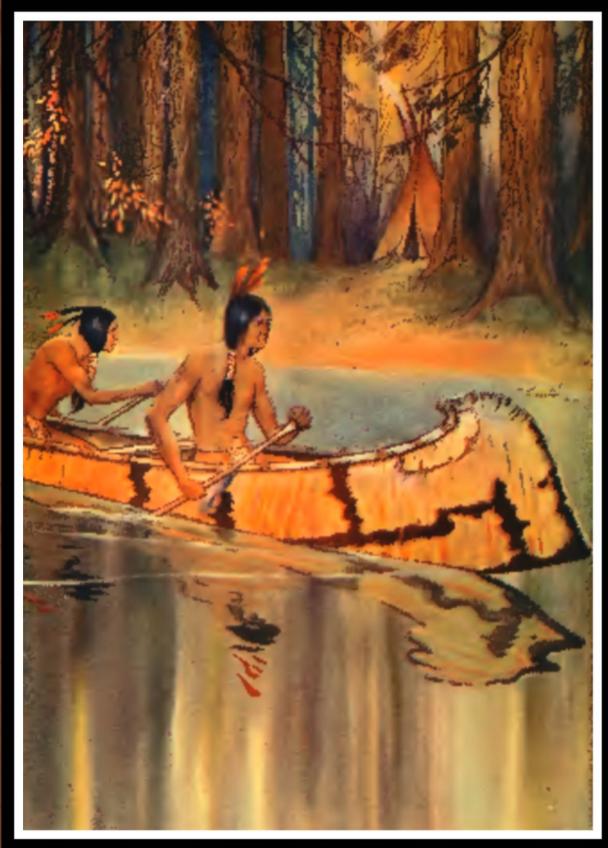


# AMERICA FIRST

## UPDATED EDITION



ORIGINAL TEXT  
BY LAWTON B. EVANS

UPDATED AND REVISED BY RACHEL LEBOWITZ



AMERICA FIRST  
UPDATED EDITION

BY  
RACHEL LEBOWITZ

AN UPDATED AND EXPANDED EDITION OF  
AMERICA FIRST  
BY LAWTON B. EVANS

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## UPDATED EDITION

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## INTRODUCTION BY LAWTON B. EVANS

When children advance beyond the nursery age, no story is so wonderful as a true story. Fiction to them is never as appealing as fact. I have often been faced with the inquiry: whether or not a story is a true one. The look of gratification, when told that “it actually happened,” was most satisfying to me as a story-teller.

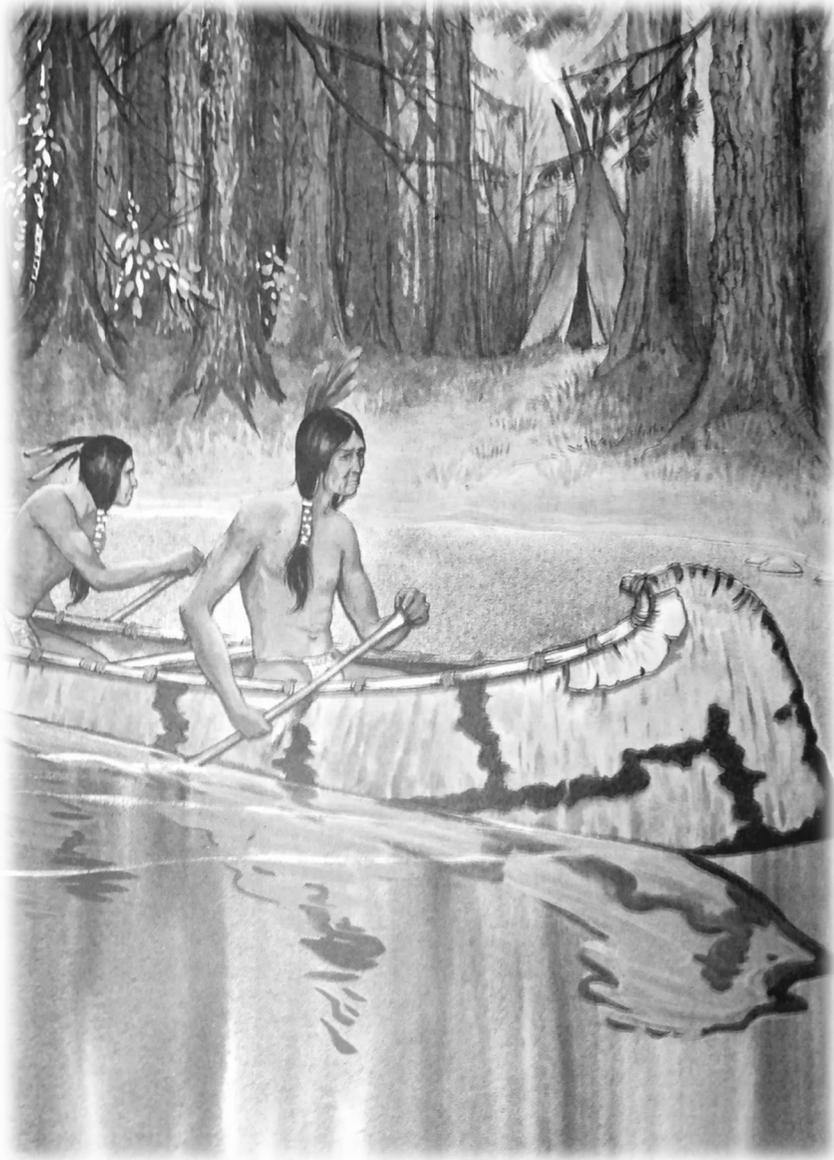
The nearer a story is to the life and traditions of the child, the more eagerly it is attended. True stories about our own people, about our neighbors and friends, and about our own country at large, are more interesting than true stories of remote places and people. We naturally are interested in our own affairs, and the nearer they are to us the greater the interest we feel.

