

THE ECLECTIC READERS 美国语文读本 6

美国原版经典语文读本



THE ECLECTIC READERS

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6

WILLIAM H. MCGUFFEY

上海三联书店

美国语文读本

(SIXTH ECLECTIC READER)

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

美国语文读本(第6册) / (美) 麦加菲(McGuffey, W. H.)编.
—上海:上海三联书店, 2011.1

ISBN 978-7-5426-3414-6

I. ①美… II. ①麦… III. ①英语-阅读教学-中小学-美国-
-课外读物 IV. ①G634.413

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2010) 第 239793 号

美国语文读本 (第6册)

编 者/ (美) 威廉·H·麦加菲

责任编辑/ 黄 韬

装帧设计/ 子木工作室

监 制/ 研 发

出版发行/ 上海三联书店

(200031)中国上海市乌鲁木齐南路 396 弄 10 号

[http:// www.sanlian. com](http://www.sanlian.com)

E-mail: [shsanlian@yahoo. com.cn](mailto:shsanlian@yahoo.com.cn)

印 刷/ 北京领先印刷有限公司

版 次/ 2011 年 1 月第 1 版

印 次/ 2012 年 4 月第 2 次印刷

开 本/ 640×940 毫米 1/16

字 数/ 300 千字

印 张/ 22

ISBN 978-7-5426-3414-6/G·1063

定价: 25.00 元



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LESSON 1

ANECDOTE OF THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE

A laughable story was circulated during the administration of the old Duke of Newcastle, and retailed to the public in various forms. This nobleman, with many good points, was remarkable for being profuse of his promises on all occasions, and valued himself particularly on being able to anticipate the words or the wants of the various persons who attended his levees, before they uttered a word. This sometimes led him into ridiculous embarrassments; and it was this proneness to lavish promises, which gave occasion for the following anecdote:

At the election of a certain borough in Cornwall, where the opposite interests were almost equally poised, a single vote was of the highest importance. This object the Duke, by well applied argument and personal application, at length attained; and the gentleman he recommended, gained the election. In the warmth of gratitude, his grace poured forth acknowledgments and promises without ceasing, on the fortunate possessor of the casting vote; called him his best and dearest friend; protested, that he should consider himself as forever indebted to him; and that he would serve him by night or by day.

The Cornish voter, who was an honest fellow, and would not have thought himself entitled to any reward, but for such a torrent of acknowledgments, thanked the Duke for his kindness, and told him the supervisor of excise was old and infirm, and, if he would have the goodness to recommend his son-in-law to the commissioners, in case of the old man's death, he should think himself and his family bound to render his grace every assistance in their power, on any future occasion.

"My dear friend, why do you ask for such a trifling employment?" exclaimed his grace; "your relative shall have it the moment the place is vacant, if you will but call my attention to it."

"But how shall I get admitted to you, my lord? For in London, I

understand, it is a very difficult business to get a sight of you great folks, though you are so kind and complaisant to us in the country."

"The instant the man dies," replied the Duke, "set out posthaste for London; drive directly to my house, and, be it by night or by day, thunder at the door; I will leave word with my porter to show you upstairs directly; and the employment shall be disposed of according to your wishes."

The parties separated; the Duke drove to a friend's house in the neighborhood, without a wish or desire to see his new acquaintance till that day seven years; but the memory of the Cornish elector, not being burdened with such a variety of objects, was more retentive. The supervisor died a few months after, and the Duke's humble friend, relying on the word of a peer, was conveyed to London posthaste, and ascended with alacrity the steps of that nobleman's palace.

The reader should be informed, that just at this time, no less a person



than the King of Spain was expected hourly to depart this life, —an event in which the minister of Great Britain was particularly concerned; and the Duke of Newcastle, on the very night that the proprietor of the decisive vote arrived at his door, had sat up anxiously expecting dispatches from Madrid. Wearied by official business and agitated spirits, he retired to rest, having previously given particular instructions to his porter not to go to bed, as he expected every minute a messenger with advices of the greatest importance, and desired that he might be shown upstairs, the moment

of his arrival.

His grace was sound asleep; and the porter, settled for the night in his armchair, had already commenced a sonorous nap, when the vigorous arm of the Cornish voter roused him from his slumbers. To his first question, "Is the Duke at home?" the porter replied, "Yes, and in bed; but has left particular orders that, come when you will, you are to go up to him directly."

"Bless him, for a worthy and honest gentleman," cried our applicant for the vacant post, smiling and nodding with approbation at the prime minister's kindness, "how punctual his grace is; I knew he would not deceive me; let me hear no more of lords and dukes not keeping their words; I verily believe they are as honest, and mean as well as any other folks." Having ascended the stairs as he was speaking, he was ushered into the Duke's bedchamber.

"Is he dead?" exclaimed his grace, rubbing his eyes, and scarcely awakened from dreaming of the King of Spain, "Is he dead?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the eager expectant, delighted to find the election promise, with all its circumstances, so fresh in the nobleman's memory.

"When did he die?"

"The day before yesterday, exactly at half past one o'clock, after being confined three weeks to his bed, and taking a power of doctor's stuff; and I hope your grace will be as good as your word, and let my son-in-law succeed him."

The Duke, by this time perfectly awake, was staggered at the impossibility of receiving intelligence from Madrid in so short a space of time; and perplexed at the absurdity of a king's messenger applying for his son-in-law to succeed the King of Spain: "Is the man drunk, or mad? Where are your dispatches?" exclaimed his grace, hastily drawing back his curtain; where, instead of a royal courier, he recognized at the bedside, the fat, good-humored countenance of his friend from Cornwall, making low bows, with hat in hand, and "hoping my lord would not forget the gracious promise he was so good as to make, in favor of his son-in-law, at the last election."

