

ANOTHER LESSON: THE BITTER FRUIT OF CIVIL WAR.

“Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.”

One of the chief characteristics of public school readers of the post-Civil War era is a deep melancholia, a remorsefulness, and a desire to bind up the wounds of the War and go forward together. Here is a sampling of selections from those readers found in *Pious to Progressive: A Century of American Readers*. It would be well to consider them in our troubled times.

The last selection is from a pre-Civil War reader. It is a stark, and shockingly prescient, warning of the dangers of treason, by then President Andrew Jackson. It also is well worth considering today.

SOMEBODY'S DARLING

Anonymous

Into a ward of the whitewashed walls,
Where the dead and the dying lay –
Wounded by bayonets, shells and balls –
Somebody's darling was borne one day.
Somebody's darling! So young and so brave,
Wearing still on his pale sweet face,
Soon to be hid by the dust of the grave,
The lingering light of his boyhood's grace.

Matted and damp are the curls of gold
Kissing the snow of the fair young brow,
Pale are the lips of delicate mould –
Somebody's darling is dying now.
Back from the beautiful, blue veined face –
Brush every wandering silken thread;
Cross his hands as a sign of grace –
Somebody's darling is still and dead.
Kiss him once for somebody's sake,
Murmur a prayer soft and low,
One bright curl from the cluster take –
They were somebody's pride, you know.
Somebody's hand had rested there;
Was it a mother's, soft and white?
And have the lips of a sister fair
Been baptized in those waves of light?
God knows best. He was somebody's love;
Somebody's heart enshrined him there,
Somebody wafted his name above,
Night and morn on the wings of prayer.

Somebody wept when he marched away,
Looking so handsome, brave, and grand;
Somebody's kiss on his forehead lay;
Somebody clung to his parting hand.
Somebody's watching and waiting for him,
Yearning to hold him again to her heart;
There he lies – with the blue eyes dim;
And the child-like lips apart.
Tenderly bury the fair young dead,
Pausing to drop on his grave a tear;
Carve on the wooden slab at his head –
"Somebody's darling lies buried here!"

California State Series, Third Reader, 1886

UNITED AT LAST

Anonymous

"O mother! What do they mean by blue?
And what do they mean by gray?"
Was heard from the lips of a little child
As she bounded in from play.
The mother's eyes filled up with tears;
She turned to her darling fair,
And smoothed away from the sunny brow
Its treasure of golden hair.
"Why, mother's eyes are blue, my sweet,
And grandpa's hair is gray,
And the love we bear our darling child
Grows stronger every day."
"But what did they mean?" persisted the child;
"For I saw two cripples today,
And one of them said he fought for the blue,
The other, he fought for the gray.
"Now he of the blue had lost a leg,
And the other had but one arm,
And both seemed worn and weary and sad,
Yet their greeting was kind and warm.
They told of the battles in days gone by,
Till it made my young blood thrill;
The leg was lost in the Wilderness fight,
And the arm on Malvern Hill.
"They sat on the stone by the farmyard gate,
And talked for an hour or more,
Till their eyes grew bright and their hearts seemed warm
With fighting their battles o'er;

And they parted at last with a friendly grasp,
In a kindly, brotherly way,
Each calling on God to speed the time
Uniting the blue and the gray."
Then the mother thought of other days—
Two stalwart boys from her riven (torn);
How they knelt at her side and lispingly prayed,
"Our Father which art in heaven;"
How one wore the gray and the other the blue;
How they passed away from sight,
And had gone to the land where gray and blue
Are merged in colors of light.
And she answered her darling with golden hair,
While her heart was sadly wrung
With the thoughts awakened in that sad hour
By her innocent, prattling tongue:
"The blue and the gray are the colors of God,
They are seen in the sky at even,
And many a noble, gallant soul
Has found them a passport to heaven."

New National Fourth Reader, 1884

MUSIC IN CAMP

John R. Thompson*

Two armies covered hill and plain,
Where Rappahannock's waters
Ran deeply crimsoned with the stain
Of battle's recent slaughter's
The summer clouds lay pitched like tents
In meads of heavenly azure;
And each dread gun of the elements
Slept in its high embrasure.
The breeze so softly blew, it made
No forest leaf to quiver,
And the smoke of the random cannonade
Rolled slowly from the river.

