

HALE EDWARD EVERETT

THE MAN WITHOUT A
COUNTRY

Edward Hale

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Edward Everett Hale

The Man Without a Country

Introduction

Love of country is a sentiment so universal that it is only on such rare occasions as called this book into being that there is any need of discussing it or justifying it. There is a perfectly absurd statement by Charles Kingsley, in the preface to one of his books, written fifty years ago, in which he says that, while there can be loyalty to a king or a queen, there cannot be loyalty to one's country.

This story of Philip Nolan was written in the darkest period of the Civil War, to show what love of country is. There were persons then who thought that if their advice had been taken there need have been no Civil War. There were persons whose every-day pursuits were greatly deranged by the Civil War. It proved that the lesson was a lesson gladly received. I have had letters from seamen who read it as they were lying in our blockade squadrons off the mouths of Southern harbors. I have had letters from men who read it soon after the Vicksburg campaign. And in other ways I have had many illustrations of its having been of use in what I have a right to call the darkest period of the Republic.

To-day we are not in the darkest period of the Republic.

This nation never wishes to make war. Our whole policy is a policy of peace, and peace is the protection of the Christian civilization to which we are pledged. It is always desirable to teach young men and young women, and old men and old women, and all sorts of people, to understand what the country is. It is a Being. The LORD, God of nations, has called it into existence, and has placed it here with certain duties in defence of the civilization of the world.

It was the intention of this parable, which describes the life of one man who tried to separate himself from his country, to show how terrible was his mistake.

It does not need now that a man should curse the United States, as Philip Nolan did, or that he should say he hopes he may never hear her name again, to make it desirable for him to consider the lessons which are involved in the parable of his life. Any man is "without a country who, by his sneers, or by looking backward, or by revealing his country's secrets to her enemy, checks for one hour the movements which lead to peace among the nations of the world, or weakens the arm of the nation in her determination to secure justice between man and man, and in general to secure the larger life of her people." He has not damned the United States in a spoken oath.

All the same he is a dastard child.

There is a definite, visible Progress in the affairs of this world. Jesus Christ at the end of his life prayed to God that all men might become One, "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

The history of the world for eighteen hundred and seventy years since he spoke has shown the steady fulfilment of the hope expressed in this prayer.

Men are nearer unity—they are nearer to being one—than they were then.

Thus, at that moment each tribe in unknown America was at war with each other tribe. At this moment there is not one hostile weapon used by one American against another, from Cape Bathurst at the north to the southern point of Patagonia.

At that moment Asia, Africa, and Europe were scenes of similar discord. Europe herself knows so little of herself that no man would pretend to say which Longbeards were cutting the throats of other Longbeards, or which Scots were lying in ambush for which Britons, in any year of the first century of our era.

Call it the "Philosophy of History," or call it the "Providence of God," it is certain that the unity of the race of man has asserted itself as the Saviour of mankind said it should.

In this growing unity of mankind it has come about that the Sultan of Turkey cannot permit the massacre of Armenian Christians without answering for such permission before the world.

It has come about that no viceroy, serving a woman, who is the guardian of a boy, can be permitted to starve at his pleasure two hundred thousand of God's children. The world is so closely united—that is to say, unity is so real—that when such a viceroy does undertake to commit such an iniquity, somebody shall hold his hands.

The story of Philip Nolan was published in such a crisis that it met the public eye and interest. It met the taste of the patriotic public at the moment. It was copied everywhere without the slightest deference to copyright. It was, by the way, printed much more extensively in England than it was in America. Immediately there began to appear a series of speculations based on what you would have said was an unimportant error of mine. My hero is a purely imaginary character. The critics are right in saying that not only there never was such a man, but there never could have been such a man. But he had to have a name. And the choice of a name in a novel is a matter of essential importance, as it proved to be here.

