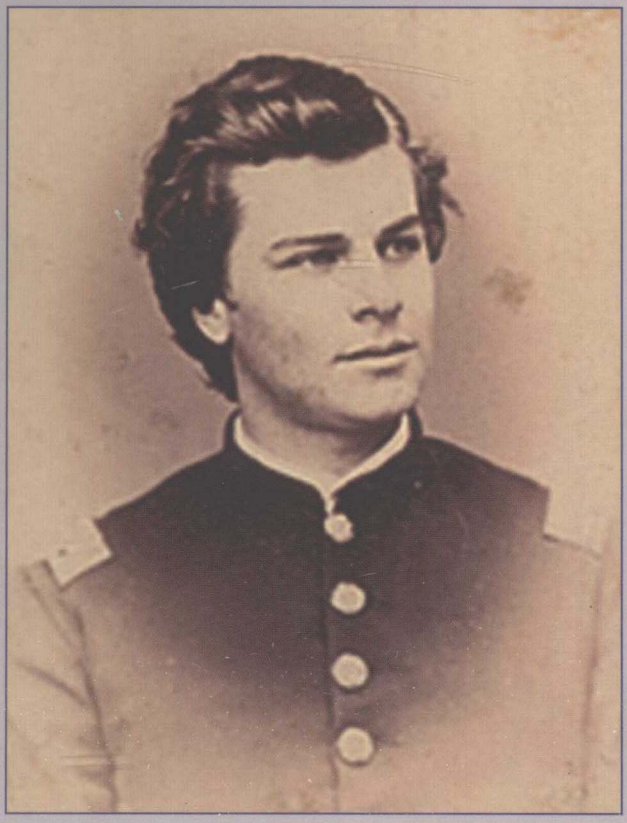
The Red Badge of Courage

Stephen Crane



Edited by Donald Pizer
and Eric Carl Link

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

FOURTH EDITION

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Stephen Crane
THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
BACKGROUNDS AND SOURCES
CRITICISM

FOURTH EDITION

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Preface

Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* is an acknowledged masterpiece of American literature, and Crane himself is one of our most closely examined late nineteenth-century authors. Whether read as an exciting war story, a psychological study of fear, an allegory of the human condition in an inhospitable world, or a reflection of Crane's own turbulent times, the novel has always had a large and involved audience. One proof of its permanence lies in its responsiveness to the distinctive interests and needs of each new generation of readers and critics. And Crane himself has had a similar protean resourcefulness for those seeking to identify characteristics of the modern consciousness. He has been discussed as naturalist, impressionist, symbolist, existentialist, and ironist, and each new emphasis has contributed to an understanding both of Crane's work and of our own preoccupations.

As in the three previous Norton Critical Editions of *The Red Badge of Courage*, the editors seek to place before the reader an authoritative reading text of the novel and a body of material bearing on its background and interpretation. Also as before, the text of the novel is that of the first edition, published by D. Appleton & Company in 1895, conservatively emended. (This emendation was greatly aided by the publication of a facsimile of the manuscript of *The Red Badge* in 1972 and a major scholarly edition of the text of the novel in 1975.) As before, Crane's uncanceled but unpublished manuscript passages, including his discarded Chapter XII, are presented as an appendix to the text of the novel. The principles underlying these editorial decisions are discussed in "A Note on the Text," preceding the text of the novel, and in "The Manuscript of *The Red Badge of Courage*," following the text.

The annotation of the text seeks to provide the reader with the information necessary to understand obscure terms and allusions. However, rather than annotate the text repetitiously for Crane's use of a specific Civil War battle, the editors have thought it best to direct the reader at the opening of the novel to Charles J. LaRocca's "The Historical Setting of *The Red Badge of Courage*" and Harold Hungerford's " 'That Was at Chancellorsville': The Factual Framework of *The Red Badge of Courage*" in the Backgrounds and Sources section of this edition.

