
The Masnavi I Ma'navi: The Song of the Reed

FROM "THE HISTORY OF THE CONFEDERATE WAR" TO "VOLUME I"

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A JEEVES READING DROP

A Note on the Text

This reading is taken from *The History of the Confederate War: Its Causes and Its Conduct*, by George Cary Eggleston (New York: Sturgis & Walton Company, 1910), Volume I, as transcribed by Project Gutenberg (eBook 45609). The edition's own preliminary notes are reproduced below.

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Part One — The Causes of the War

Introduction: The Magnitude of the Confederate War

During the years from 1861 to 1865, one of the greatest wars in all history was fought in this country.

There were in all three million three hundred and seventy-eight thousand men engaged in the fighting of it.

There are not that many men in all the regular standing armies of Europe combined, even if we include the unpaid hordes of Turkey and the military myriads of the armed camp known to geography as Russia.

The actual fighting field of this war of ours was larger than the whole of western Europe, and all of it was trampled over and fought over by great armies.

The men killed or mortally wounded in our war numbered on the Northern side alone 110,000. The total number of deaths resulting from military operations on the Northern side alone was 350,000. The figures for the Southern side are not accessible, owing to the loss of records. But as the fighting was equally determined on both sides, and as other conditions were substantially equal, it is certain that the losses of life were relatively about the same on both sides. It is well within the facts, therefore, to say that this war of ours directly caused the death of more than half a million men. No other war in modern history has cost so many lives or half so many.

We hear much of our recent war with Spain. Let us take it as a basis of comparison. The total number of men even nominally called into the field in that war was less by nearly two to one than the deaths alone during the Confederate war. The number of men who were actually engaged in the Spanish war numbered only about one tenth as many as those who were buried as victims of the Confederate war's battle fields.

Again, the total number of men killed and wounded during the Spanish war—including every man who was touched by a bullet or scratched by a sword or bayonet thrust or hurt by a splinter at sea—was only two hundred sixty-eight. That is fewer than the number who were stricken in each of many before-

breakfast skirmishes of the Confederate war, some of which were deemed too insignificant to be reported to headquarters with precision.

Looking for higher standards of comparison, we find that 43,449 men fell killed or wounded at Gettysburg alone. That is almost double the loss of the allied forces at Waterloo and probably equal to the total losses on both sides at that greatest and most decisive of European battles.

There were more than a dozen other battles of the Confederate war which in slaughter fairly deserved comparison with Waterloo. These included the Seven Days' battle before Richmond, and the battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Antietam, Shiloh, Chickamauga, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, the Second Manassas (or Bull Run), Stone River, Petersburg, Franklin, Lookout Mountain, Nashville and several others.

Still another measure of the magnitude of a war is its duration. It is duration indeed that chiefly determines the amount of human suffering caused by a war, especially to the women and children who are war's chief victims.

Measured by this test of duration the Confederate war exceeded all other recent conflicts in the magnitude of the suffering it inflicted.

Its first gun was fired at Fort Sumter in April, 1861: its last armed conflict did not occur until May, 1865. Thus for four years and a month the war endured. The Crimean war—one of the longest of nineteenth century conflicts—endured for less than half that length of time and the actual fighting of it lasted less than one fourth as long. The duration of the Confederate war was seven times as great as that of the stupendous Franco-Prussian conflict of 1870, which overthrew the second Napoleonic empire, consolidated Germany and made the republic an enduring fact in France. It was twenty-four times as long as that of the French-Austrian war, which set Italy free, or as the War of 1866 between Austria and Prussia which laid the foundations of the present German empire.

Measured by its enduring consequences the superior magnitude of our war in its influence upon national and human destinies is still more conspicuous.

It made an end of human slavery in the last civilized country on earth in which slavery was permitted.

It freed the nation from a reproach that sorely afflicted its citizens.

It ended a political conflict which had threatened the very foundations of the Republic from the hour of its institution.

It freed the Southern States of the Union from an incubus that their statesmen and their best citizens had for generations desired to be rid of, an incubus that had restricted their development and retarded their growth in wealth and population as no other evil influence had ever done in any part of our country.

Still more important so far as human history is concerned, this war of ours settled at once and forever, the vexed and vexatious questions of constitutional interpretation that had beset the Republic from the hour of its formation.

It revised the constitution upon new lines and reconstructed the Republic in ways that promise permanence.

