



西方家庭学校经典教材读本

英国语文

THE ROYAL READERS



THOMAS NELSON

〔英〕托马斯·尼尔森公司/编

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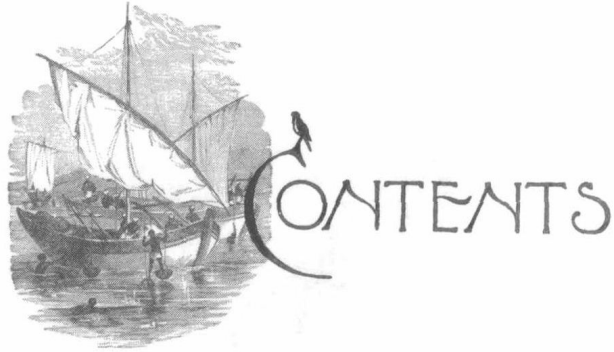
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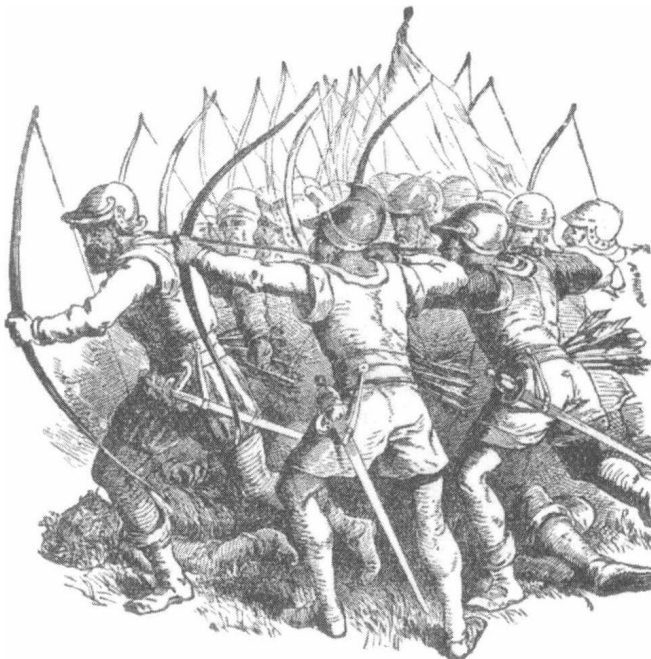


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❧ LESSON 1 ❧

SCENES IN THE TROPICS

I. THE FOREST

IN hot countries the woods are not like our woods. They are great dark forests, where the trees grow so closely together, and are so tall, that if you looked up you could hardly see the sky.

Then there are a great many climbing plants, that twist themselves round and round the trunks and branches of the trees. They are called vegetable cables, because they are so much like ropes. They reach from one tree to another, and almost fill up the spaces between. The white man has to carve out his way with his hatchet, or else burn a passage for himself through the dense mass.

Dangers of every kind lurk in the forest. The quick subtle Indian dare not venture there without his poisoned arrows, nor the white man without the thunder and lightning of his gun. The venomous^① snake may lie coiled among the bushes, or traces of the savage jaguar^② may be seen upon the path.

Birds, beasts, and insects live there, for the most part, undisturbed. It is their home; and on every side they are at work, hunting their prey, or escaping from danger. For though man seldom wages war upon them, these wild

① Venomous, *poisonous*.

② Jaguar, *the American tiger*.



creatures of the forest are engaged in constant warfare with each other; and the weak are always using some contrivance^① to protect themselves from the strong.

There are a great many curious things to be seen in these South American forests.

In the deepest gloom, where the trees shut out the sun, myriads^② of lights flit about, and twinkle like little stars. As they flash here and there, you might fancy that troops of fairies were floating about with torches in their hands; but there are no fairies in the case,—the lights are only the torches of the fire-flies that live in the recesses^③ of the woods, and every night make a kind of illumination amongst the trees.

There are troops of monkeys, that run along the vegetable cables from one tree to another, or swing from the branches by their tails, making a noise all the time as if they were talking to each other. When night comes they roll themselves into a ball, huddled together as close as may be, to keep themselves warm.