That history is just a long, thrilling story of the trials and triumphs of pioneers and patriots is well known to those who have had to do with the teaching of history to youthful minds. That the dry recital of political and governmental history does not interest children is also well known. History should be made vital, vibrant, and personal if we expect children to be stirred by its study.

To gratify the love of children for the dramatic and picturesque, to satisfy them with stories that are true, and to make them familiar with the great characters in the history of their own country, is the purpose of this volume.

It is hoped that through appeal to youthful love of adventure, this collection of stories, covering the entire range of American history, will stimulate the ambition and strengthen the patriotism of those young citizens whose education has been the constant concern of the author for many years.

Lawton B. Evans



**Building a Canoe**

## **PREFACE TO THE UPDATED EDITION**

AMERICA FIRST by Lawton Evans has always been my favorite book for elementary American History. The author has such a wonderful narrative style that always keeps students engaged. Both my children have thoroughly enjoyed this book.

However, as a parent, I was dismayed at some of the language used in the book, as well as some of the subjects chosen. The author, Lawton Bryan Evans (1862-1934), published this book in 1920. Unfortunately, the book contains language and attitudes from that time period that are racially insensitive. In addition to the racial language, Evans sometimes chose subject matter that I consider inappropriate for young children, including tales that are too violent as well as stories that not only glorify Confederate soldiers during the Civil War, but also suggest that slaves were well-treated.

I have tried to remedy this so that parents can enjoy reading this book to their children without having to edit as they read it aloud. Or, in the case of children reading this book independently, so that parents are not having to explain why certain disrespectful words and attitudes were common when the book was published.

Therefore, I have made the following changes to the 1920 edition of America First:

I have edited or removed any disrespectful and offensive language and subject matter that appeared in the original publication. Any language that described Native Americans as savages or blood-thirsty has been removed. The term “Indian” has been replaced with “Native American” or simply, “natives” in most instances. The term “negro” has been replaced with “person” or “citizen,” or, when referring to enslaved peoples prior to or during

the Civil War, the term “negro” has been replaced with “slave.” All instances of the term “master” and “marse” have been removed. The term “white men” has been changed to “explorers,” “English colonists,” “colonists,” or simply, “citizens” or “people,” depending on the context.

Other updates to the book include restoring dignity to the descriptions of enslaved peoples. An example of this includes changing the title of one chapter from “The Rescue of Jerry” to “The Rescue of Jerry McHenry.” McHenry was an escaped slave who found freedom in the north. Evans continually refers to him by his first name, whereas he refers to other persons by their last names. “Jerry” has been replaced with “McHenry” throughout the chapter so that Mr. McHenry receives the same respect as any other person mentioned in the book.

Likewise, changes have been made to the chapter titled “Through the Heart of the South.” In this chapter, Evans uses “dialect” speech whenever a freed slave woman speaks. Her dialogue lines have been changed to modern English to give the character her due respect.