As an exhibition of national military capacity and a revelation of our prodigious possibilities of armed resistance, it taught the world the advisability and indeed the absolute necessity of letting the United States alone, as the one unassailable and defensively irresistible nation on earth.

Finally it gave to the American people a realizing sense of their own limitless power, which has both strengthened and sobered the popular mind, revealing to it the nation's limitless ability to work iniquity, and awakening it to the Republic's nobler capacity—to work righteousness instead.

The conflict so far exalted and emphasized the power of the Republic as to inspire us with a new generosity of forbearance in our dealings with all other nations. It made it easy for us to follow General Grant's rule of right to "deal with other nations as enlightened law requires individuals to deal with each other."

Incidentally this war exhausted and impoverished the South as no other war ever exhausted and impoverished any fruitful land. It utterly destroyed the labor system of those states. It put out the light of their prosperity for a time and left their people blindly groping for sustenance. It destroyed a social fabric of exquisite poise and picturesqueness which had endured from the beginning of American colonization. It set society upon its head in the South and replaced historic order with inexpressible chaos. For a time it substituted for a traditional government by the best, an actual and very lawless government by the worst elements of society, exalting ignorance above culture, vice over virtue, and setting a horde of half-savage and suddenly emancipated slaves to direct the destinies of a region to which the country had always reverently looked for exalted patriotism and the wisest statesmanship—the region which had produced Washington and Jefferson and Madison and Monroe; the region that had given to the Republic that greatest and wisest of the jurists of the modern world, John Marshall; the birthplace of Patrick Henry, and George Wythe and George Mason and Henry Clay.

Anarchy and chaos and an era of unspeakable disorder succeeded the war as its inevitable consequence and when at last a new order was wrought out of these disturbed conditions, all that was characteristic of the old South had completely passed away. A new era had dawned, coming as a posthumous birth of the conflict of arms.

A revolution had been wrought in the social, industrial and economic conditions of a fair land. It brought with it a new material prosperity greater than any that had ever been dreamed of in that region before. It led to the development of resources that had lain dormant for generations. In agriculture alone, the South produces now many times the wealth each year that had been dug out of her fields under the old system. The very greatest cotton crop that was ever grown before the war amounted to 4,669,770 bales; since 1877 no crop so small has been grown in any year, while in recent years the crops have reached the stupendous total of more than 12,000,000 bales in each year.

Thus the old staple industry has doubled and trebled its productiveness under the influence of the new industrial conditions created by the war and by the social and economic revolution which the war wrought.

But this is a small part of the matter. Greatly as the yield of cotton has been multiplied under the new conditions, cotton has ceased to be king even in the land over which it once exercised undisputed sway. Other and humbler agricultural products—never thought of in the old planting days as money crops—have come, in their value to rival cotton itself as a source of enrichment to Southern agriculture.

More important still, the new conditions that were created in the South as a result of the war have led to the development there of resources of inestimable value which were wholly neglected under the old system. The little, local, loitering railroad lines of the older time have been combined and extended and upbuilt

into great arteries of travel and traffic. Prairies that were scratched over for the sake of meager cotton crops of half a bale to the acre have been delved under for coal and iron. Industrial cities of importance have arisen where cabins remotely stood.

Blast furnaces have replaced the breezes that once alone disturbed the broom-straw grass. Iron foundries, steel mills, machine shops, coke ovens, rolling mills and the like employ men by tens of thousands where before only a few hundreds compelled the reluctant soil to yield them a precarious living. The still unsubdued pine lands are dotted all over with cotton mills which give work and wages to a multitude and the magnitude of their dividends strongly tempts capital to a like investment elsewhere in the country that was once abundantly content to produce a raw material and to buy back the finished products of it from factories hundreds or thousands of miles away.

The harbors of the South, once mere ports of call or refuge for a shipping that belonged elsewhere, have become the seats of great shipbuilding and ship-owning enterprises the productiveness of which is loosely reckoned by imperfectly counted millions.

Still again, under the new conditions resulting from the war, great industries have sprung up in the South which find both their profit and their reason for being in the utilization of things that were sheer waste under the old system. The manufacture of cotton seed oil and its rich by-products is the best illustrative example of this. It employs thousands of well paid workmen and millions of well remunerated capital in converting into very valuable products the cotton seed that was once utilized only as a fertilizer for half-exhausted soils.