The Backgrounds and Sources section has been expanded and restructured in this fourth Norton Critical Edition of the novel. The first portion, "Stephen Crane's Life and Times," provides an introduction to the biographical and cultural context of *The Red Badge of Courage*. The second, "*The Red Badge of Courage* as a Novel of the Civil War,"

which contains much new material, including illustrations, reflects the recent increased interest in the novel's roots in the Civil War and, more specifically, in the battle of Chancellorsville.

The Criticism section opens with a review of Crane criticism bearing on *The Red Badge of Courage*, a review which can serve both as an introduction to the varying approaches to the novel found in this section and, in conjunction with the Selected Bibliography at the end of the volume, as a guide to further readings in Crane studies. The essays included here represent the editors' effort to present the best that has been written about *The Red Badge of Courage* and to do so as much as possible in complete essays and chapters. There has been no effort to have the selections reflect the history of Crane criticism either by a full representation of earlier criticism or by the presence of criticism from all "schools" of interpretation, though in fact the most significant schools are represented. The "Early Estimates" portion of the section contains a collage of perspectives on Crane, from George Wyndham's penetrating and influential review of the novel to Frank Norris's skillful parody of Crane's distinctive style. New to this section are three interrelated early responses to *The Red Badge* that appeared in *The Dial* in 1896. In addition, Crane's story "The Veteran" is offered as Crane's own estimate not of the novel but of Henry's character.

Modern critical interest in Crane began in the early 1950s with John Berryman's biography and the editions and critical essays of R. W. Stallman. The problem of Henry's growth or maturity was central to this criticism, as was the related difficulty of identifying Crane's literary allegiances in the novel. "Does Henry mature" and "Is Crane a naturalist, impressionist, or ironist?" were the questions many critics appeared to be answering. In addition, Crane's narrative voice, his symbolism, and the structure of the novel were offered as ways of discovering meaning. More recently, the effort to demonstrate that Crane's manuscript version of *The Red Badge of Courage* should be the principal text of the novel reinvigorated the examination of a number of large-scale issues bearing on the themes and form of the work. There was also a turning away by some scholars from specific psychological themes and formalistic concerns toward more broadly philosophical, historical, and social readings in which the critic addresses such matters as the problem of knowledge in the novel, its representation of war, and the underlying relationship of the themes of the work to late nineteenth-century American life and thought. Indeed, even more recently, a good deal of the significant criticism of *The Red Badge of Courage* centers on its character as a Civil War historical novel of a special kind, as is reflected in the last two essays in this section, both of which are new to the Fourth Edition.

A Note on the Text

There are three significant texts for *The Red Badge of Courage*: portions of a discarded draft; an almost complete manuscript; and the 1895 Appleton edition. Until the early 1950s, when the manuscript versions of *The Red Badge of Courage* became available, the Appleton text had sole authority. Soon afterward, however, editors began to use the manuscript versions in several ways. Because the completed manuscript contains uncanceled passages which do not appear in the Appleton version, some editors incorporated these passages in the text of their editions (usually in brackets) on the assumption that they were omitted without Crane's approval. Other editors adopted the technique of publishing these passages as notes to the text, and in some instances of also publishing as notes or appendices canceled passages from the completed manuscript and sections from the discarded draft. More recently, Henry Binder and Hershel Parker have vigorously argued that Crane's editor at Appleton, Ripley Hitchcock, forced Crane to revise *The Red Badge of Courage* in order to make the novel more palatable to a popular audience. Crane, they hold, thus cut many of the passages in which Henry's puerile musings on his fate reflect poorly on his role as a typical Union recruit. In order to restore the novel to Crane's original and more coherent portrayal of Henry, they argue, it is necessary that we substitute the manuscript version for the Appleton text, a task which Binder undertook in his 1982 edition of *The Red Badge of Courage*.