Sometimes it happens that a few little monkeys have not been alert^④ enough to get into the ball, and are left

① Contrivance, *plan, scheme.*

② Myriads, *immense numbers.*

③ Recesses, *deepest parts.*

④ Alert, *active; quick.*

shivering outside. They keep up a pitiful howling the whole night through, as if they were telling the rest how cold and miserable they are, and begging to be let in. But the others pay no attention, and go quietly off to sleep.

Then there are all sorts of wonderful birds, such as we never see in our country, except in cages.



Flocks of parrots glisten in the sun, clad in glowing scarlet, and green, and gold. Humming-birds, like gems of beauty, come to seek honey and insects from the forest flowers. Fly-catchers gleam and sparkle everywhere. Water-fowl of snowy plumage sport on the streams, their white dresses contrasting with those of the red flamingo, or the scarlet ibis, that stand patiently fishing on the shore.

QUESTIONS

Why are the forests in hot countries so dark? What are the climbing-plants called? Why? How does the white man make a way for himself through the forest? What dangers lurk there? Of what is the forest specially the home? What are the lights that flit about in the gloom? How do the monkeys swing themselves from one tree to another? How do they keep themselves warm at night? What birds are found in these forests?

PRONUNCIATION

climb'-ing	pro-tect'	mon'-keys	qui'-et-ly
veg'-e-ta-ble	cu'-ri-ous	shiv'-er-ing	spar'-kle
poi'-soned	car'-ry-ing	pit'-i-ful	plu'-mage
un-dis-turbed'	il-lu-mi-na'-tion	mis'-er-a-ble	flam-in'-go
crea'-tures	hud'-dled	at-ten'-tion	pa'-tient-ly

DICTION

In the dense forests of South America, birds, beasts, and insects live, for the most part, undisturbed by man.

But though man does not wage war upon them, they are engaged in constant warfare with each other.

II. THE BIRD OF PARADISE

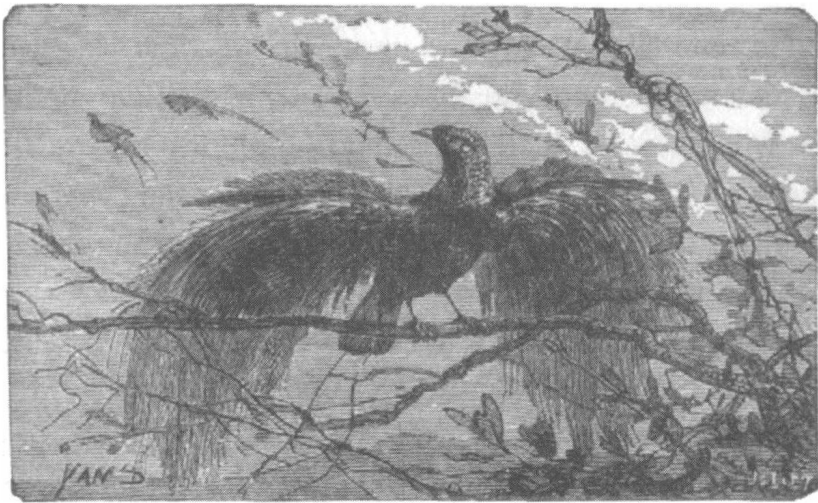
If you turn now to the map of Asia, you will find a number of islands lying to the south of Malacca, and forming a link between Asia and Australia.

These islands are in the very midst of the Tropics. The

warm tropical^① seas bathe their coasts; and dark, dense forests, cover many of them from the sea-shore to the top of the highest mountain.

One of the largest of these islands, called New Guinea, and a few small islands near it, are the home of the splendid Bird of Paradise. These birds live nowhere else. The natives call them God's Birds, because they think them more splendid than any other that he has made.

The head and neck of the Bird of Paradise are as soft as velvet, and of a golden tint, that changes, while you are looking at it, into all the colours of the rainbow. Its tail is a magnificent plume^② of fairy-like feathers, partly white and partly yellow, so that you might think they were made of silver and gold. This plume is very much longer than the body, and makes the bird appear larger than it is; for in reality it is only about the size of a pigeon.