In brief, the political and social revolution wrought by the war is matched and over-matched by the stupendous economic revolution produced, a revolution whose rewards to industry, to capital and to enterprise are such as the wildest visionary would have laughed at as a futile dream when the South lay stripped and stricken and staggering under its burden of perplexities at the end of a struggle which had taxed its material resources to the point of exhaustion and which had well-nigh exterminated its vigorous young manhood.

It is to tell the story of a war thus stupendous in its causes, its events and its consequences that this book is written. There is nowhere in history a story more dramatic, more heroic or more intimately inspired by those emotions that control human conduct and work out the events of human life. The endeavor in these volumes will be to relate that story with absolute loyalty to truth.

The writer of these pages is persuaded that the time has fully come when this may be acceptably done; that the time has passed away when any American of well ordered mind desires the perversion or the suppression of truth with respect to our war history. There is certainly nothing in that history of which any part of the American people need be ashamed.

The great actors in the drama have all passed away. The passions of the war are completely gone. Even in politics, war prejudices no longer play a part worth considering. The time seems fully come when one may write truth with regard to the war with the certainty of a waiting welcome for his words. The time has come which General Grant foresaw in 1865, when he predicted that the superb strategy and unconquerable endurance of Lee and the brilliant military play of Sherman, the splendid prowess of Stonewall Jackson and the picturesque achievements of Phil Sheridan, the extraordinary dash and enterprise of J. E. B. Stuart on the one side and of Custer on the other, would all be reckoned a common possession in the storehouse

of American memory, a subject of pride and satisfaction wherever there might be an American to glory in the deeds of his countrymen.

The time has come when the prowess of the American soldier, equally on the one side and upon the other, his measureless courage, his exhaustless endurance, his all-defiant devotion to duty, his extraordinary steadiness under a fire such as few soldiers on earth have ever been called upon to face, his patience under long marchings, starvation and every circumstance of suffering, are subjects of justly indiscriminate admiration on both sides of a geographical line long since obliterated.

The story of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg may now be told to Northern ears as surely sympathetic with the heroism shown in that world-famous action as are any ears at the South. The heroic tale of the Federal assaults upon Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg where brave men, knowing the futility of their endeavors, obeyed orders and went to their deaths by thousands because it was their duty to do so may now be told to listening Southern ears with as absolute certainty of applause as if the story were related only to veterans of the Army of the Potomac.

"East is East, and West is West" writes Kipling in one of his finest ballads in celebration of generous personal courage. Paraphrasing, we may say: "North is North and South is South," but courage, heroism, devotion and a generous chivalry belong to no time and no country exclusively. They are the common possessions of all worthy manhood. Like the gold beneath the guinea's stamp they pass current wherever coined because their value is inherent.

Chapter I. A Public, Not a Civil, War

The war of 1861-65 was in fact a revolution. Had the South succeeded in the purposes with which that war was undertaken it would have divided the American Republic into two separate and independent confederations of states, the Union and the Southern Confederacy. The North having succeeded, no such division was accomplished, but none the less was a revolution wrought as has been suggested in the introductory chapter of this work.

Familiarly, and by way of convenience, we are accustomed to call this "The Civil war," in contra-distinction from those other wars in which the American power has been arrayed against that of foreign nations. But the term "Civil war," as thus applied, is neither accurate nor justly descriptive. In all that is essential to definition this was a public and not a civil war and it is necessary to a just understanding of the struggle and its outcome to bear this fact in mind. Otherwise the entire attitude and conduct of the Federal government toward its antagonist must be inexplicable, inconsistent and wanting in dignity.

The Southern States asserted and undertook to maintain by a resolute appeal to arms, their right to an independent place among the nations of the earth. In the end they failed in that endeavor. But while the conflict lasted they so far maintained their contention as to win from their adversary a sufficient recognition of their attitude to serve all the purposes of public rather than civil war.

They instituted and maintained a government, with a legislature, an executive, a judiciary, a department of state, an army, a navy, a treasury, and all the rest of the things that independent nations set up as the official equipment of their national housekeeping.

Not only did foreign powers recognize their right to make war, not as rebels but as legitimate belligerents entitled to all the consideration that the laws of civilized war guarantee to nations, but the United States government itself made similar recognition of the South's status as a power possessed of the right to make war.

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