The book originally contained 100 chapters; it now contains 93 chapters. The following chapters were removed:

Hannah Dustin  
Israel Putnam Captures the Wolf  
How the Indians Treated Major Putnam  
An Indian Trick that Failed  
Christmas on the Plantation  
Colter’s Race for Life  
The Exploits of Sergeant York

Dates have been updated from “a few years ago” or “a hundred years ago” to the actual date or time period, so as to not confuse the

reader.

I have also included new illustrations in addition to the original illustrations by Milo Winter. Almost every chapter now has an illustration. However, some of the original illustrations were removed if the accompanying chapter was also removed.

All in all, I hope you and your children enjoy the revised and updated edition of *AMERICA FIRST*.

For a complete listing of books and study guides, or for more information regarding the Charlotte Mason method of education, please see The Plenary website at [CMPLINARY.COM](http://CMPLINARY.COM).

Rachel Lebowitz  
June 2019



Vikings explore North America

## CHAPTER 1

# LEIF, THE LUCKY

Leif was a bold Norseman, and was called “Lucky” because he came safely through so many dangers. He was the bravest seaman of his race, and the sailors believed that whatever boat carried him would come safely into port, no matter how fierce the storm.

When voyagers from the far seas brought word to Iceland that fair lands covered with forests lay to the west, for they had seen them, Leif the Lucky called for thirty-five strong and true men. “Let us sail to this country, and get wood for our ships, and perhaps gold and silver to sell to the kings of Europe,” he said. The men came forward and the ship set sail in the summer.

They went by way of Greenland, where they stopped for more news of the strange lands, and then sailed southwest for many days. The first place they saw was a land of ice and mountains. This was probably Newfoundland. Then they reached a level country covered with trees. This was probably Nova Scotia. Still sailing onward, the little ships with their brave crews came to a beautiful country abounding in trees, grass, and flowers. Here they landed, and carried all their baggage ashore with them. The place was so beautiful, they resolved to spend the winter there, and at once set about building houses. This was probably somewhere in Rhode Island.

When the Norsemen had built their houses, Leif said to his men, “Let us explore the land; some of us will stay to guard the houses, and the rest will find out what there is to see.” So they set

forth into the interior.

Soon they came upon an abundance of grapevines hanging from trees and covered with luscious fruit. Leif was delighted, and at once named the country Vinland, or the Land of Vines. So they gathered grapes, and cut wood for their ships, and built more houses, and settled down to spend the winter in this delightful spot. The cold came on, but the Norsemen did not mind it, for they had plenty of food and great fires; besides which, they were accustomed to cold weather.

In the spring they loaded their ships with timber, and sailed for home. Here they narrated their marvelous story of the new land. Leif offered his ship to his brother, Thorwald, and told him he might go and spend a winter in Vinland. So Thorwald fitted himself out and started for the new country, but he was not as lucky as his brother. He found the homes that had been built by those who had been before him; but the Native people attacked his party one night, and killed Thorwald with a poisoned arrow. He was buried on the shore, and his men set sail for home as soon as the weather allowed them to leave.

About eight hundred years after this, a skeleton clothed in armor was found buried in the earth at the head of Narragansett Bay. No one knew who it was; but we have every reason to believe that it was the remains of the brave old Norse warrior, Thorwald, or, maybe, of one of his followers. At any rate, the Skeleton in Armor has been the subject of much romance and poetry, and the traditions of the Norsemen have been handed down to us as sagas in the writing of the seafaring Icelanders.

## CHAPTER 2

### HOW THE SPANIARDS CONQUERED MEXICO

The one thing the early Spaniards wanted above all else was gold. For it they were willing to abandon their homes and families in the Old World, undergo all kinds of hardships and suffering, treat the native people of the Americas with great cruelty, and often imperil their own lives. Thus we see what men will do when possessed of a greed for wealth!

In Cuba there lived a Spanish gentleman named Hernando Cortez. He was the son of wealthy parents, and he had studied law. But when nineteen years of age, he had run away from home to find adventures in America. He possessed wonderful courage and great command over men; but by nature he was very cruel. He loved gold, as all the others did in those days, but he loved power and adventure as much as he did wealth.



**Hernando Cortez**

Cortez heard stories about the wonderful wealth of the King of Mexico. It was said that gold was so common among them that the very people ate and drank from golden vessels. The King was said to live in a palace so covered with gold that it shone like the sun, while he and all his attendants were believed to wear gold embroidered clothes every day. These fabulous stories were told by the natives, and the Spaniards were wild with excitement.