① Tropical, *between the Tropics; in the Torrid (Hottest) Zone.*

② Plume, *a bunch of feathers.*

We can hardly fancy a flock of these beautiful birds upon the wing, floating at their ease, or pursuing the insects of various kinds that serve them for food. But this is no uncommon sight in that land of flowers and spices—a land that seems exactly fitted to be the home of the Bird of Paradise.

But there, as in all tropical countries, there is a season of rain and storm. Then the birds disappear, as the swallows do with us, and seek some sheltered place. But when the rain is over, and the spices in the woods breathe out fresh fragrance, they return to their old haunts,^① and the gay plumes of the male birds may be seen glittering amongst the trees as before.

When the Birds of Paradise are about to take one of their long flights, they choose a leader to be king over them. Where he goes they go, and where he settles they settle, perching on the same tree.

He generally flies high up in the air, far above the heads of his subjects; and he takes care to lead them against the wind, so that their loose floating plumes may not be blown over their heads. If a storm comes, they then rise higher and higher, and keep mounting until they reach a calmer and serener region.

The natives always know the king, by the spots which he has upon his tail, like the eyes upon the feathers of the peacock. When they go into the woods to shoot these birds, they try to kill him first. In order to get a good shot, they make a little bower of leaves and branches of

① Haunts, *favourite places.*

trees, within which they can hide themselves and yet see all that is going on.

The birds are perched around them, suspecting no danger; but arrow after arrow comes out of this leafy bower, and strikes down first one, and then another, till the natives think that they have enough. They cut off the legs, and stuff the bodies with spices, and make a famous trade of selling them to Europeans.

The natives used to pretend that this bird had neither legs nor stomach! Thus it was believed for a long time that it fed on the dew, and never alighted on the ground. This is why it has been called the "Bird of Paradise."



QUESTIONS

Where does the Bird of Paradise live? What do the natives call it? Why? What is remarkable in the colour of its head and neck? and in the colour and size of its tail? When do these birds disappear? Who leads these birds in their long flights? How do the natives know the king? Where do they conceal themselves when shooting these birds? How do they prepare them for the European

market? What did the natives use to pretend about them? Why was it called the Bird of Paradise?

PRONUNCIATION

de-li'-cious	pur-su'-ing	shel'-tered	be-lieved'
Par'-a-dise	in'-sects	perch'-ing	sus-pect'-ing
mag-nif'-i-cent	dis-ap-pear'	gen'-er-al-ly	Eu-ro-pe'-ans

DICTATION

The chiefs of the islands where the Birds of Paradise are found, use them in their turbans.

In many parts of the East, as well as in this country, parts of these birds are used by ladies as ornaments in their head-dress.

❧ LESSON 2 ❧

CASABIANCA

THE boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame, that lit the battle's wreck,
Shone round him—o'er the dead.
Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born^① to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud though child-like form!

The flames rolled on—he would not go,
Without his father's word; —
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.
He called aloud: "Say, father! say
If yet my task is done?" —
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, father!" once again he cried,
"If I may yet be gone!
And" —but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames rolled on.
Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair,

① As born, *as if he were born.*

And looked from that lone post of death,
In still, yet brave despair;

And shouted but once more aloud,
“My father! must I stay?”
While o’er him fast, through sail and shroud,^①
The wreathing^② fires made way:
They wrapped the ship in splendour wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And streamed above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound,—
The boy!—oh, where was he?
Ask of the winds, that far around
With fragments strewed the sea,—
With mast, and helm, and pennon^③ fair,
That well had borne their part!
But the noblest thing that perished there,
Was that young faithful heart!

— MRS. HEMANS

PRONUNCIATION

burn'-ing	chief'-tain	de-spair'	thun'-der
beau'-ti-ful	un-con'-scious	splen'-dour	frag'-ment
crea'-ture	boom'-ing	gal'-lant	no'-blest
he-ro'-ic	re-plied'	ban'-ners	per'-ished

① Shroud, *ropes supporting the masts.*

② Wreathing, *encircling; rolling.*

③ Pennon, *a flag, or streamer.*