

The sudden death of Prof. H. B. Boisen, at his home near Princeton, N. J., removes from the ranks of teachers a man in many respects most remarkable. The son-in-law of Dr. T. A. Wylie, so long a professor in the State University at Bloomington, and himself for many years professor of modern languages in the same institution, he became widely known throughout Indiana. But those who knew him the best were the most astonished at his erudition, his indomitable energy, his invincible enthusiasm, and his wonderful capacity for new requirements, especially in the department of language. Though a German by birth and coming to this country perhaps not earlier than at the age of twenty, he acquired a mastery over the English language such as is rarely accorded even to a native. Quick, ardent, earnest, enthusiastic, thorough, he was a rare teacher, and could kindle a wonderful enthusiasm in the souls of his pupils and always secure their respect. He did not know how to spare himself. He served as a torch whose flame never burned out. Extremely nervous in his organism, and clear in his perception, he sometimes, possibly, expected more of his pupils than he ought; yet he encouraged them, and bore patiently with all who seemed to him to be anxious to do their best. He knew well how to sweep away from the path of his pupils the useless encumbrances. He simplified their work, and told them how to study, and yet he drilled them most thoroughly.

Talking with him, some years ago, about his early experience, he told two which always seemed to me the most remarkable and most indicative of the man. I think I shall narrate the main facts about as he gave them. He remarked to me that his first school consisted of 600 pupils. Seeing my amazement, he went on to say that when he first came over he had found himself in Minnesota, if I am correct, where were several either German or Norwegian communities, each unable to support a school, and yet all combined could do so. Buying a horse for \$60, which took the larger part of his surplus, he would make the circuit of those communities, teaching school one day in each of them, riding six miles or more every evening to the next station, and finally returning to the starting point by Saturday night. I have often thought of that first experience of him at the age when few boys have thought of leaving their homes, even for a short trip. Teaching thus for several months, he finally took another school, in what place I do not remember, but I think it was a subscription school. At this time he was not much of a believer in the use of text-books. So he caused the whole four walls of the school-room to be blackened from floor to ceiling, and on these he would put the daily lessons. He would arise at 4 o'clock to put his work on the board, using ladders for the upper surfaces. His school enlarged and pupils came from miles, until they numbered far above a hundred, and with a smile he recounted how he had to stand to those children as teacher and doctor and nurse until his extraordinary exertions compelled him to stop, and he took a little trip up the Missouri among the Indians to recuperate. I think he read Latin with perfect ease, and Greek almost as readily. During a little walk once taken out in the country near Bloomington, commenting on the value of children being compelled to learn the masterpieces of language, he proceeded to quote to me with perfect ease long passages from the Iliad in Greek, of which he said to me he could repeat several books. He was a master of French, and could read Spanish, I think, and was also acquainted, I am sure, somewhat with Italian. How much more than this I am not aware. And yet, as versed as he was in language, he seemed to think he had a better acquaintance with mathematics, which chair I think he held two years in the Normal at Terre Haute under President Jones. And those who have heard him give instructions in mathematics in county institutes would hardly doubt his word. Then, too, he was a great lover of nature. He loved with an earnest love her woods and fields, and flowers and fruits. Walking with him one day in Cambridge, Mass., through the little woods that border or cover the grounds of Harvard University, he told me he knew the leaf of every plant that grew north of the latitude of Washington in this country. Asking him how many, he answered, about five thousand. So, walking behind him, I would, from time to time, pluck a leaf, asking him the name of the plant. Quick as I put the question, so quick and sure the answer would come. One leaf I presented him was from a plant which seemed to stand alone without support. "It is a creeper," said he. "But," I said, "it stands alone." "Look here," he answered, and pointed to the same plant creeping easily over some support. And one of his friends told me once that

it was a perfect treat to hear him take a clover blossom and show forth its beauty and point out its perfect adaptation to its work. So he took me, on that hot 4th of July, to Harvard and through the beautiful country of Mt. Auburn, seemingly unwearyed by his long walk, in order that he might gratify his friend, and little conscious, also, that the grass should grow again kind nature, whom he so loved, would as lovingly deck the mound which would mark the spot of his last repose. During the last year Prof. Boisen acted as one of the sub-masters in the Boston Public Schools. His school was one of the hardest in the city. It was, however, his own choice. He had been offered a position in a more aristocratic community, but he preferred to be among the little children of that polyglot community which makes that part of Boston the most dangerous in the city.

But I was informed that he was most successful. One of the assistant supervisors of the Boston schools—Mr. Metcalf—told me he was the finest teacher of English he ever saw, and at that time was engaged in the preparation of a course of language books for use in the public school.

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