Cortez was placed at the head of an expedition designed to conquer Mexico, and with him were the bravest of the Spanish captains and the wildest adventurers in the New World, Nothing suited Cortez better than this expedition, and with hope he and his men set forth.

The ruler of Mexico was the proud Montezuma. He lived in a palace, and fared sumptuously upon the dainties of his land. Was it not said of him that he ate fresh fish, brought every day from the coast by runners who came in relays over two hundred miles? Around him was every kind of comfort and luxury, and Mexico, the capital city, showed many evidences of a high civilization.

When Cortez landed at Vera Cruz, runners carried swift word of the stranger to Montezuma, as he sat on his throne in Mexico City. The King turned pale as he heard of the men, riding strange animals, killing their enemies with the aid of weapons that gave out smoke and made noises like many thunders. He cried in dismay, "They are the children of the sun, who, according to the traditions of my country, have come to take away my throne. Alas! woe is me, and woe is Mexico!" And the brave monarch shed tears of distress.

The runners were sent back to Cortez, bearing presents of gold, jewels, and rich cloth, and begging him to begone with his men and leave the country in peace. When Cortez saw the gifts, his eyes blazed with greed, and he said, "Go tell your Montezuma we will visit him in his palace, even if we have to force our way. Tell him also that we have a disease of the heart; it will take much gold to cure us!"

The King heard this message with dismay, for he did not understand why men should want gold. They could not eat or wear it, and he feared their coming to his beautiful capital.

Cortez burned his ships, so that his men could not think of retreat, and then set out on his march to Mexico City. The terrified natives fled before him at the sight of his horses, and at the sound of his cannon and guns. The roads over the mountains were smooth, with here and there a stone house built nearby for the convenience of traders.

At last Cortez and his adventurers came to a point where they could look down over the city of Mexico. Great white stone buildings, were seen on an island in the middle of a lake, connected with the mainland by means of bridges. The temples and palaces were reflected in the clear water, and the whole scene was peaceful and beautiful. "The Land of Gold! The City of Plenty!" exclaimed Cortez, and he rested awhile before preparing for his triumphal entry.

Montezuma sat in his palace with his attendants around him. "The strangers are in the mountains," announced his chief warrior. "Shall I drive them away, or let them enter?" Montezuma thought awhile, and replied, "It will be of no avail to try and drive them away. Let them enter the city."

Cortez, on a fine horse and covered with all the trappings of war, attended by his captains and men, rode into the city. Montezuma was carried to meet him in a chair beneath a canopy of feathers. His mantle was decorated with gold and precious stones, and his bearers brought with them great quantities of food and rich gifts for the strangers. Alas for poor Montezuma! If he thought that was the way to get rid of the cruel and greedy Spaniard, he was much mistaken!

Cortez was given the freedom of the city. He went everywhere, observing the means of defense and the provisions of warfare. He visited the temples and saw the priests offering up sacrifices. He

resolved to force these people to adopt the Christian religion. He was very arrogant, and made the Mexicans give him everything he demanded.

So matters went on for several weeks, until the Mexicans showed plainly that they wanted the Spaniards to leave. But the



**Cortez and the Aztec King Montezuma**

Spaniards wanted more and more gold, and Cortez became anxious, for the natives were growing tired and unfriendly. He felt that he was walking over a volcano that might blow up at any minute. A Mexican slew one of his soldiers. This proved to Montezuma's subjects that the Spaniards could be killed. Cortez demanded that the murderer be turned over to him for punishment, and, when this was done, the Spaniards burned him alive in the public square. The Mexicans became more sullen and dangerous.

Cortez had only two hundred men with him, and around him were thousands of Mexicans. He and his men, already loaded with plunder and in fear of their lives, resolved to escape with what they had. It would mean for them certain destruction if the Mexicans once began hostilities. Montezuma, whom Cortez had quite terrified, advised him to go, so as to escape the wrath of the Mexican people. Just about this time, Alvarado, one of the Spanish captains, witnessing the sacrifice of human lives at a Mexican religious festival, grew so indignant that he ordered his men to fire their cannon into the group, thereby killing some of the priests.

This brought matters to a crisis. The Spaniards must now indeed leave, and leave quickly. So they planned to go by night. But as they departed over the bridge that connected the city with the mainland, the Mexicans discovered them, and began a merciless attack upon them. They swarmed forth by the thousands, cutting away portions of the bridge, hurling stones and arrows, and rushing upon the Spaniards with their spears. Cortez lost many men before he could withdraw. The greedy Spanish soldiers would not follow his advice to drop their packs of gold as they fled. They clung to their plunder to the very last, and, in consequence, many were killed who might have escaped. In Spanish histories this is known as "the sorrowful night."

