there were many exclamations of surprise. There was at least one minister who considered it necessary to correct Mr.

Beck's fallacy, and said to his congregation: "This man Beck has a kind of a horn (telescope), through which he looks into the heavens, and he wants to tell us it was not the stars that fell. But I will tell you better. We can read in the Scriptures that the stars shall fall from heaven and the world shall be destroyed by fire, and this was a sign and a warning to us to prepare for that day."

### **Some of the Incentives to Study.**

As already indicated, the rule of the rod was superseded by the more humane and equally effective methods to encourage pupils and fit them for study. This fact has been denied by some of the earlier scholars, and it was asserted by them that Mr. Beck did use the rod. Investigation, however, shows that the rod was used only for serious offenses, when Mr. Beck would take the offender to his private room for punishment. Neither Mr. Beck nor his assistants carried the rod about the school rooms for use during school hours.

Young boys are fond of stories, and when a class was industrious and did its work, with time to spare, Mr. Beck would reward them by telling or reading to them some interesting story. Some of his assistants followed this course also. He also treated his school to an occasional holiday—a supper at the hotel on Washington's Birthday, when some of the pupils recited pieces, and kind Mrs. Beck sent word to the boys that they must eat like threshers. Then there was the annual fall excursion after chestnuts. The report in the neighborhood was that Mr. Beck would look to the Furnace Hills some five miles off through his telescope to see whether the chestnuts were ripe, and when he discovered that the burrs had bursted and the brown nuts were ready to fall he ordered a number of farm teams, with their drivers, to haul the

school out. Then there would be a merry time. The eager boys would crowd upon the seats fixed on the hay-ladder wagons, with their well-filled lunch baskets, and after scrambling and shouting to become all properly seated the train would start, with cheer and music of flute, flageolet, tambourine and accordeon, the prancing of the fat farm horses and crack of the driver's whip—off for a day of enjoyment among the hills and chestnuts and a chicken supper at the Brickerville Hotel, and Mr. Beck the happiest boy among them all.

Some of the elements of Mr. Beck's success as a teacher can be named, beginning with the least:

### **The Environments of His School.**

Lititz was admirably suited for a school like his. A quiet, moral atmosphere prevailed the place and it afforded few temptations and no bad company for the boys. The Moravian congregation held supreme title to the land of the village and owned several of the adjoining farms and woodlands. It was under a mild, but strict, church government; outsiders could not become land-holders, and undesirable tenants could not intrude themselves upon the community. A Collegium of church members regulated the affairs of the village, presided over by a Vorsteher; and a committee of chimney inspectors looked after the sanitary condition of the place.

The villagers were quiet, respectable tradesmen and mechanics, and their wives were tidy housekeepers and kind mothers. Many of the latter were educated in the Ladies' Seminary of that place, and some of them, having served in it as teachers, were intelligent and refined in manner.

Among these people the pupils from abroad were distributed in sets from two to six or more in number. They were boarded, lodged and cared-for

and became like members of the same family. The good dames of the house took them under their protection, particularly if yet small boys, rejoiced in their success, sympathized with them in their troubles, and nursed them in sickness; that is, if they ever got sick, for Mr. Beck's boys were a remarkably healthy set.

Besides these attractions there were other inducements which contributed to make the boys feel at home. The village, always neat and attractive, was located in the midst of a charming agricultural country, abounding in streams containing fish, fields in which rabbits could be started in season without much trouble, and woods full of nut-bearing trees, to which the boys could go on their Saturday excursions.

The owners of the surrounding farms were respectable, thrifty farmers, not disposed to quarrel with the boys, and on friendly terms with their Principal, many of them sending their sons to his school during the winter season.

Their board was good and wholesome, and in all the wide world there were no such pretzels and streissel cakes as could be had at the cake-shops in Lititz, nor such taffy as the Sisters, yet remaining in the Sister-house, sold for a cent a stick; at least so the boys used to think.

Then there was the bright, neat, old church, close to the school, its clock keeping time while the boys went through their lessons, and telling the hours and quarters on its two bells in the steeple. In front was a square, gay with hollyhocks in summer and green with cedar trees in winter.