Now I had a hero who was a young man in 1807. He knew nothing at that time but the valley of the Mississippi River. "He had been educated on a plantation where the finest company was a Spanish officer, or a French merchant from Orleans." He must therefore have a name familiar to Western people at that time. Well, I remembered that in the preposterous memoirs of General James Wilkinson's, whenever he had a worse scrape than usual to explain, he would say that the papers were lost when Mr. Nolan was imprisoned or was killed in Texas. This Mr. Nolan, as Wilkinson generally calls him, had been engaged with Wilkinson in some speculations mostly relating to horses. Remembering this, I took the name Nolan for my hero. I made my man the real man's brother. "He had spent half his youth with an older brother, hunting horses in Texas." And again:—"he was catching wild horses in Texas with his adventurous cousin." [Note: Young authors may observe that he is called a brother in one place and a cousin in another, because such slips would take place in a real narrative. Proofreaders do not like them, but they give a plausibility to the story.] I had the impression that Wilkinson's partner was named Stephen, and as Philip and Stephen were both evangelists in the Bible, I named my man Philip Nolan, on the supposition that the mother who named one son Stephen would name another Philip. It was not for a year after, that, in looking at Wilkinson's "Memoirs" again, I found to my amazement, not to say my dismay, that Wilkinson's partner was named Philip Nolan. We had, therefore, two Philip Nolans, one a real historical character, who was murdered by the Spaniards on the 21st of March, 1801, at Waco in Texas; the other a purely imaginary character invented by myself, who appears for the first time on the 23d of September, 1807, at a court-martial at Fort Adams.

I supposed nobody but myself in New England had ever heard of Philip Nolan. But in the Southwest, in Texas and Louisiana, it was but sixty-two years since the Spaniards murdered him. In truth, it was the death of Nolan, the real Philip Nolan, killed by one Spanish governor while he held the safe-conduct of another, which roused that wave of indignation in the Southwest which ended in the independence of Texas. I think the State of Texas would do well, to-day, if it placed the statue of the real Phil Nolan in the Capitol at Washington by the side of that of Sam Houston.

In the midst of the war the story was published in the "Atlantic Monthly," of December, 1863. In the Southwest the "Atlantic" at once found its way into regions where the real Phil Nolan was known. A writer in the "New Orleans Picayune," in a careful historical paper, explained at length that I had been mistaken all the way through, that Philip Nolan never went to sea, but to Texas. I received a letter from a lady in Baltimore who told me that two widowed sisters of his lived in that neighborhood. Unfortunately for me, this letter, written in perfectly good faith, was signed E. F. M. Fachtz. I was receiving many letters on the subject daily. I supposed that my correspondent was concealing her name, and was really "Eager for More Facts." When in reality I had the pleasure of meeting her a year or two afterwards, the two widowed sisters of the real Phil Nolan were both dead.

But in 1876 I was fortunate enough, on the kind invitation of Mr. Miner, to visit his family in their beautiful plantation at Terre Bonne. There I saw an old negro who was a boy when Master Phil Nolan left the old plantation on the Mississippi River for the last time. Master Phil Nolan had then married Miss Fanny Lintot, who was, I think, the aunt of my host. He permitted me to copy the miniature of the young adventurer.

I have since done my best to repair the error by which I gave Philip Nolan's name to another person, by telling the story of his fate in a book called "Philip Nolan's Friends." For the purpose of that book, I studied the history of Miranda's attempt against Spain, and of John Adams's preparations for a descent of the Mississippi River. The professional historians of the United States are very reticent in their treatment of these themes. At the time when John Adams had a little army at Cincinnati, ready to go down and take New Orleans, there were no Western correspondents to the Eastern Press.

Within a year after the publication of the "Man without a Country" in the "Atlantic" more than half a million copies of the story had been printed in America and in England. I had curious accounts from the army and navy, of the interest with which it was read by gentlemen on duty. One of our officers in the State of Mississippi lent the "Atlantic" to a lady in the Miner family. She ran into the parlor, crying out, "Here is a man who knows all about uncle Phil Nolan." An Ohio officer, who entered the city of Jackson, in Mississippi, with Grant, told me that he went at once to the State House. Matters were in a good deal of confusion there, and he picked up from the floor a paper containing the examination of *Philip Nolan*, at Walnut Springs, the old name of Vicksburg. This was before the real Philip's last expedition. The United States authorities, in the execution of the neutrality laws, had called him to account, and had made him show the evidence that he had the permission of the Governor of New Orleans for his expedition.