It took a whole year for Cortez to get enough men from Cuba and Spain to march again upon Mexico. In the meantime Montezuma had been slain by his own people, and Guatemazin reigned in his stead. This time the siege lasted three months, and thousands of the Mexicans were slain before the proud city gave way, and the conquest of Mexico was complete. Cortez had at last broken the heart of the ancient race, and from that time on Mexico was in possession of the Spanish conquerors.

## CHAPTER 29

### KING GEORGE AND THE COLONIES

We must not get the idea that the Colonies in America were disloyal in their allegiance to the mother country. On the contrary, they loved the Old England from which their fathers came, and looked forward to a happy development under the British flag.

It was not the English people, but the English King, George III, who caused all the trouble. He had ascended the throne when he was twenty-two years of age. He was nearly forty when the Revolution began. He was obstinate and short-sighted in dealing with his subjects. He believed in the right of kings to have their own way and to him the will of the people counted for nothing as against the will of the King. Whatever George III wanted, he proposed to have people or no people, Colonies or no Colonies. Kings do not act that way nowadays, but then it was different.

When he came to the throne his mother said to him, "George be a king." She taught him to think that he owned his people, and that they should always do his will.

Instead of choosing the



**King George III**

wisest and best men in the kingdom to be his advisers and ministers, George III turned to the weaker men, who flattered him and who were ready to do his bidding. It was always one of the “King’s friends” who proposed in Parliament the obnoxious measures against America. Finally, the King succeeded in getting a Prime Minister, Lord North, who was willing, in all things, to do as his sovereign wished. In fact, someone has said that, while North was in office, “the King was his own Prime Minister.”

In spite of the protest of some really great men in England, who knew the Colonists were illtreated, the King went blindly and obstinately to work, until the Colonies in America were in complete revolt.

To see how poorly the great mass of the people of England was represented in their Parliament, we should know that, when George III came to the throne, there was a most unequal distribution of seats in the House of Commons. For two hundred years, no changes had been made in the allotment of seats according to the number of the population.

Some very large cities, like Manchester and Sheffield, that had grown up in the meantime, had no representatives at all, while some very small and old places had several representatives. One town, named Old Sarum, went on sending members to Parliament long after it had ceased to have any inhabitants at all.

The result was that many members represented only a handful of voters, many seats in Parliament were bought and sold, and some were given away, as favors. This made an assembly of representatives that did not truly represent the great body of the people, and it, therefore, became easy for the King to secure such laws as he and his friends wanted.

Was it not natural that a corrupt Parliament should do George III's own bidding? He united, with the ruling class, to suppress public opinion in England, and self-government in America. He began to rule the Colonies by royal orders, and sent instructions, over his own signature, to be obeyed in America; otherwise, so he threatened, military force would be used to make the people obey. Colonial assemblies were dissolved, unusual places of meeting were appointed, orders were issued, lands were granted or taken away, and by many other acts the Colonists were treated without consideration.

But the Colonists had many friends among the English people, who sympathized with them in their opposition to the tyranny of the King and his Parliament. They were still English people and English subjects, though their home was across the sea, and they had rights that their relatives and friends in England thought should be respected. So there were many in the old country who believed that the Colonists were right to oppose the King; some voices in Parliament even spoke out bravely in their defense.

One great Englishman, William Pitt, who was the Earl of Chatham, declared in the House of Lords, "This kingdom has no right to lay a tax upon the Colonies. I rejoice that America has resisted." After the Revolutionary War had begun, and the King had been forced to hire about 20,000 German troops from the Duke of Brunswick, because the English simply would not enlist for this unpopular war, Pitt said, in another speech,

"My Lords, you cannot conquer America. In three years' campaign, we have done nothing and suffered much. You may swell every expense, accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow, traffic and barter with every little pitiful German prince, but your efforts are forever vain and impotent, doubly so from this

mercenary aid on which you rely, for it irritates to an incurable resentment. If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I would never lay down my arms, never, never, never.”

While the Stamp Act was being debated in Parliament, Colonel Barre, who had fought by the side of Wolfe at Quebec, replied to the statement that the Colonies were children “planted by our care, nourished by our indulgence, and protected by our arms,” by exclaiming with great eloquence,

“They planted by your care! No, your oppression planted them in America. Nourished by your indulgence! They grew up by your neglect of them. They protected by your arms! Those sons of liberty have nobly taken up arms in your defense.”