Vexed at so untimely a disturbance, and disappointed of news from Spain, the Duke frowned for a moment; but chagrin soon gave way to

mirth, at so singular and ridiculous a combination of circumstances, and, yielding to the impulse, he sunk upon the bed in a violent fit of laughter, which was communicated in a moment to the attendants.

The relater of this little narrative, concludes, with observing, “Although the Duke of Newcastle could not place the relative of his old acquaintance on the throne of His Catholic Majesty, he advanced him to a post not less honorable—he made him an exciseman.”

—*Blackwood's Magazine.*

LESSON 2

THE NEEDLE

The gay belles of fashion may boast of excelling
In waltz or cotillon, at whist or quadrille;
And seek admiration by vauntingly telling
Of drawing, and painting, and musical skill:
But give me the fair one, in country or city,
Whose home and its duties are dear to her heart,
Who cheerfully warbles some rustical ditty,
While plying the needle with exquisite art:
The bright little needle, the swift-flying needle,
The needle directed by beauty and art.

If Love have a potent, a magical token,
A talisman, ever resistless and true,
A charm that is never evaded or broken,
A witchery certain the heart to subdue,
'T is this; and his armory never has furnished
So keen and unerring, or polished a dart;
Let beauty direct it, so polished and burnished,
And oh! it is certain of touching the heart:
The bright little needle, the swift-flying needle,
The needle directed by beauty and art.

Be wise, then, ye maidens, nor seek admiration,
By dressing for conquest, and flirting with all;
You never, whate'er be your fortune or station,
Appear half so lovely at rout or at ball,
As gayly convened at the work-covered table,
Each cheerfully active, playing her part,

Beguiling the task with a song or a fable,
And plying the needle with exquisite art:
The bright little needle, the swift-flying needle,
The needle directed by beauty and art.

—*Samuel Woodworth.*

LESSON 3

DAWN

Edward Everett, 1794-1865. He was born at Dorchester, Mass., now a part of Boston, and graduated from Harvard College with the highest honors of his class, at the age of seventeen. While yet in college, he had quite a reputation as a brilliant writer. Before he was twenty years of age, he was settled as pastor over the Brattle Street Church, in Boston, and at once became famous as an eloquent preacher. In 1814, he was elected Professor of Greek Literature in his Alma Mater; and, in order to prepare himself for the duties of his office, he entered on an extended course of travel in Europe. He edited the "North American Review," in addition to the labors of his professorship, after he returned to America.

In 1825, Mr. Everett was elected to Congress, and held his seat in the House for ten years. He was Governor of his native state from 1835 to 1839. In 1841, he was appointed Minister to England. On his return, in 1846, he was chosen President of Harvard University, and held the office for three years. In 1852, he was appointed Secretary of State. February 22, 1856, he delivered, in Boston, his celebrated lecture on Washington. This lecture was afterwards delivered in most of the principal cities and towns in the United States. The proceeds were devoted to the purchase of Mt. Vernon. In 1860, he was a candidate for the Vice Presidency of the United States. He is celebrated as an elegant and forcible writer, and a chaste orator.

This extract, a wonderful piece of word painting, is a portion of an address on the "Uses of Astronomy," delivered at the inauguration of the Dudley Observatory, at Albany, N. Y. Note the careful use of words, and the strong figures in the third and fourth paragraphs.

I had occasion, a few weeks since, to take the early train from Providence to Boston; and for this purpose rose at two o'clock in the morning. Everything around was wrapped in darkness and hushed in silence, broken only by what seemed at that hour the unearthly clank and rush of the train. It was a mild, serene, midsummer's night,—the sky was without a cloud, the winds were whist. The moon, then in the last quarter, had just risen, and the stars shone

with a spectral luster but little affected by her presence.

Jupiter, two hours high, was the herald of the day; the Pleiades, just above the horizon, shed their sweet influence in the east; Lyra sparkled near the zenith; Andromeda veiled her newly-discovered glories from the naked eye in the south; the steady Pointers, far beneath the pole, looked meekly up from the depths of the north to their sovereign.

Such was the glorious spectacle as I entered the train. As we proceeded, the timid approach of twilight became more perceptible; the intense blue of the sky began to soften; the smaller stars, like little children, went first to rest; the sister beams of the Pleiades soon melted together; but the bright constellations of the west and north remained unchanged. Steadily the wondrous transfiguration went on. Hands of angels, hidden from mortal eyes, shifted the scenery of the heavens; the glories of night dissolved into the glories of the dawn.

The blue sky now turned more softly gray; the great watch stars shut up their holy eyes; the east began to kindle. Faint streaks of purple soon blushed along the sky; the whole celestial concave was filled with the inflowing tides of the morning light, which came pouring down from above in one great ocean of radiance; till at length, as we reached the Blue Hills, a flash of purple fire blazed out from above the horizon, and turned the dewy teardrops of flower and leaf into rubies and diamonds. In a few seconds, the everlasting gates of the morning were thrown wide open, and the lord of day, arrayed in glories too severe for the gaze of man, began his state.

I do not wonder at the superstition of the ancient Magians, who, in the morning of the world, went up to the hilltops of Central Asia, and, ignorant of the true God, adored the most glorious work of his hand. But I am filled with amazement, when I am told, that, in this enlightened age and in the heart of the Christian world, there are persons who can witness this daily manifestation of the power and wisdom of the Creator, and yet say in their hearts, "There is no God."