There is no doubt that the manuscripts of *The Red Badge of Courage* are a great boon to Crane scholarship. They permit us to see Crane's imagination at work in a manner usually not permitted us, since no other Crane novel is extant in manuscript form. And they permit us to correct errors in the Appleton text. But there is much doubt whether they should lead to any major revision or replacement of the Appleton version of the novel. There is evidence that one or more lost typescripts intervened between the completed manuscript and the Appleton text, that one such typescript served as printer's copy for the Appleton text, and that Crane revised the Appleton text in proof. But there is no external evidence (letters, remarks by Crane, reports by others, etc.) of any censorship by Hitchcock within this process. In addition, most Crane critics who

have closely examined the manuscript and the Appleton versions of *The Red Badge of Courage* have found sufficient justification for Crane's cuts in the fictional weakness of the omitted material. Thus, except for obvious errors in the manuscript or in the transmission of the manuscript text to the typescript and to print, we should permit Crane the last word—that of the Appleton text—and not attempt to return the novel to a state which he had rejected or revised in the course of composition.

A further complication in the issue of the text of *The Red Badge of Courage* is Fredson Bowers's 1975 edition of the novel in the University of Virginia's *The Works of Stephen Crane*. Although Bowers rejected the claim that Crane was forced to revise the novel under pressure from Appleton, he nevertheless held that Crane was extremely careless in his revising, especially in his modification of dialect and in his acceptance of many minor changes imposed upon the text by his typist and editor. Bowers therefore attempted in his edition to distinguish between those changes from the manuscript in the Appleton text which could be attributed to Crane's seeking to improve the novel and those which were the product of his carelessness or of unwarranted editorial revision. Although we have profited in this edition from several of Bowers's emendations, we share the reservations of the many critics of his edition who believe that his effort to impose consistency and correctness on Crane permits the modern editor far too much discretion. Many of the changes in the Appleton text which Bowers rejects in favor of the manuscript version can readily be explained and defended either as having been made by Crane or as having been consciously accepted by him. It is significant in this regard that when J. C. Levenson, one of the principal contributors to the Virginia edition, was required to choose a text of *The Red Badge of Courage* for the Library of America edition of Crane's work, he selected the Appleton rather than the Bowers text.

For this edition of *The Red Badge of Courage*, therefore, the text is that of the 1895 edition, conservatively emended. Uncanceled passages in the manuscript do not appear in the text or as footnotes but rather are reproduced in an appendix at the close of the text. Emendations either correct obvious typographical errors, supply a manuscript reading when the typist or compositor clearly failed to follow Crane's copy correctly, or (in a few instances) correct a Crane lapse which appears in both the manuscript and the Appleton texts. We have not emended or noted variations from conventional grammar and spelling in the first edition which are confirmed by the manuscript except when such variations might cause confusion. A list of all emendations from the 1895 Appleton text can be found at the close of the novel.

Contents

The Text of THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

Chapter I

The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting.[1] As the landscape changed from brown to green, the army awakened, and began to tremble with eagerness at the noise of rumors. It cast its eyes upon the roads, which were growing from long troughs of liquid mud to proper thoroughfares. A river, amber-tinted in the shadow of its banks, purled at the army's feet; and at night, when the stream had become of a sorrowful blackness, one could see across it the red, eyelike gleam of hostile campfires set in the low brows of distant hills.

Once a certain tall soldier developed virtues and went resolutely to wash a shirt. He came flying back from a brook waving his garment bannerlike. He was swelled with a tale he had heard from a reliable friend, who had heard it from a truthful cavalryman, who had heard it from his trustworthy brother, one of the orderlies at division headquarters. He adopted the important air of a herald in red and gold.

"We're goin' t' move t' morrah—sure," he said pompously to a group in the company street. "We're goin' 'way up the river, cut across, an' come around in behint 'em."

To his attentive audience he drew a loud and elaborate plan of a very brilliant campaign. When he had finished, the blue-clothed men scattered into small arguing groups between the rows of squat brown huts. A negro teamster who had been dancing upon a cracker box with the hilarious encouragement of twoscore soldiers was deserted. He sat mournfully down. Smoke drifted lazily from a multitude of quaint chimneys.