The expression, “Sons of Liberty,” became a popular rallying cry of the Patriots in America.

The quarrel between King George III and the American Colonists grew into the Revolutionary War. During that War, the Colonists had many friends in England, especially in the city of London. As he walked through the streets, William Pitt was loudly cheered for the part he took in defending the cause of the Colonists. When the war was over, many in England were secretly rejoiced that the Colonies were independent, and that the will of the foolish King was at last broken.

## CHAPTER 30

### PATRICK HENRY AND THE PARSON'S CAUSE

Among the noted men in the history of the struggle of the American Colonies against the tyranny of the King of England, none occupies a more striking position than Patrick Henry, the great orator of Virginia.

His father was a magistrate, of an old Scotch family, whose lack of means kept his son, Patrick, from an education in college. However, young Henry studied at home, and acquired a fair education. He seemed to be ill-fitted for business of any kind. He kept a country store and failed; he tried farming and failed; then he went back to keeping a store and failed again. He became discouraged and idle, and began passing his time fishing and hunting and telling humorous stories to idle companions around the village inn.

Finally, he turned to the law. After studying for a few weeks, he was examined, and allowed to begin practice. It was four years, however, before he gave any evidence to the world that he possessed those marvelous powers of oratory that have made him famous.

Now, let us see how Henry won reputation in the Parson's Cause. From the beginning, the Colonists of Virginia were accustomed to pay the preacher's salary in tobacco. Each parish minister received so much tobacco out of the amount raised by the tobacco tax. If the price of tobacco was high, the minister had the benefit of the high price. If the price was low, he suffered accordingly. For a long time the ministers took their chances on the

tobacco market, and lived in abundance or in want, as the market price went up or down. At best, however, their salaries were never munificent.

In the year 1748, an Act was passed, fixing the annual salary of each parish minister at 16,000 pounds of tobacco. This Act was approved by the King, and became the law in Virginia. Each minister was allotted his tobacco salary, which he sold at whatever price he could get. This went on for a while, until the Legislature passed another Act, paying the minister's salary in paper money, at a fixed price per pound for tobacco. This fixed price was always lower than the market price, and reduced the minister's salary very much.

The Act was clearly unconstitutional, for it did not have the consent of the King, and, therefore, could not be law. Besides, it was manifestly unjust to the ministers who were employed under a tobacco contract, and not under a paper money contract. However, the people did not care, for the ministers were unpopular. And as for the King and his consent the Colonies were rapidly becoming rebellious of his authority.

The ministers had to take paper money for their salaries, or receive none at all. They complained to the Legislature, but could get no hearing. They complained to the Governor, but he gave them no consolation. They sent some of their own number to England to lay the matter before the King's Council. There they were told that their cause was just, and that they had a right to sue for damages in the Courts of Virginia. Whereupon they returned home to begin their suits.

One of the cases was brought by Rev. James Maury into the Court of Hanover County. The Judge promptly decided that the Act, paying the salaries in paper money, was no law, and that the ministers were clearly entitled to damages to be fixed by a special

jury. The case of the people against Maury seemed hopeless, especially as it was very easy to calculate the difference between the value of the tobacco and the value of the paper money paid. However, a jury was drawn, and the desperate cause of the people against the clergy was committed to Patrick Henry, then almost unknown as a lawyer and advocate. Indeed, no other counsel or lawyer would take the case, as they said it was a hopeless one, and the people had better pay and be done with it.

