

美国原版经典语文课本

THE
ECLECTIC
READERS

美国语文



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WILLIAM H. MCGUFFEY

〔美〕威廉·H·麦加菲 / 著

天津人民出版社

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LESSON 1

THE GOOD READER

1. It is told of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, that, as he was seated one day in his private room, a written petition¹ was brought to him with the request that it should be immediately read. The King had just returned from hunting, and the glare of the sun, or some other cause, had so dazzled his eyes that he found it difficult to make out a single word of the writing.

2. His private secretary happened to be absent; and the soldier who brought the petition could not read. There was a page, or favorite boy servant, waiting in the hall, and upon him the King called. The page was a son of one of the noblemen of the court, but proved to be a very poor reader.

3. In the first place, he did not articulate² distinctly. He huddled his words together in the utterance, as if they were syllables of one long word, which he must get through with as speedily as possible. His pronunciation was bad, and he did not modulate³ his voice so as to bring out the meaning of what he read. Every sentence was uttered with a dismal monotony⁴ of voice, as if it did not differ in any respect from that which preceded it.

4. "Stop!" said the King, impatiently. "Is it an auctioneer's list of goods to be sold that you are hurrying over? Send your companion to me." Another page who stood at the door now entered, and to

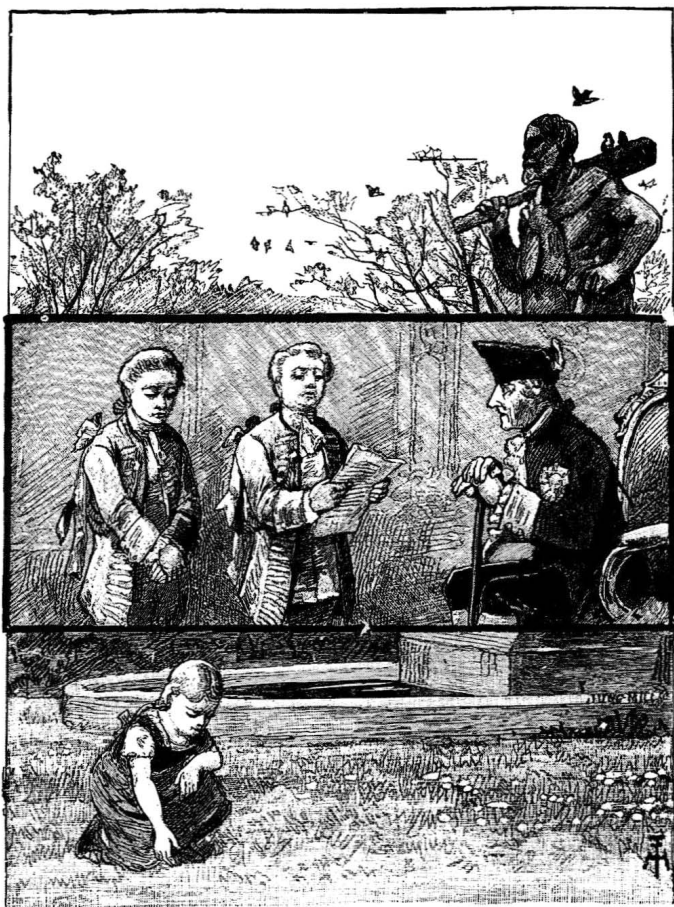
1 Petition, a formal request.

2 Articulate, to utter the elementary sounds.

3 Modulate, to vary or inflect.

4 Monotony, lack of variety.

him the King gave the petition. The second page began by hemming and clearing his throat in such an affected¹ manner that the King jokingly asked him whether he had not slept in the public garden, with the gate open, the night before.



5. The second page had a good share of self-conceit, however,

¹ Affected, *unnatural and silly*.

and so was not greatly confused by the King's jest. He determined that he would avoid the mistake which his comrade had made. So he commenced reading the petition slowly and with great formality, emphasizing every word, and prolonging the articulation of every syllable. But his manner was so tedious that the King cried out, "Stop! are you reciting a lesson in the elementary sounds? Out of the room! But no: stay! Send me that little girl who is sitting there by the fountain."

6. The girl thus pointed out by the King was a daughter of one of the laborers employed by the royal gardener; and she had come to help her father weed the flower beds. It chanced that, like many of the poor people in Prussia, she had received a good education. She was somewhat alarmed when she found herself in the King's presence, but took courage when the King told her that he only wanted her to read for him, as his eyes were weak.

7. Now, Ernestine (for this was the name of the little girl) was fond of reading aloud, and often many of the neighbors would assemble at her father's house to hear her; those who could not read themselves would come to her, also, with their letters from distant friends or children, and she thus formed the habit of reading various sorts of handwriting promptly and well.

8. The King gave her the petition, and she rapidly glanced through the opening lines to get some idea of what it was about. As she read, her eyes began to glisten, and her breast to heave. "What is the matter?" asked the King; "don't you know how to read?" "Oh, yes! sire," she replied, addressing him with the title usually applied to him: "I will now read it, if you please."