In 1876 I visited Louisiana and Texas, to obtain material for "Philip Nolan's Friends." I obtained there several autographs of the real Phil Nolan,—and the original Spanish record of one of the trials of the survivors of his party,—a trial which resulted in the cruel execution of Ephraim Blackburn, seven years after he was arrested. That whole transaction, wholly ignored by all historians of the United States known to me, is a sad blot on the American administration of the Spanish kings. Their excuse is the confusion of everything in Madrid between 1801 and 1807. The hatred of the Mexican authorities among our frontiersmen of the Southwest is largely due to the dishonor and cruelty of those transactions.

I suppose that very few casual readers of the "New York Herald" of August 13, 1863, observed,² in an obscure corner, among the "Deaths," the announcement,—

"NOLAN. Died, on board U. S. Corvette 'Levant,'³ Lat. 2° 11' S.,
Long. 131° W., on the 11th of May, PHILIP NOLAN."

I happened to observe it, because I was stranded at the old Mission House in Mackinaw, waiting for a Lake Superior steamer which did not choose to come, and I was devouring to the very stubble all the current literature I could get hold of, even down to the deaths and marriages in the "Herald." My memory for names and people is good, and the reader will see, as he goes on, that I had reason enough to remember Philip Nolan. There are hundreds of readers who would have paused at that

¹ Frederic Ingham, the "I" of the narrative, is supposed to be a retired officer of the United States Navy.

² "Few readers . . . observed." In truth, no one observed it, because there was no such announcement there. The author has, however, met more than one person who assured him that they had seen this notice. So fallible is the human memory!

³ The "Levant." The "Levant" was a corvette in the American navy, which sailed on her last voyage, with despatches for an American officer in Central America, from the port of Honolulu in 1860. She has never been heard of since, but one of her spars drifted ashore on one of the Hawaiian islands. I took her name intentionally, knowing that she was lost. As it happened, when this story was published, only two American editors recollected that the "Levant" no longer existed. We learn from the last despatch of Captain Hunt that he intended to take a northern course heading eastward toward the coast of California rather than southward toward the Equator. At the instance of Mr. James D. Hague, who was on board the "Levant" to bid Captain Hunt good bye on the day when she sailed from Hilo, a search has been made in the summer of 1904 for any reef or islands in that undiscovered region upon which she may have been wrecked. But no satisfactory results have been obtained.

announcement, if the officer of the "Levant" who reported it had chosen to make it thus: "Died, May 11, THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY." For it was as "The Man without a Country" that poor Philip Nolan had generally been known by the officers who had him in charge during some fifty years, as, indeed, by all the men who sailed under them. I dare say there is many a man who has taken wine with him once a fortnight, in a three years' cruise, who never knew that his name was "Nolan," or whether the poor wretch had any name at all.

There can now be no possible harm in telling this poor creature's story. Reason enough there has been till now, ever since Madison's⁴ administration went out in 1817, for very strict secrecy, the secrecy of honor itself, among the gentlemen of the navy who have had Nolan in successive charge. And certainly it speaks well for the *esprit de corps* of the profession, and the personal honor of its members, that to the press this man's story has been wholly unknown,—and, I think, to the country at large also. I have reason to think, from some investigations I made in the Naval Archives when I was attached to the Bureau of Construction, that every official report relating to him was burned when Ross burned the public buildings at Washington. One of the Tuckers, or possibly one of the Watsons, had Nolan in charge at the end of the war; and when, on returning from his cruise, he reported at Washington to one of the Crowninshields,—who was in the Navy Department when he came home,—he found that the Department ignored the whole business. Whether they really knew nothing about it, or whether it was a "*Non mi ricordo*," determined on as a piece of policy, I do not know. But this I do know, that since 1817, and possibly before, no naval officer has mentioned Nolan in his report of a cruise.