"It's a lie! that's all it is—a thunderin' lie!" said another private loudly. His smooth face was flushed, and his hands were thrust sulkily into his trousers' pockets. He took the matter as an affront to him. "I don't believe the derned old army's ever going to move. We're set. I've got ready to move eight times in the last two weeks, and we ain't moved yet."

The tall soldier felt called upon to defend the truth of a rumor he himself had introduced. He and the loud one came near to fighting over it.

A corporal began to swear before the assemblage. He had just

1. For Crane's reliance upon the events and geography of the Battle of Chancellorsville, see Charles J. LaRocca, "The Historical Setting of *The Red Badge of Courage*," and Harold Hungerford, "That Was at Chancellorville: The Factual Framework of *The Red Badge of Courage*," in Backgrounds and Sources, below.

put a costly board floor in his house, he said. During the early spring he had refrained from adding extensively to the comfort of his environment because he had felt that the army might start on the march at any moment. Of late, however, he had been impressed that they were in a sort of eternal camp.

Many of the men engaged in a spirited debate. One outlined in a peculiarly lucid manner all the plans of the commanding general. He was opposed by men who advocated that there were other plans of campaign. They clamored at each other, numbers making futile bids for the popular attention. Meanwhile, the soldier who had fetched the rumor bustled about with much importance. He was continually assailed by questions.

"What's up, Jim?"

"Th' army's goin' t' move."

"Ah, what yeh talkin' about? How yeh know it is?"

"Well, yeh kin b'lieve me er not, jest as yeh like. I don't care a hang."

There was much food for thought in the manner in which he replied. He came near to convincing them by disdaining to produce proofs. They grew much excited over it.

There was a youthful private who listened with eager ears to the words of the tall soldier and to the varied comments of his comrades. After receiving a fill of discussions concerning marches and attacks, he went to his hut and crawled through an intricate hole that served it as a door. He wished to be alone with some new thoughts that had lately come to him.

He lay down on a wide bunk that stretched across the end of the room. In the other end, cracker boxes were made to serve as furniture. They were grouped about the fireplace. A picture from an illustrated weekly was upon the log walls, and three rifles were paralleled on pegs. Equipments[2] hung on handy projections, and some tin dishes lay upon a small pile of firewood. A folded tent was serving as a roof. The sunlight, without, beating upon it, made it glow a light yellow shade. A small window shot an oblique square of whiter light upon the cluttered floor. The smoke from the fire at times neglected the clay chimney and wreathed into the room, and this flimsy chimney of clay and sticks made endless threats to set ablaze the whole establishment.

The youth was in a little trance of astonishment. So they were at last going to fight. On the morrow, perhaps, there would be a battle, and he would be in it. For a time he was obliged to labor to make himself believe. He could not accept with assurance an omen that he was about to mingle in one of those great affairs of the earth.

2. An acceptable plural in late nineteenth-century usage.

He had, of course, dreamed of battles all his life—of vague and bloody conflicts that had thrilled him with their sweep and fire. In visions he had seen himself in many struggles. He had imagined peoples secure in the shadow of his eagle-eyed prowess. But awake he had regarded battles as crimson blotches on the pages of the past. He had put them as things of the bygone with his thought-images of heavy crowns and high castles. There was a portion of the world's history which he had regarded as the time of wars, but it, he thought, had been long gone over the horizon and had disappeared forever.

From his home his youthful eyes had looked upon the war in his own country with distrust. It must be some sort of a play affair. He had long despaired of witnessing a Greeklike struggle.[3] Such would be no more, he had said. Men were better, or more timid. Secular and religious education had effaced the throat-grappling instinct, or else firm finance held in check the passions.

He had burned several times to enlist. Tales of great movements shook the land. They might not be distinctly Homeric, but there seemed to be much glory in them. He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all. His busy mind had drawn for him large pictures extravagant in color, lurid with breathless deeds.