9. The two pages wore about to leave the room. "Remain," said the King. The little girl began to read the petition. It was from a poor widow, whose only son had been drafted¹ to serve in the army, although his health was delicate and his pursuits had been such as to unfit him for military life. His father had been killed in battle, and

¹ Drafted, *selected by lot.*

the son had a strong desire to become a portrait painter.

10. The writer told her story in a simple, concise¹ manner, that carried to the heart a belief of its truth; and Ernestine read it with so much feeling, and with an articulation so just, in tones so pure and distinct, that when she had finished, the King, into whose eyes the tears had started, exclaimed, "Oh! now I understand what it is all about; but I might never have known, certainly I never should have felt, its meaning had I trusted to these young gentlemen, whom I now dismiss from my service for one year, advising them to occupy their time in learning to read."

11. "As for you, my young lady," continued the King, "I know you will ask no better reward for your trouble than the pleasure of carrying to this poor widow my order for her son's immediate discharge². Let me see whether you can write as well as you can read. Take this pen, and write as I dictate³." He then dictated an order, which Ernestine wrote, and he signed. Calling one of his guards, he bade him go with the girl and see that the order was obeyed.

12. How much happiness was Ernestine the means of bestowing through her good elocution, united to the happy circumstance that brought it to the knowledge of the King! First, there were her poor neighbors, to whom she could give instruction and entertainment. Then, there was the poor widow who sent the petition, and who not only regained her son, but received through Ernestine an order for him to paint the King's likeness; so that the poor boy soon rose to great distinction⁴, and had more orders than he could attend to. Words could not express⁵ his gratitude, and that of his mother, to the little girl.

13. And Ernestine had, moreover, the satisfaction of aiding

1 Concise, *brief and full of meaning.*

2 Discharge, *release.*

3 Dictate, *to utter so that another may write it down.*

4 Distinction, *honorable and notable position.*

5 Express, *to make known the feelings of.*

her father to rise in the world, so that he became the King's chief gardener. The King did not forget her, but had her well educated at his own expense. As for the two pages, she was indirectly the means of doing them good, also; for, ashamed of their bad reading, they commenced studying in earnest, till they overcame the faults that had offended the King. Both finally rose to distinction, one as a lawyer, and the other as a statesman; and they owed their advancement in life chiefly to their good elocution.

NOTES.—Frederick II. of Prussia (b. 1712, d. 1788), or Frederick the Great, as he was called, was one of the greatest of German rulers. He was distinguished for his military exploits, for his wise and just government, and for his literary attainments. He wrote many able works in the French language. Many pleasant anecdotes are told of this king, of which the one given in the lesson is a fair sample.

LESSON 2

THE BLUEBELL

1. There is a story I have heard—
A poet learned it of a bird,
And kept its music every word—
2. A story of a dim ravine,
O'er which the towering tree tops lean,
With one blue rift¹ of sky between;
3. And there, two thousand years ago,
A little flower as white as snow
Swayed² in the silence to and fro.
4. Day after day, with longing eye,
The floweret watched the narrow sky,
And fleecy clouds that floated by.
5. And through the darkness, night by night,
One gleaming star would climb the height³,
And cheer the lonely floweret's sight.
6. Thus, watching the blue heavens afar,
And the rising of its favorite star,
A slow change came—but not to mar;

¹ Rift, a narrow opening, a cleft.

² Swayed, swung.

³ Height, an elevated place.

7. For softly o'er its petals¹ white
There crept a blueness, like the light
Of skies upon a summer night;
8. And in its chalice², I am told,
The bonny³ bell was formed to hold
A tiny star that gleamed like gold.
9. Now, little people, sweet and true,
I find a lesson here for you
Writ in the floweret's hell of blue:
10. The patient child whose watchful eye
Strives after all things pure and high,
Shall take their image by and by.

1 Petals, *the colored leaves of a flower.*

2 Chalice, *a cup or bowl.*

3 Bonny, *beautiful.*

LESSON 3

THE GENTLE HAND

Timothy S. Arthur (b. 1809, d. 1885) was born near Newburgh, N.Y., but passed most of his life at Baltimore and Philadelphia. His opportunities for good schooling were quite limited, and he may be considered a self-educated man. He was the author of more than a hundred volumes, principally novels of a domestic and moral tone, and of many shorter tales—magazine articles, etc. “Ten Nights in a Barroom,” and “Three Years in a Mantrap,” are among his best known works.

1. When and where it matters not now to relate—but once upon a time, as I was passing through a thinly peopled district of country, night came down upon me almost unawares. Being on foot, I could not hope to gain the village toward which my steps were directed, until a late hour; and I therefore preferred seeking shelter and a night’s lodging at the first humble dwelling that presented itself.

2. Dusky twilight was giving place to deeper shadows, when I found myself in the vicinity¹ of a dwelling, from the small uncurtained windows of which the light shone with a pleasant promise of good cheer and comfort. The house stood within an inclosure, and a short distance from the road along which I was moving with wearied feet.

3. Turning aside, and passing through the ill-hung gate, I approached the dwelling. Slowly the gate swung on its wooden hinges, and the rattle of its latch, in closing, did not disturb the air until I had nearly reached the porch in front of the house, in which a slender girl, who had noticed my entrance, stood awaiting my arrival.

¹ Vicinity, *neighborhood*.