But, as I say, there is no need for secrecy any longer. And now the poor creature is dead, it seems to me worth while to tell a little of his story, by way of showing young Americans of to-day what it is to be A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

PHILIP NOLAN was as fine a young officer as there was in the "Legion of the West," as the Western division of our army was then called. When Aaron Burr⁵ made his first dashing expedition down to New Orleans in 1805, at Fort Massac, or somewhere above on the river, he met, as the Devil would have it, this gay, dashing, bright young fellow; at some dinner-party, I think. Burr marked him, talked to him, walked with him, took him a day or two's voyage in his flat-boat, and, in short, fascinated him. For the next year, barrack-life was very tame to poor Nolan. He occasionally availed himself of the permission the great man had given him to write to him. Long, high-worded, stilted letters the poor boy wrote and rewrote and copied. But never a line did he have in reply from the gay deceiver. The other boys in the garrison sneered at him, because he lost the fun which they found in shooting or rowing while he was working away on these grand letters to his grand friend. They could not understand why Nolan kept by himself while they were playing high-low jack. Poker was not yet invented. But before long the young fellow had his revenge. For this time His Excellency, Honorable Aaron Burr, appeared again under a very different aspect. There were rumors that he had an army behind him and everybody supposed that he had an empire before him. At that time the youngsters

⁴ *Madison*. James Madison was President from March 4, 1809, to March 4, 1817. Personally he did not wish to make war with England, but the leaders of the younger men of the Democratic party—Mr. Clay, Mr. Calhoun, and others—pressed him against his will to declare war in 1812. The war was ended by the Treaty of Peace at Ghent in the year 1814. It is generally called "The Short War." There were many reasons for the war. The most exasperating was the impressment of American seamen to serve in the English navy. In the American State Department there were records of 6,257 such men, whose friends had protested to the American government. It is believed that more than twenty thousand Americans were held, at one time or another, in such service. For those who need to study this subject, I recommend Spears's "History of our Navy," in four volumes. It is dedicated "to those who would seek Peace and Pursue it."

⁵ Aaron Burr had been an officer in the American Revolution. He was Vice-President from 1801 to 1805, in the first term of Jefferson's administration. In July, 1804, in a duel, Burr killed Alexander Hamilton, a celebrated leader of the Federal party. From this duel may be dated the indignation which followed him through the next years of his life. In 1805, after his Vice-Presidency, he made a voyage down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, to study the new acquisition of Louisiana. That name was then given to all the country west of the Mississippi as far as the Rocky Mountains. The next year he organized a military expedition, probably with the plan, vaguely conceived, of taking Texas from Spain. He was, however, betrayed and arrested by General Wilkinson,—then in command of the United States army,—with whom Burr had had intimate relations. He was tried for treason at Richmond but acquitted.

all envied him. Burr had not been talking twenty minutes with the commander before he asked him to send for Lieutenant Nolan. Then after a little talk he asked Nolan if he could show him something of the great river and the plans for the new post. He asked Nolan to take him out in his skiff to show him a canebrake or a cotton-wood tree, as he said,—really to seduce him; and by the time the sail was over, Nolan was enlisted body and soul. From that time, though he did not yet know it, he lived as A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

What Burr meant to do I know no more than you, dear reader. It is none of our business just now. Only, when the grand catastrophe came, and Jefferson and the House of Virginia of that day undertook to break on the wheel all the possible Clarences of the then House of York, by the great treason trial at Richmond, some of the lesser fry in that distant Mississippi Valley, which was farther from us than Puget's Sound is to-day, introduced the like novelty on their provincial stage; and, to while away the monotony of the summer at Fort Adams, got up, for spectacles, a string of court-martials on the officers there. One and another of the colonels and majors were tried, and, to fill out the list, little Nolan, against whom, Heaven knows, there was evidence enough,—that he was sick of the service, had been willing to be false to it, and would have obeyed any order to march anywhere with any one who would follow him had the order been signed, "By command of His Exc. A. Burr." The courts dragged on. The big flies escaped,—rightly for all I know. Nolan was proved guilty enough, as I say; yet you and I would never have heard of him, reader, but that, when the president of the court asked him at the close whether he wished to say anything to show that he had always been faithful to the United States, he cried out, in a fit of frenzy,—

"Damn the United States! I wish I may never hear of the United States again!"

I suppose he did not know how the words shocked old Colonel Morgan,⁶

⁶ Colonel Morgan is a fictitious character, like all the others in this book, except Aaron Burr.

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