Close on its eastern side stands Linden Hall Seminary, out of which proceeded, on almost every fine day, and came up the village street, a train of demure, sweet-faced schoolgirls, accompanied by several of their teachers, out for their afternoon walk. Upon

these the boys looked with indifference. Being of the weaker sex, they could neither play ball, fish, hunt, skate, or climb trees with them. The fair train was allowed to pass and the boys made no sign. Love-making was not allowed—hardly thought of. Once, in many years, an academy boy opened a correspondence with Linden Hall, and Mr. Beck shipped him in a hurry and without any fuss.

The old-fashioned tally-ho mail coach and four, with well-remembered sorrel off-leader, rolled up in front of the hotel every other day, and carried the passengers and mail between Lancaster and Reading. The sooty-faced chimney-sweep came several times a year, and, to the great delight of the boys, sang his comic, and, alas, sometimes, too, his drunken, songs, from the tops of the chimneys until he fell down inside.

The community of Lititz had a fine ear for music, and quite a number of expert performers. They had a good pipe organ in the church. A quartette of trombones announced the death of a member from the church steeple, and preceded his funeral train to the grave, playing a hymn.

They had an orchestra, with a grand piano, in their concert hall above the main school room in the brick academy building. They had a brass band, who believed in the "concord of sweet sounds" rather than the more noise the better the music.

And Mr. Beck's boys could hardly fail to take the infection, and flutes could be heard in many of the boarding houses and school buildings while passing along the streets after school hours.

Parents who came and saw and heard could not fail to conclude that it was safe to place their sons within such environments.

## **Mr. Beck's Natural Capacity, Great Love for Boys and Indomitable Perseverance.**

His love for boys alone would not have assured him the influence he exercised over his pupils. Many a son has been spoiled by the inordinate love of parents. He possessed other equally necessary qualifications—good common sense and a keen knowledge of human nature. His love was ruled and directed by sound judgment and a wise discretion. He had the art of interesting pupils in their lessons and a happy faculty of imparting knowledge. They recognized in him a friend, and at the same time entertained a wholesome respect for his authority. His mode of teaching was to develop such capacities and natural talents as the pupil possessed, rather than to cram him into a mould fashioned by the teacher himself. He was quick to discover the promising traits in boys and encourage them. To illustrate one such case: During arithmetic hour he caught a pupil engaged in drawing a picture of a locomotive instead of working at his sums, as he should have done. Mr. Beck took the slate and looked at the drawing; the pupil meanwhile sat expecting a sharp reprimand. Instead of this the teacher said: "I think you should become a machinist and learn to build steam engines. As soon as you are sufficiently advanced in your other studies I will put you in the class of mechanical drawing." By that remark and promise the wise teacher sounded the keynote of what became that boy's ambition and aroused his sleeping intellect into activity. An object worth striving for, which accorded with his youthful inclination, had been set before him. Henceforth he was industrious and the words of his teacher, ever ringing in his ears down the avenue of his life, spurred him on to his destiny. He became a successful ma-

chinist, rose step by step, until now, 1898, he is the General Superintendent of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. He has been heard to say that Mr. Beck's encouraging words have had much to do with his success in life. We say that was a good deed—a noble act. So it was, but it was only a trifle in Mr. Beck's work. Many a boy did he thus send out of his school, cheered and encouraged to begin life's battle. No one can know until the Recording Angel opens His book all the good Mr. Beck has done. He was not a witty man; it would not have done to say too many smart things among his boys. But he had a keen sense of the humorous, and could, and often did, laugh heartily.

Mr. Beck's utterances came quickly and spontaneously, but were not spoken, as might be supposed, hastily or without due consideration for the feelings and welfare of his pupils. He would postpone a Friday evening lecture to avoid calling out the small boys in bad weather, or when a deep snow had fallen. And when it was urged against such postponement by some of the larger boys that the sidewalks had been cleaned of the snow and all could come dry shod his reply was that such a little fellow like Bobby H—— could not come to the lecture without measuring some of the big snow heaps by jumping into them and getting his feet wet. To run the risk of causing the illness of one of his boys was in his estimation more to be avoided than missing one of his lectures, much as we all liked to hear them.

So long as a boy showed a willingness to learn, however dull, he went to the trouble of teaching him.

“Nichts wissen ist keine schande,  
Aber nichts lernen wollen,”

was one of the mottoes he had hung on the walls of his school room to greet and encourage the beginner.