And now where circling hills looked down
With cannon grimly planted,
O'er listless camp and silent town
The golden sunset slanted;
When on the fervid air there came
A strain, now rich, now tender,
The music seemed itself aflame

With day's departing splendor.
A Federal band, which eve and morn
 Played measures brave and nimble,
Had just struck up with flute and horn
 And lively clash of cymbal.
Down flocked the soldiers to the banks,
 Till, margined by its pebbles,
One wooded shore was blue with "Yank,"
 And one was gray with "Rebels."
Then all was still; and then the band
 With movement light and tricky,
Made stream and forest, hill and strand,
 Reverberate with "Dixie."
The conscious stream, with burnished glow,
 Went proudly o'er its pebbles,
But thrilled throughout its deepest flow
 With yelling of the Rebels.
Again a pause, and then again
 The trumpet pealed sonorous,
And "Yankee Doodle" was the strain
 To which the shore gave chorus.
The laughing ripple shoreward flew
 To kiss the shining pebbles –
Loud shrieked the swarming Boys in Blue
 Defiance to the Rebels.
And yet once more the bugle sang
 Above the stormy riot;
No shout upon the evening rang –
 There reigned a holy quiet.
The sad, slow stream its noiseless flood
 Poured o'er the glistening pebbles:

All silent now the Yankees stood,
 All silent stood the Rebels:
No unresponsive soul had heard
 That plaintive note's appealing,
So deeply "Home Sweet Home" had stirred
 The hidden founts of feeling.
Or blue or gray, the soldier sees,
 As by the wand of fairy,
The cottage 'neath the liveoak trees,
 The cabin by the prairie.
Or cold or warm, his native skies
 Bend in their beauty o'er him;
Seen through the tear mist in his eyes
 His loved ones stand before him.
As fades the iris after rain

In April's tearful weather,
The vision vanished as the strain
And daylight died together.
But memory, waked by music's art,
Expressed in simplest numbers,
Subdued the sternest Yankee's heart –
Made light the Rebel's slumbers.
And fair the form of Music shines,
That bright celestial creature,
Who still 'mid war's embattled lines
Gave this one touch of nature.

McGuffey's Fifth Reader, 1901

*American Journalist, and a Southerner from Atlanta.

ON THE RESTORATION OF THE UNION

Alexander H. Stephens*

Now that the storm of war has passed, it behooves us all to labor for the establishment of good government, with its resulting prosperity and happiness. I need not assure you, if this can be obtained, that our desolated fields, our barns, our villages and cities, now in ruins, will soon, like the Phoenix, rise from their ashes, and all our waste places will again, at no distant day, blossom as the rose.

Wars, and civil wars especially, always menace liberty. They seldom advance it, while they usually end in its entire overthrow and destruction. Our civil contest stopped just short of such a catastrophe. It is now our duty to retrace our steps and look for vindication and maintenance of constitutional liberty in the forums of reason and justice, instead of on the arena of arms; in the courts and halls of legislation, instead of on the fields of battle.

I have not lost my faith in the virtue, intelligence, and patriotism of the American people, or in their capacity for self-government. But for these great essential qualities of human nature to be brought into active and efficient exercise for the fulfillment of patriotic hopes, it is essential that the passions of the day should subside, that the causes of these passions should not now be discussed, that the embers of the late strife should not be stirred.

The most hopeful prospect at this time is the restoration of the old union, and with it the speedy return of fraternal feeling throughout its length and breadth. These results depend upon the people themselves, upon the people of the North quite as much as the South. The masses

everywhere are alike equally interested in the great object. Let old issues, old questions, old differences, and old feuds be regarded as fossils of another epoch.

The old Union was based on the assumption that it was for the best interests of the people of the United States to be united as they were, each state faithfully performing to the people of the other states all their obligations under a common compact. I always thought that this assumption was founded upon broad, correct, and statesmanlike principles. I think so yet.

And now, after the severe chastisement of war, if the general sense of the whole country shall come back to the acknowledgment of the original assumption that it is for the best interests of all the States to be so united, as I trust it will, I can perceive no reason why, under such restoration, we may not enter upon a new career, exciting increased wonder in the old world by grand achievements hereafter made, than any heretofore attained, by the peaceful and harmonious workings of our American institutions of self-government.