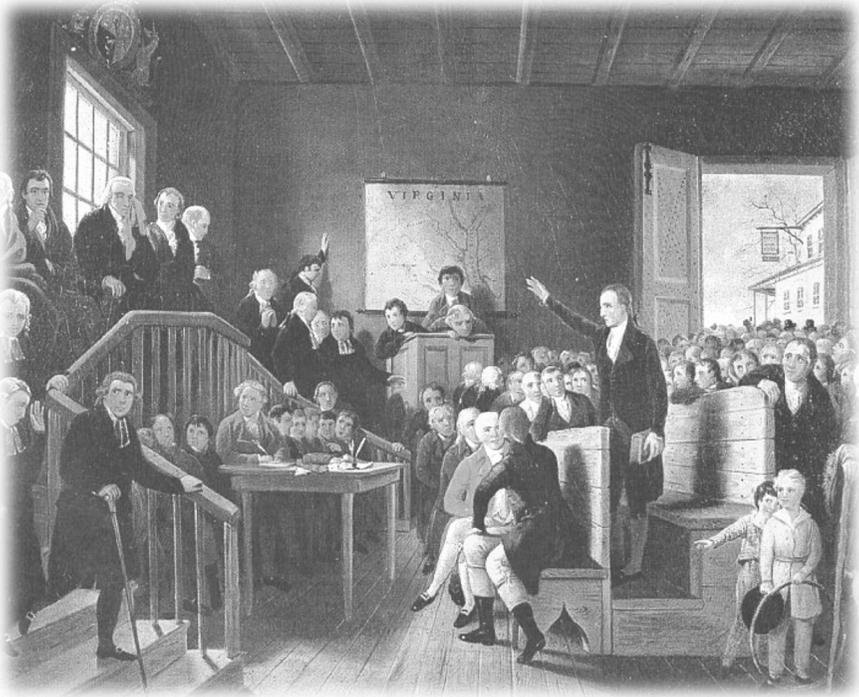
Now comes the story of how the world found out the marvelous powers of oratory possessed by Patrick Henry. On the day of trial, the courtroom was crowded with people, the clergy being there in force to witness the triumph of one of their number. On the bench sat Henry's father, the presiding Judge of the trial, who looked with much distrust upon the ability of his son to defend the people's cause.

No one had heard Henry speak before a jury. He was considered an idle young man, of twenty-seven years of age, without learning or ability. He was badly dressed, and appeared ill at ease. When he arose to speak, he did so very awkwardly, and began in a stammering and hesitating manner; so much so that the ministers smiled, the people looked disappointed, and his father sank back in his chair mortified.

But wait, let us see what happened! In a few minutes, the young orator forgot his awkwardness, and ceased his stammering. His form straightened up, and his eyes began to flash, as he unrolled his invectives against the King, and narrated the grievances of the Colonies. He did not hesitate to call the King a tyrant, who had forfeited all right to obedience. His face began to shine with a nobleness and grandeur which no one ever saw before, and his eyes seemed to hold the lightning of wrath and power. His actions were

graceful, bold, and commanding. For an hour he spoke, while the crowd listened as if under the spell of some enchantment. One of them said, “He made my blood run cold and my hair stand on end.” As for his father, such was his surprise and joy that, Judge though he was, he allowed tears of happiness to run down his cheeks.

When Henry had finished his great oration, the jury was so overwhelmed by his arguments that they voted Rev. Maury just one penny damage whereas his suit had been for many pounds. In this way did Patrick Henry begin that marvelous career which made him one of the greatest orators this country has ever produced.



**Patrick Henry Argues the Parson's Cause**

## CHAPTER 31

### PAUL REVERE'S RIDE

On the night of April 18, 1775, in a suburb of Charlestown, just outside of Boston, stood a strong and keen-eyed man beside a restless horse, ready at a moment's notice to mount and ride hard upon some secret mission. His eye was fixed upon the distant steeple of a church, scarcely to be seen in the darkness, as if he expected some signal to make him spring into instant action.

He had not long to wait. Into the night there suddenly flashed the rays from two lanterns; as soon as he saw them, he grasped the reins of the bridle, leaped into the saddle, and rode swiftly away. The man's name was Paul Revere. The signal was from the steeple of the Old North Church, in Boston, and it had been placed there by a friendly hand to let Revere know that the British troops were moving silently out of Boston to capture the military stores which the Patriots of the Revolution had at Concord, about nineteen miles away.

Swiftly his horse bore Revere past Charlestown Neck. Suddenly two British officers appeared in his path.

"Halt! Who goes there?" was the stern command.

Revere made no answer, but turned his horse's head, and went flying back to seek another road. The officers started in swift pursuit, calling out, "Halt, or we fire!"

Revere paid no attention to them, but, spurring his horse onward, turned into Medford Road. One of the officers tried to intercept him by a short cut across the field, but, in the darkness, he

fell into a clay-pit, where Revere left him as he went thundering by.

On he went, mile after mile, intent upon arousing the people. At every house he stopped, rapped furiously on the door, or called out from the roadside, "Get up, and arm yourselves. The Regulars are marching to Concord!" And then he would dash away, leaving the occupants to rise and hastily dress themselves.

The British marched out of Boston about midnight. Just at that hour, Revere rode into Lexington with a great clatter of hoofs upon the streets. He galloped up to the house of the Reverend Mr. Clarke, where Samuel Adams and John Hancock, two leading Patriots, were asleep.