It was a well-known fact that boys too timid to remain in other schools felt at home in his, and others who could not be governed elsewhere submitted to his control. They all felt that he dealt with them squarely and impartially, and while his displeasure might come swiftly and overwhelmingly like a flash there was no lingering bitterness in it. He never, within the writer's recollection, made use of the one punishment which a spirited boy will most resent and a timid one take most to heart; he never ridiculed him before his fellows—never humiliated him. His reproof was an earnest but honest reproof, free from scorn. His words left no sting to rankle and fester in the wound; no scar in the memory to be carried to the grave.

He kept on familiar terms with his pupils, and between school hours the boys would gather around him and ply him with questions, or they would even give him accounts of some of their excursions into the country, and were often surprised to hear that he was already acquainted with more of their doings than they wished him to know. "You wonder how I find out those things," he would say; "a little bird tells me." This quaint conceit some of the boys liked to humor, and when a small bird, many of which frequented the groves around Lititz, was seen flitting among the branches overhead and peeping down at them in a knowing kind of a way they would say, "Look-out, there is Mr. Beck's bird!"

Happy and free from restraint were those chance gatherings between school hours; and yet without anything to detract from the respect due the master. Unfortunate was the presumptuous youth who on such an occasion sought to take advantage of the master's condescension. A look of reproof, more withering than words, would put the offender down so that he never attempted the like again. Often when

some mischief was done about the school houses Mr. Beck would say: "Now, nobody did this again. If I could only catch this Mr. Nobody!" He usually found him out, sooner or later.

Mr. Beck's learning was solid and practical, rather than abstruse. As a teacher of penmanship I question whether he ever had his equal, certainly never his superior. And many of his instructions to beginners were given by object lessons long before any system, such as the Spencerian, was heard of.

His academy was emphatically a school of the people. In it was taught that which was useful in all the walks of life. And therein sat, without difference or distinction in the eyes of the master, the heir to millions by the side of the charity scholar, the humble country lad beside the sons of Governors of the States, and other equally eminent citizens.

He was a devout Moravian and a regular attendant at the church where he took his pupils to divine service several times a week. He opened his school with song and prayer each morning, and yet he and his assistants scrupulously avoided using their influence to draw those under their charge away from other churches to their own particular faith. Neither did he hesitate to teach and proclaim the truth as disclosed by science for fear it might conflict with the teachings of the Bible. The possibility of such a happening did not seem to have even suggested itself to him. How could the truth conflict with what was the truth itself? He was the fearless champion of the truth, and the ever ready opponent of error. During his long and active life he wielded a two-edged battle-axe in the cause of education; the one edge bright and shining with the increasing light of public schools; the other steeled to smite ignorance and superstition wherever they raised their

opposing crests. When he first opened school he was far in advance of the times, and when the times, largely through his efforts, had sufficiently advanced to be abreast with him he had already rounded up his fifty years of teaching and sat down to write his valedictory letter to his former pupils, full of enduring love and tender solicitude towards them and thankfulness for the past.

Those who had been under his charge, though long since grown to full stature, and many of them crowned with gray hairs and honors, still remained his boys and he their master.

He was liberal in the interchange of opinions with other teachers, visited the country schools in the neighborhood, attended one of the first conventions of teachers and friends of education at West Chester in 1836, and was chosen its President. He was one of the originators of the Lancaster Lyceum, which met monthly, and was often called on to address Sunday Schools and school celebrations, even after he had quit teaching in his academy.

#### **Some of His Teachers.**

Mr. John Rickert, Mr. Augustus Christ, Mr. Elias Weller, Mr. Ferdinand Rickert, Mr. Edwin Fetter, Mr. Charles Berg, Mr. William Hall, Mr. William L. Bear, Mr. George Hepp, Mr. Adam Reidenbauch, Mr. Abraham Beck, Mr. George R. Barr, Mr. Bernhard De Schweinitz.

#### **Instructors in Music.**

Rev. Peter Wolle, Miss Matilda Blickenderfer, Miss Martha Beck, Miss Angelica Reichel, Miss Mary Heebner, Mrs. Anrelia Christ, Mrs. Joanna Beck, Mrs. Juliet Rickert, Mrs. Emma Rickert, Mrs. Martha Hepp.