New McGuffey Fifth Reader, 1901

*[Mr. Stephens was an attorney, a member of US Congress from Georgia, and although originally opposed to secession, he was elected Vice President of the Confederate States. He was returned to Congress after Reconstruction. This is an extract from a speech delivered at Milledgeville, Georgia, in 1866.]

THE TRAILED BANNER

Rev. J. A. Ryan*

Take that banner down, 'tis weary,
Round its staff 'tis drooping weary.
Furl it, fold it, let it rest;
For there's not a man to wave it,
For there's not a sword to save it,
And there's not a hand to lave (wash) it,
In the blood that heroes gave it,
And its foes now scorn and brave it.
Furl it, hide it, let it rest.
Take that banner down, 'tis tattered;
Broken is its staff and shattered,
And the valiant hosts are scattered
Over whom it fluttered high.
Oh, 'tis hard for us to fold it!
Hard to think there's none to hold it;
Hard, for those who once unrolled it

Now must furl it with a sigh.

California State Series Third Reader, 1886

*[Ryan, “the poet priest of the South,” has written a number of poems distinguished by grace, fervor, and passion, but it is not known that any collection of them has been made in a single volume. His death occurred April 22, 1886, at Mobile, Alabama, where he was buried with military honors.”]

THE HERO IN GRAY

Henry W. Grady*

Some of you saw, and all of you have heard of the grand review of the Northern army at the close of the war. How in the pomp and circumstance of war they came back, marching with proud and victorious tread, reading their glory in a nation’s eyes. But there was another army that sought home at the close of the war: an army that marched home in defeat and not in victory; in pathos and not in splendor; but in glory that equaled theirs, and to hearts as loving as ever welcomed heroes home.

Picture to yourself the footsore Confederate soldier, as, buttoning up in his faded gray jacket the parole which was to bear testimony to his children of his fidelity and faith, he turned his face southward from Appomattox, in April, 1865. Think of him as ragged, half starved, heavy-hearted, enfeebled by want and wounds, having fought to exhaustion, he surrenders his gun, wrings the hands of his comrades in silence, and lifting his tear stained and pallid face for the last time to the graves that dot the old Virginia hills, pulls his gray cap over his brow and begins the slow and painful journey.

What does he find – let me ask you, who went to your homes eager to find the welcome you had justly earned, full payment for four years’ sacrifice – what does he find when he reaches the home he left so prosperous and beautiful? He finds his house in ruins, his farm devastated, his slaves free, his stock killed, his barns empty, his trade destroyed, his money worthless; his social system, feudal in its magnificence, swept away; his people without law or legal status, his comrades slain, and the burdens of others heavy on his shoulders. What does he do – this hero in gray with a heart of gold? Does he sit down in sullenness and despair? Not for a day. Surely God, who had stripped him of his prosperity, inspired him in his adversity.

As ruin was never before so overwhelming, never was restoration swifter. The soldier stepped from the trenches into the furrow; horses that had charged Federal guns marched before the plow; and fields that

ran red with human blood in April were green with the harvest in June.

Never was nobler duty confided to human hands than the uplifting and upbuilding of the prostrate and bleeding South, misguided, perhaps, but beautiful in her suffering, and honest, brave, and generous always. As she stands upright, full-statured and equal among the people of the earth, breathing the keen air and looking out upon the expanding horizon, she understands that her emancipation came because in the inscrutable wisdom of God her honest purpose was crossed and her brave armies were beaten; and she rejoices that the omniscient God held the balance of battle in His almighty hand; that human slavery was swept forever from American soil; and the American Union saved from the wreck of war.

But what of the North? Will she permit the prejudices of war to remain in the hearts of the conquerors, when it has died in the hearts of the conquered? Will she withhold, save in strained courtesy, the hand which straight from his soldier's heart Grant offered to Lee at Appomattox? If she does, the South, never abject in asking comradeship, must accept with dignity its refusal; but if she does not; if she accepts in frankness and sincerity this message of goodwill and friendship, then will the prophecy of Webster be verified in its fullest and final sense, when he said: "Standing hand to hand and clasping hands, we should remain united, citizens of the same country, members of the same government, united all, united now and united forever. There have been difficulties, contentions, and controversies, but I tell you that in my judgment:

"Those opposed eyes,
Which like the meteors of a troubled heaven,
All of one nature, of one substance bred,
Did lately meet in th' inner shock,
Shall now, in mutual well beseeming ranks,
March all one way."

