Elson Grammar School Reader, Book Two

Christine Keck
Title: Elson Grammar School Reader, Book Two

Author: Christine Keck

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I—Patriotism, Stories, Poems of Nature and Duty</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patriotism:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Flag..............................................Arthur Macy.................15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hail, Columbia.........................................Joseph Hopkinson.............17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Country...........................................(Author Unknown)..........19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hohenlinden............................................Thomas Campbell.............21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigration of the Pilgrim Fathers.Edward Everett........23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnold Winkelried.....................................James Montgomery.............25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend of Bregenz.....................................Adelaide Procter.............29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Country............................................Frank L. Stanton.............36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America................................................Sidney Lanier...............38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stories:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abou Ben Adhem.......................................Leigh Hunt....................39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Barefoot Boy......................................John Greenleaf Whittier.....40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pied Piper of Hamelin............................Robert Browning.............44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Belle........................................Constance F. Woolson........54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King of the Golden River........................John Ruskin................60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song..................................................Celia Thaxter...............88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Heart Leaps Up....................................William Wordsworth..........89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spacious Firmament................................Joseph Addison..............90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sea...............................................Bryan Walter Procter.........92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March..................................................William Wordsworth..........94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice of Spring..................................Mary Howitt..................95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An April Day..........................................Caroline B. Southey..........97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Blossoms........................................William Wesley Martin......100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duty:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dare to Do Right.....................................George L. Taylor............102</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Psalm of Life.......................................Henry W. Longfellow.........103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a Way or Make It................................John G. Saxc................105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Than Gold......................................Abram J. Ryan................107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradatim...............................................J. G. Holland...............110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bells:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those Evening Bells..................................Thomas Moore.................111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bells of Shandon................................Francis Mahony..............112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring Out, Wild Bells..................................Alfred Lord Tennyson........115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Bells......................................Henry W. Longfellow.........118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table of Contents

**CHRISTMAS:**

- The Fir Tree .................. *Hans Christian Andersen* 119
- A Christmas Tree .......... *Charles Dickens* 126

**Part II—Stories of Greece and Rome**

- Introduction .......................................... 135
- The Story of Achilles .................................. 138
- The Story of Ulysses .................................. 175
- The Story of Æneas ................................... 225
- The Story of Horatius .................................. 254
- Horatius at the Bridge ................... *Thomas Babington Macaulay* 259

**Part III—Great American Authors**

- Biographies ........................................... 277
- Benjamin Franklin
  - My Arrival in Philadelphia ......................... 283
- Washington Irving
  - The Bobolink ...................................... 289
- William Cullen Bryant
  - March .............................................. 293
  - The Death of the Flowers .......................... 295
  - The Planting of the Apple Tree .................. 296
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
  - The Village Blacksmith ............................ 300
  - The Old Clock on the Stairs ....................... 303
  - The Birds of Killingworth ......................... 307
- Ralph Waldo Emerson
  - The Rhodora ...................................... 313
  - The Humble Bee .................................. 319
- Nathaniel Hawthorne
  - Little Daffydowndilly ................................ 322
- James Russell Lowell
  - The Fountain ...................................... 330
  - Longing ............................................ 332
- John Greenleaf Whittier
  - The Pumpkin ....................................... 333
  - All's Well ......................................... 335
- Oliver Wendell Holmes
  - Lexington ........................................... 336
  - Contention ......................................... 339
 COURSE OF READING

In the ELSON READERS selections are grouped according to theme or authorship. This arrangement, however, is not intended to fix an order for reading in class; its purpose is to emphasize classification, facilitate comparison, and enable pupils to appreciate similarities and contrasts in the treatment of like themes by different authors.

To give variety, to meet the interests at different seasons and festivals, and to go from prose to poetry and from long to short selections, a carefully planned order of reading should be followed. Such an order of reading calls for a full consideration of all the factors mentioned above. The Course here offered meets these ends but may easily be varied to fit local conditions.

FIRST HALF-YEAR

BIOGRAPHY OF HAWTHORNE (280)
LITTLE DAFYDOWNDILLY (322)
THE BAREFOOT BOY (40)
KENTUCKY BELLE (54)
THE KING OF THE GOLDEN RIVER (60)
THE PIECE PIPER OF HAMELIN (44)
A LEGEND OF BRIGENZ (29)
BIOGRAPHY OF BRYANT (278)
THE DEATH OF THE FLOWERS (295) ..........BRYANT’S BIRTHDAY, NOV. 3
THE STORY OF ACHILLES (138)
DARE TO DO RIGHT (102)
A PSALM OF LIFE (103)
FIND A WAY OR MAKE IT (105)
BETTER THAN GOLD (107)
EMIGRATION OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS (23) ..........THANKSGIVING
ABOU BEN ADHEM (39)
BIOGRAPHY OF WHITTIER (281)
THE PUMPKIN (333)
ALL’S WELL (335)
THE FIR TREE (119)
THOSE EVENING BELLS (111)
THE BELLS OF SHANDON (112)
CHRISTMAS BELLS (118)
A CHRISTMAS TREE (126)
RING OUT WILD BELLS (115)
GRADATIM (116)
BIOGRAPHY OF FRANKLIN (277) ..........FRANKLIN’S BIRTHDAY, JAN. 17
MY ARRIVAL IN PHILADELPHIA (283)
THE SEA (92)
HOHENLINDEN (21)
ARNOLD WINKELRIED (25)