#### **Pupils.**

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| United States—Pennsylvania..... | 1,982 |
| New Jersey.....                 | 16    |
| Maryland .....                  | 150   |

|                                  |       |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| United States—District Columbia. | 18    |
| Maine .....                      | 1     |
| Tennessee .....                  | 5     |
| Virginia .....                   | 52    |
| Mississippi .....                | 2     |
| Ohio .....                       | 13    |
| North Carolina ...               | 3     |
| South Carolina....               | 4     |
| Louisiana .....                  | 2     |
| New York.....                    | 21    |
| Delaware .....                   | 5     |
| Iowa .....                       | 7     |
| Alabama .....                    | 2     |
| Georgia .....                    | 2     |
| Indiana .....                    | 5     |
| Vermont .....                    | 1     |
| Florida .....                    | 2     |
| Utah .....                       | 1     |
| Arkansas .....                   | 2     |
| Texas .....                      | 2     |
| Missouri .....                   | 12    |
| Minnesota .....                  | 1     |
| Wisconsin .....                  | 1     |
| Europe—France .....              | 1     |
| Baden .....                      | 2     |
| Wurtemberg .....                 | 3     |
| Switzerland .....                | 3     |
| Bavaria .....                    | 1     |
| West Indies—Jamaica .....        | 1     |
| St. John.....                    | 1     |
| Asia—Hindustan .....             | 1     |
| Canada West.....                 | 1     |
| <hr/>                            |       |
| Total .....                      | 2,326 |

### Some of Beck's Well-Known Pupils, Living and Dead.

The catalogue of Mr. Beck's pupils not being at hand, the following list is made from memory and information furnished:

Julius Bechler, Principal of Linden Hall Seminary.

Jacob Bausman, President Farmers' National Bank.

Edward Brooke, iron master, Birdsboro, Berks county.

George Brooke, iron master, Birdsboro, Berks county.

Augustus Beck (son), artist, Hamburg.

Abm. R. Beck (son), teacher, Lititz.

John R. Bricker, Lititz.

Abm. Bigler, John Bigler, sons of Governor Bigler.

Robert Coleman, Wm. Coleman, proprietors of Cornwall and Colebrook furnaces.

Abm. Cassel, coal and lumber dealer, Marietta.

Uriah Carpenter (farmer), Warwick.

Shaner Christman, Esq., Chester county.

Nathaniel Ellmaker, prominent member Lancaster Bar.

Henry Erb, farmer, Penn township.

Levi Erb, miller and business man, Canada.

Israel G. Erb, Esq., farmer, surveyor and Vice President Lititz Bank.

Simon P. Eby, member Lancaster Bar.

Eugene A. Freuauff, Principal Linden Hall Seminary.

A. Bates Grubb, iron master, Mount Hope furnace.

Robert H. Gratz, Esq., Philadelphia.

George Greider, Lititz.

Frank B. Gowan, President Philadelphia and Reading Railway.

Charles A. Heinitsh, druggist, Lancaster.

Isaac E. Heister, Lancaster Bar and Member of Congress.

George Steinman, Lancaster, Pa.

Edwin Houston, Philadelphia.

Henry F. Hostetter, farmer, Warwick.

D. W. Patterson, member of Bar and Judge of Courts of Lancaster county.

William Reynolds, Admiral United States Navy.

John F. Reynolds, Major General, fell at Gettysburg.

James L. Reynolds, member Lancaster Bar.

George W. Ruby, a celebrated teacher, Principal of York Academy.

John Rickert, teacher Lititz Academy.

Ferdinand Rickert, teacher, Lititz Academy.

A. B. Reidenbach, teacher, Lititz Academy.

A. Herr Smith, member of Lancaster Bar and Member of Congress.

Hiram B. Swarr, member of Lancaster Bar.

Jacob L. Stehman, Bank President, Lititz.

Francis Shunk, son of Governor Shunk.

A. W. Shober, retired merchant, Lititz.

Thaddeus Stevens, Jr., Major National Guard.

Charles B. Shultz, Principal Linden Hall Seminary.

Nathaniel W. Sample, Superintendent Denver and Rio Grande railroad.

Jacob B. Tshudy, merchant, Lititz.

Haydn H. Tshudy, Esq., Lititz.

Milton N. Woods, President First National Bank, Lancaster.

E. H. Yundt, member of Lancaster Bar.

Amos Witmer, Paradise township.

Hiram Witmer, Paradise township.

Author: Eby, Simon P.

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