But his mother had discouraged him. She had affected to look with some contempt upon the quality of his war ardor and patriotism. She could calmly seat herself and with no apparent difficulty give him many hundreds of reasons why he was of vastly more importance on the farm than on the field of battle. She had had certain ways of expression that told him that her statements on the subject came from a deep conviction. Moreover, on her side, was his belief that her ethical motive in the argument was impregnable.

At last, however, he had made firm rebellion against this yellow light thrown upon the color of his ambitions. The newspapers, the gossip of the village, his own picturings, had aroused him to an uncheckable degree. They were in truth fighting finely down there. Almost every day the newspapers printed accounts of a decisive victory.

One night, as he lay in bed, the winds had carried to him the clangoring of the church bell as some enthusiast jerked the rope frantically to tell the twisted news of a great battle. This voice of the people rejoicing in the night had made him shiver in a prolonged ecstasy of excitement. Later, he had gone down to his mother's room and had spoken thus: "Ma, I'm going to enlist."

3. That is, warfare conducted in the manner depicted by Homer in *The Iliad*, his epic of the Trojan War; see also 5:18 below.

"Henry, don't you be a fool," his mother had replied. She had then covered her face with the quilt. There was an end to the matter for that night.

Nevertheless, the next morning he had gone to a town that was near his mother's farm and had enlisted in a company that was forming there. When he had returned home his mother was milking the brindle cow. Four others stood waiting. "Ma, I've enlisted," he had said to her diffidently. There was a short silence. "The Lord's will be done, Henry," she had finally replied, and had then continued to milk the brindle cow.

When he had stood in the doorway with his soldier's clothes on his back, and with the light of excitement and expectancy in his eyes almost defeating the glow of regret for the home bonds, he had seen two tears leaving their trails on his mother's scarred cheeks.

Still, she had disappointed him by saying nothing whatever about returning with his shield or on it.[4] He had privately primed himself for a beautiful scene. He had prepared certain sentences which he thought could be used with touching effect. But her words destroyed his plans. She had doggedly peeled potatoes and addressed him as follows: "You watch out, Henry, an' take good care of yerself in this here fighting business—you watch out, an' take good care of yerself. Don't go a-thinkin' you can lick the hull rebel army at the start, because yeh can't. Yer jest one little feller amongst a hull lot of others, and yeh've got to keep quiet an' do what they tell yeh. I know how you are, Henry.

"I've knet yeh eight pair of socks, Henry, and I've put in all yer best shirts, because I want my boy to be jest as warm and comf'able as anybody in the army. Whenever they get holes in 'em. I want yeh to send 'em right-away back to me, so's I kin dern 'em.

"An' allus be careful an' choose yer comp'ny. There's lots of bad men in the army, Henry. The army makes 'em wild, and they like nothing better than the job of leading off a young feller like you, as ain't never been away from home much and has allus had a mother, an' a-learning 'im to drink and swear. Keep clear of them folks, Henry. I don't want yeh to ever do anything, Henry, that yeh would be 'shamed to let me know about. Jest think as if I was a-watchin' yeh. If yeh keep that in yer mind allus, I guess yeh'll come out about right.

"Yeh must allus remember yer father, too, child, an' remember he never drunk a drop of licker in his life, and seldom swore a cross oath.

"I don't know what else to tell yeh, Henry, excepting that yeh must never do no shirking, child, on my account. If so be a time

4. A traditional injunction to the young warrior in Greek heroic literature.

comes when yeh have to be kilt or do a mean thing, why, Henry, don't think of anything 'cept what's right, because there's many a woman has to bear up 'ginst sech things these times, and the Lord 'll take keer of us all.

"Don't forgit about the socks and the shirts, child; and I've put a cup of blackberry jam with yer bundle, because I know yeh like it above all things. Good-by, Henry. Watch out, and be a good boy."