7
Course of Reading

SECOND HALF-YEAR

THE STORY OF ULYSSES (138)
THE FLAG (15)
HAIL, COLUMBIA (17)
OUR COUNTRY (19)
ONE COUNTRY (36)
AMERICA (38)
BIOGRAPHY OF LOWELL (281)
THE FOUNTAIN (330)
LONGING (332)
THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH (300)
THE OLD CLOCK ON THE STAIRS (303)
THE BIRDS OF KILLINGWORTH (307)
THE STORY OF AENEAS (225)
MARCH (94)
THE VOICE OF SPRING (95)
BIOGRAPHY OF IRVING (278)
THE BOBOLINK (289)
THE PLANTING OF THE APPLE TREE (296)
APPLE BLOSSOMS (100)
AN APRIL DAY (97)
BIOGRAPHY OF HOLMES (282)
LEXINGTON (336)
CONTENTMENT (339)
THE STORY OF HORATIUS (254)
HORATIUS AT THE BRIDGE (259)
BIOGRAPHY OF EMERSON (279)
THE RHODORA (318)
THE HUMBLEBEE (319)
MY HEART LEAPS UP (89)
THE SPACIOUS FIRMAMENT (90)
INTRODUCTION

This book is designed to furnish a rich and varied supply of reading matter suited to the interests and needs of children in the early part of the grammar school work. The selections have been made with great care from among the masterpieces of British and American literature. Many familiar old pieces that have stood the test of time are included in the list. They are the songs that will always be sung and the stories that will always be told. The grouping into separate parts will aid both teachers and pupils in classifying the material, indicating at a glance the range and variety of literature offered.

Part One includes both poetry and prose. The stirring notes of patriotism with which the book opens find fitting supplement in the charming stories which follow, "The Barefoot Boy" being typical of the entire group. The series of nature poems, the group relating to character and that relating to the music of the bells, complete a collection of literary creations notable for their charm of expression and conspicuous for their beauty of thought and imagery.

Part Two contains some of the heroic tales of Greece and Rome. These fine old legends of adventure and heroism, handed down from the dawn of history, have delighted old and young for countless generations. They typify the noblest and best ideals of heroic conduct in ancient times and offer exceptional material for character-building at this impressionable period in the child's life. These stories are adapted from the stories from Homer and Virgil by Prof. Alfred J. Church.

Part Three presents a few of the great American authors, and no apology is needed for the names included in the list offered. They represent the makers of American literature and the
selections chosen are those best suited to children of this age. From Franklin to Holmes, the spirit and thoughts of our developing nation are set forth in a literature distinctively American, and some of the choicest treasures of that creative period are here brought together. Through these, the children may become familiar with the life of the past and may be made conscious of some of its lessons for the present and the future. They may thus come to know and love American authors and their works.

The biographies are intended to portray in brief form the personal characteristics and lives of the authors, making them more interesting and real to the children, giving them the human touch and incidentally furnishing helpful data for interpreting their writings. The biographical introduction to Part Three gives a related story of the lives of American authors from whose writings selections have been made in this book. "Helps to Study" include questions and notes designed to stimulate inquiry on the part of pupils and to suggest fruitful lines for discussion. Only a few points are suggested, to indicate the way, and no attempt is made to cover the ground in all directions; that remains for the teacher to do.

While placing emphasis primarily on interpreting the selection for the reader himself, the formalities necessary to give the full force of the selection to the hearer must not be overlooked. The technique of reading, though always subordinate and secondary to the mastery of the thought, nevertheless claims constant and careful attention. Good reading requires clear enunciation and correct pronunciation, and these can be secured only when the teacher steadily insists upon them. The increase in our school population of children in whose homes a foreign language is spoken, and the influence this has upon clearness and accuracy of speech furnish added reason for attention to these details. Special drill exercises should be given and the habit of using the dictionary freely should be firmly established in pupils. The ready use of the dictionary and other reference books for pronunciation and meaning of words, for historical
and mythical allusions should be steadily cultivated. Without doubt much of the reading accepted in the public schools is seriously deficient in these particulars. The art of good reading can be cultivated by judicious training and the school should spare no pains to realize this result.

To discriminating teachers it will be apparent that this book is not the usual school reader. On the contrary it differs widely from this in the cultural value of the selections, in the classification and arrangement of material, in the variety of interest to which it appeals, and in the abundance of classic literature from British and American authors which it contains. It aims to furnish the best in poetry and prose to be found in the literature of the English-speaking race and to furnish it in abundance. If these familiar old selections, long accepted as among the best in literature, shall be the means of cultivating in pupils a taste for good reading, and at the same time shall have that refining influence on character which good literature always has, then the book will have fulfilled its purpose.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to those teachers who have given valuable suggestions and help in the compilation of this book.

The Authors.

September, 1910.