The New McGuffey Fifth Reader, 1901

*American journalist from Georgia.

These are merely a sample of that genre which saturated school books in the generation after the Civil War, as almost every family suffered loss. Below is a firm warning of that catastrophe, which, unfortunately, was forgotten in a few years.

AN APPEAL TO THE PATRIOTISM OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Pres. Andrew Jackson*

Fellow Citizens of my native State! Let me not only admonish you, as the first magistrate of our common country, not to incur the penalty of its laws, but use the influence that a father would over his children whom he saw rushing to certain ruin. In that paternal language, with that paternal feeling, let me tell you, my country men, that you are deluded by men who either are deceived themselves or wish to deceive you. Mark under what pretenses you have been led on to the brink of insurrection and treason, on which you stand.

You were told that this opposition might be peaceably, – might be constitutionally made, – that you might enjoy all the advantages of the Union, and bear none of its burdens. Eloquent appeals to your passions, to your state pride, to your native courage, to your sense of real injury, were used to prepare you for the period when the mask which concealed the hideous features of DISUNION, should be taken off.

It fell, and you were made to look with complacency on objects which not long since you would have regarded with horror.

Look back at the acts which have brought you to this state, – look forward to the consequences, to which it must inevitably lead. Something more is necessary. Contemplate the condition of that country, of which you still form an important part! – consider its government, uniting in one bond of common interest and general protection, so many different states, – giving to all their inhabitants the proud title of AMERICAN CITIZENS, – protecting their commerce, – securing their literature and their arts, – facilitating their intercommunication, – defending their frontiers, – and making their name respected in the remotest parts of the earth!

Consider the extent of its territory, its increasing and happy population, its advance in arts which render life agreeable, and the sciences which elevate the mind! See education spreading the lights of religion, humanity, and general information, into every cottage in this wide extent of our territories and states! Behold it as the asylum where the wretched and the oppressed find refuge and support! Look on this picture of happiness and honor, and say, "WE, TOO, ARE CITIZENS OF AMERICA; Carolina is one of these proud states; her arms have defended, – her best blood has cemented this happy Union!" And then add, if you can, without horror and remorse, "This happy Union we will dissolve, – this picture of peace and prosperity we will deface, – this free intercourse we will interrupt, – these fertile fields we will deluge with blood, – the protection of that glorious flag we renounce, – the very name of AMERICANS we discard."

And for what, mistaken men! for what do you throw away these inestimable blessings, – for what would you exchange your share in the advantages and honor of the Union? For the dream of a separate independence, a DREAM interrupted by bloody conflicts with your neighbors, and a vile dependence on foreign power? If your leaders could succeed in establishing a separation, what would be your situation? Are you united at home, – are you free from the apprehensions of civil discord, with all its fearful consequences? Do our neighboring republics, every day suffering some new revolution, or contending with some new insurrection, – do they excite your envy?

But the dictates of a high duty oblige me solemnly to announce that you can not succeed. The laws of the United States must be executed, I have no discretionary power on the subject, – my duty is emphatically pronounced in the constitution. Those who told you that you might peaceably prevent their execution, deceived you, – they could not have been deceived themselves. They know that a forcible opposition could alone prevent the execution of the laws, and they know that such opposition must be repelled. Their object is disunion; but be not deceived by names; disunion, by armed force is TREASON.

Are you really ready to incur its guilt? If you are, on the heads of the instigators of the act, be the dreadful consequences, – on their heads be the dishonor, but on yours may fall the punishment, – on your unhappy state will inevitably fall all the evils of the conflict you force upon the government of your country. It can not accede to the mad project of disunion, of which you would be the first victims, – its first magistrate can not, if he would, avoid the performance of his duty, – the consequence must be fearful for you, distressing to your fellow citizens here, and to the friends of good government throughout the world. Its enemies have beheld our prosperity with a vexation they could not conceal, – it was a standing refutation of their slavish doctrines, and they will point to our discord with the triumph of malignant joy. It is yet in your power to disappoint them. There is yet time to show that the descendants of the Pinckneys, the Sumters, the Rutledges, and of the thousand other names which adorn the pages of your Revolutionary history, will not abandon that Union, to support which so many of them fought, and bled, and died.