He had, of course, been impatient under the ordeal of this speech. It had not been quite what he expected, and he had borne it with an air of irritation. He departed feeling vague relief.

Still, when he had looked back from the gate, he had seen his mother kneeling among the potato parings. Her brown face, upraised, was stained with tears, and her spare form was quivering. He bowed his head and went on, feeling suddenly ashamed of his purposes.

From his home he had gone to the seminary[5] to bid adieu to many schoolmates. They had thronged about him with wonder and admiration. He had felt the gulf now between them and had swelled with calm pride. He and some of his fellows who had donned blue were quite overwhelmed with privileges for all of one afternoon, and it had been a very delicious thing. They had strutted.

A certain light-haired girl had made vivacious fun at his martial spirit, but there was another and darker girl whom he had gazed at steadfastly, and he thought she grew demure and sad at sight of his blue and brass. As he had walked down the path between the rows of oaks, he had turned his head and detected her at a window watching his departure. As he perceived her, she had immediately begun to stare up through the high tree branches at the sky. He had seen a good deal of flurry and haste in her movement as she changed her attitude. He often thought of it.

On the way to Washington his spirit had soared. The regiment was fed and caressed at station after station until the youth had believed that he must be a hero. There was a lavish expenditure of bread and cold meats, coffee, and pickles and cheese. As he basked in the smiles of the girls and was patted and complimented by the old men, he had felt growing within him the strength to do mighty deeds of arms.

After complicated journeyings with many pauses, there had come months of monotonous life in a camp. He had had the belief that real war was a series of death struggles with small time in between for sleep and meals; but since his regiment had come to the field the army had done little but sit still and try to keep warm.

5. A local school, not then necessarily a school of theology.

He was brought then gradually back to his old ideas. Greeklike struggles would be no more. Men were better, or more timid. Secular and religious education had effaced the throat-grappling instinct, or else firm finance held in check the passions.

He had grown to regard himself merely as a part of a vast blue demonstration. His province was to look out, as far as he could, for his personal comfort. For recreation he could twiddle his thumbs and speculate on the thoughts which must agitate the minds of the generals. Also, he was drilled and drilled and reviewed, and drilled and drilled and reviewed.

The only foes he had seen were some pickets[6] along the river bank. They were a sun-tanned, philosophical lot, who sometimes shot reflectively at the blue pickets. When reproached for this afterward, they usually expressed sorrow, and swore by their gods that the guns had exploded without their permission. The youth, on guard duty one night, conversed across the stream with one of them. He was a slightly ragged man, who spat skillfully between his shoes and possessed a great fund of bland and infantile assurance. The youth liked him personally.

"Yank," the other had informed him, "yer a right dum[7] good feller." This sentiment, floating to him upon the still air, had made him temporarily regret war.

Various veterans had told him tales. Some talked of gray, bewhiskered hordes who were advancing with relentless curses and chewing tobacco with unspeakable valor; tremendous bodies of fierce soldiery who were sweeping along like the Huns.[8] Others spoke of tattered and eternally hungry men who fired despondent powders. "They'll charge through hell's fire an' brimstone t' git a holt on a haversack, an' sech stomachs ain't a-lastin' long," he was told. From the stories, the youth imagined the red, live bones sticking out through slits in the faded uniforms.

Still, he could not put a whole faith in veterans' tales, for recruits were their prey. They talked much of smoke, fire, and blood, but he could not tell how much might be lies. They persistently yelled "Fresh fish!" at him, and were in no wise to be trusted.

However, he perceived now that it did greatly matter what kind of soldiers he was going to fight, so long as they fought, which fact no one disputed. There was a more serious problem. He lay in his bunk pondering upon it. He tried to mathematically prove to himself that he would not run from a battle.

Previously he had never felt obliged to wrestle too seriously with

6. Sentries.
7. A euphemism for "damn."
8. A fierce Asiatic people whose raids terrorized Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries.