

March 3, 1845

You of course my dear Sir, will not regard these remarks as made in a hypercritical or boastfull spirit, but with all respect for yourself and with a desire for accuracy. Your arrangement I should object to, as I said to you before. My own I cannot present, unless somewhat at length.

Yours most truly
Lewis R. Gibbes.

Be so good as to send the rest of your syllabus beyond p 43, if printed.²⁵

reduced in density by being stretched. For his explanation, see below, May 31, 1845. His teaching copy has a notation reducing the strict claim to a lesser one: they are "said to be" less dense. This phrasing was followed in the later version also (p. 196, section 30).

There is also a phrase "See Young," but we have been unable to find the source of Henry's information on the experiments in the works of Thomas or Matthew Young, both of which are in the Henry Library.

²⁵ The last page of "Somatology."

TO [FRANCIS DWIGHT]¹

Draft, Henry Papers, Smithsonian Archives

Princeton College of N.J.
March 3rd 1845

Dear Sir

Your favour of the 22nd ult² asking me in behalf of the executive committee of the Normal School of the state of New York³ to recommend a

¹ The recipient is identified as Dwight (b. 1808) because he was at this date Secretary and Treasurer of the Executive Committee of the New York State Normal School at Albany, a position he held until his death in December 1845. While engaged in law practice after his graduation from Harvard College (1827), Dwight became interested in public education and published the *District School Journal of the State of New York*. It became the official organ of the state's common-school system and earned him wide acclaim from educators throughout the United States. He was appointed to the Normal School's Executive Committee in May 1844. *DAB*; William Marshall French and Florence Smith French, *College of the Empire State: A Centennial History of the New York State College for Teachers at Albany* (Albany, 1944), pp. 47-48.

Henry earlier sent a certificate of recommendation for George R. Perkins, then a candidate for Professor of Mathematics at the

Normal School (see above, Henry to James Henry, January 13, 1845).

² Not found.

³ The Executive Committee was composed of individuals who "were already favorably known in educational circles throughout the state." In addition to Dwight, its members included Nathaniel S. Benton, the chairman; the Reverend Alonzo Potter; the Reverend William H. Campbell; Gideon Hawley; and Samuel Young. Benton (d. 1849), then Secretary of State of New York, was, by virtue of his position, ex officio Superintendent of Common Schools. Potter (*Henry Papers*, 5:353) was Professor of Intellectual Philosophy and Political Economy at Union College. Campbell (1808-1890; *Henry Papers*, 2:437n), pastor of the Third Reformed Church in Albany, was a Trustee of the Albany Academy. Gideon Hawley (1785-1870; *Henry Papers*, 1:50), the state's first Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1813-1821, and President of the Albany Acad-

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suitable candidate for the Professorship of the natural sciences in that Institution was received a few days ago but an absence from home has prevented my answering it before this time. After giving the subject the consideration which its importance demands I have concluded to submit to the committee the following suggestions and recommendation.

In the selection of a teacher of Physical science it is in my opinion of the highest importance that the candidate selected if possible should not only possess an historical knowledge of the labours of others [and] the requisite amount of literary and scientific learning but also powers of original investigation and a laudable ambition to employ these in establishing an honest reputation in the science he has chosen. An individual of this character with the enthusiasm which usually accompanies it can scarcely fail to become a successful teacher. Where several candidates are presented for a scientific Professorship I should not hesitate *<all>* other things being nearly equal to *<select>* choose the one who had already distinguished himself by labours which has received the commendation of competent judges. The man who has made a successful beginning in any line—who has felt the stimulous of true fame and has attained confidence in his own ability cannot as a general rule remain stationary. He has given a pledge by what he has done *<that he will do more and that by constant exertion he will endeavour>*. The inducement to farther exertion in order to *<sustain>* to sustain and increase *<the>* his reputation *<he has already acquired>* is much greater than that which led to the first effort. I am confident from long observation that the cause of science and of general education would be materially advanced in our country if the question were put in reference to every candidate for a professorship in any of our higher institutions of learning "*What has he done?*" instead of the more usual one of What do his friends think him capable of doing. This principle is beginning to be understood and a few of our institutions have *<begun to>* been benefited by act[ing] in accordance with it but it is not as generally recognised as it should be and places of importance in *<the majority>* many of our colleges are filled with mere promising men *<who never repay the>* to the exclusion of those who have earned a well merited reputation by their actual performance. With these views which I hope the committee will *<indulge me>* pardon me for expressing perhaps too warmly and with a lively interest in what ever relates to the advance of education in my

emy, 1832-1842, was also a Regent of the University of the State of New York. Samuel Young, a former State Senator and Benton's predecessor as Secretary of State, led the move to establish the Normal School in Albany,

where its activities could be overseen by the legislative branch. French and French, *College of the Empire State*, pp. 45-51, 84 (quote at p. 45).

March 15, 1845

native state I beg leave to recommend as the most suitable person within my knowledge who could be procured for the <situation> vacant chair in the Normal S[c]hool Mr James Hall of Albany⁴ a gentleman already well known in this country and abroad for his labours in Geology and who on the principles I have advanced may reasonably be expected should his life be [spared] to advance his reputation by farther exertions in this and the kindred branches of science.⁵ With due acknowledgement to the committee for the honor they have conferred on me by the request contained in your letter <and with> I am sir your

obedient servant
Joseph Henry

⁴ James Hall, the State Paleontologist, was then working on his *New York State Natural History Survey: Paleontology* (1847). See above, Hall to Henry, November 20, 1844. Henry informed Hall on June 27, 1845, that he had recommended him for the position at the Normal School, and that Princeton had awarded Hall an honorary degree at its last commencement. State Geologists and State Paleontologists Correspondence File, New York State Archives and Records Administration.

⁵ It is not known whether Hall was interviewed for or offered the post. Merritt G. McKoon of Little Falls, New York, who had also applied to be Principal of the Normal School, was selected as Professor of Natural Science on March 15, 1845. He served only four months before resigning on June 9, 1845. The position remained vacant until 1854, when Ezra S. Carr was appointed. French and French, *College of the Empire State*, pp. 55, 62.

TO ANONYMOUS¹

Retained Copy, Henry Papers, Smithsonian Archives

Princeton March 15th
1845

My Dear Sir

I was much gratified in receiving a letter from you some months ago informing me that you had commenced to prepare yourself in the most thorough manner for the business of practical engineering. I would have answered it immediately but was prevented at the time by a press of college duty and other engagements and as usual when I do not attend to a letter as soon as it is received I have suffered your communication to remain unanswered until a late day. Each hour brings its own duties and I have long since found by sad experience the evils of procrastination.

I think you have made a good choice and provided you can persevere in the course you are now in there is every probability that you will become an important and useful man. The professions of Law and Medicine are so

¹ Although unidentified, the recipient was clearly a former student of Henry's.