I adjure you, as you honor their memories, – as you love the cause of freedom, to which they dedicated their lives, – as you prize the peace of your country, the lives of its best citizens, and your own fair fame, to retrace your steps. Snatch from the archives of your state the disorganizing edict of its convention, – bid its members to re-assemble and promulgate the decided expressions of your will to remain in the path which alone can conduct you to safety, prosperity, and honor, – tell

them that, compared to disunion, all other evils are light, because that brings with it an accumulation of all, – declare that you will never take the field unless the star-spangled banner of your country shall float over you, – that you will not be stigmatized when dead, and dishonored and scorned while you live, as the authors of the first attack on the constitution of your country!

Its destroyers you can not be. You may disturb its peace, – you may interrupt the course of its prosperity, – you may cloud its reputation for stability, – but its tranquility will be restored, its prosperity will return, and the stain upon its national character will be transferred and remain an eternal blot on the memory of those who caused the disorder.

May the great Ruler of nations grant, that the signal blessings, with which He has favored ours, may not, by the madness of party or personal ambition, be disregarded and lost; and may His wise providence bring those who have produced this crisis, to see the folly, before they feel the misery, of civil strife; and inspire a returning veneration for that Union which, if we may dare to penetrate His designs, He has chosen as the only means of attaining the high destinies, to which we may reasonably aspire.

Sander's Fifth Reader, 1855

*Andrew Jackson (right) was a penniless frontiersman who rose to leading Tennessee political figure, Tennessee militia Colonel, then US Army General, and President of the United States. His success in holding the US together through his turbulent time was no less remarkable than his defeat of the British army at New Orleans.

1. This is part of President Jackson's response to the "Nullification Controversy" which threatened to break apart the country into civil war a generation before it actually happened. The particular point at issue here was tariffs on imported goods to help Northern industrial development, but at the expense of the agricultural South.

In addition to his appeal to patriotism, Jackson declared his intention to hold together the Union even if it meant war, and he also urged compromise legislation to mollify the South Carolinians. At the same time, Georgia and Alabama were also threatening to secede from the Union, and carry the rest of the South with them, over federal recognition of Indian land claims within their borders. That led to the Indian Removal Act, which relocated the tribes remaining in the Southeast to the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi.

This is a significant document in American history, first because it reveals the force of Jackson's character and how seriously the enemies of the Union regarded his threat; and secondly, it sheds some light on the cause of the Civil War. His repeated allusions to traitors deceiving the people seems in line with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, "... that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." Not government by a self-styled aristocracy that ruled by political chicanery. Jackson's dire prediction certainly proved correct.

The following notes are in the textbook:

[In the year 1832, a state convention of South Carolina passed an ordinance, declaring that certain enactments of Congress, in regard to imposts, were unconstitutional, and therefore null and void, and that any attempt on the part of the United States' government to enforce them, would produce the withdrawal of that State from the Union, and the establishment of an independent government. This doctrine was promptly met by the President of the United States, ANDREW JACKSON, in a proclamation, which he issued Dec. 11, 1832, from which the following (preceding) is an extract. The sentiments of the proclamation met with a cordial response from all the friends of the Union, and South Carolina with becoming promptness and patriotism receded from her hostile position.

2. CHARLES C. PINKNEY and THOMAS PINKNEY, brothers, were distinguished Revolutionary officers. They were natives of South Carolina, but were educated at Oxford in England. The former was made an Aide de Camp to General Washington, and was also a member of the convention which framed the Constitution of the United states.

3. SUMTER was a celebrated general of South Carolina, in the American Revolution. He was distinguished for his insuperable firmness and courage.

4. JOHN RUTLEDGE and EDWARD RUTLEDGE were eminent Revolutionary Patriots of South Carolina. The former was a member of the first Continental Congress, 1774, and was distinguished for his Demosthenian (name taken from the Greek orator Demosthenes, famous for his debating) eloquence. The latter was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and also an officer in the army in South Carolina.]

Bill Kitchens