"Don't make so much noise," called out the guard in front of the house, "you will awake the inmates."

"Noise!" exclaimed Revere. "You'll have noise enough before long. The Regulars are coming!"

At that moment, a window was thrown open, and John Hancock, looking out, inquired what was the matter. Recognizing Revere, he directed the guard to open the door, and admit the messenger, who soon told his startling tale. Hancock and Adams quickly dressed, and, while Revere set out again on his journey, these two Patriots left Lexington to avoid capture.

Revere was now joined by another rider, named Dawes, who had left Boston at the same time by a different route. Upon these two was put the responsibility of arousing the people. From every house the good men of the countryside rushed out when they heard the news. The Minute Men began to gather, with such guns as they had, and by two o'clock in the morning over a hundred of them had met upon the green in Lexington. As no foe was in sight, and as the air was cold, they disbanded to assemble again at the sound of the

drum.

Meanwhile, Revere and Dawes rode toward Concord, six miles off. On their way, they fell in with Dr. Samuel Prescott, to whom they told their story as the three rode along. Suddenly, a group of British officers appeared in the road before them, and laid their hands upon Revere and Dawes, who were a little in advance. This occurred so unexpectedly that escape was impossible for those two. But Dr. Prescott urged his horse over a stone wall, and was well away before he could be stopped. He alone bore the news to the people of Concord.

When Prescott arrived, at about two in the morning, he at once gave the alarm. The bells were rung, and the people rushed toward the center square where Dr. Prescott addressed them.

“The Regulars are on their way to capture the stores in the warehouse,” he declared. “They may now be in Lexington, and it is certain they will be here before long. Revere and Dawes brought me word. We must remove the stores before the British arrive.”

This was enough. It did not take the people of Concord many hours to put the precious stores in a place of safety.

Meantime, the British had come to the outskirts of Lexington. It was about daybreak, and the drum-beat called the Colonists together on the village green. There were about one hundred stern and determined Patriots, facing five or six hundred British troops. The moment was one of intense excitement, for both sides knew it meant war if a shot was fired. Captain John Parker, in command of the militia, said to his men:

“Stand your ground; don’t fire unless fired upon; but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here.”

The British Commander, Major Pitcairn, drew his pistol, and, pointing at the Patriots, cried out:

“Disperse, you villains! Lay down your arms, you rebels, and disperse!”

The Patriots did not move. The British came nearer, as if to surround Parker’s men. A shot, fired from the British line, was answered immediately by the Patriots. Then Major Pitcairn drew his pistol, and discharged it, calling out, “Fire.” The British then fired upon the Minute Men, killing four of them, after which the others retreated. This was the opening shot of the Revolution, and we shall see how England paid dearly for it.

The British moved on to Concord, reaching there about seven o’clock. They were too late, however, for most of the stores had been removed. They did what damage they could, by knocking open, sixty barrels of flour, injuring three cannon and setting fire to the court-house.

About midday, the British began their retreat. The Patriots had gathered in haste from the neighboring towns, and were preparing to harass the enemy along the road. Concealing themselves behind houses, barns, roadside walls, and trees, they poured a galling fire into the retreating British. The Red Coats, as the British were called, began to run in order to escape the deadly fire of the farmers, with their rifles and shotguns. The six miles from Concord to Boston were one dreadful ambush. Reaching Lexington, a number of the British fell exhausted on the ground, their tongues parched from fatigue and thirst.

Here they were joined by a large number of fresh British troops, and the whole force proceeded to Boston, pursued by the Patriots up to the very entrance of the city. Altogether, they lost about three

hundred men, while the Americans lost only one hundred.

Such was the beginning of the American Revolution. The midnight ride of Paul Revere was a very good beginning for the cause of American freedom.



**Paul Revere's Ride**

## CHAPTER 74

### THE RESCUE OF JERRY MCHENRY

Sometimes slaves in the South escaped and ran away to places in the North where slavery was not allowed. But there was a law known as the Fugitive Slave Act that allowed Southern slave owners to capture runaway slaves in the Northern states, and returned to them to the South.

Jerry McHenry was one such runaway, who had lived as a free man for a number of years in Syracuse, New York, working quietly and expertly as a cooper. No one inquired where he came from, or how he had reached the town, or who he was. The people were content to let McHenry alone, and not ask too many questions. If he was an escaped slave, it was the duty of the officers of the law to return him to his previous owner. And no one wanted to do that.

One day, an agent came to Syracuse, and obtained a warrant for the arrest of McHenry, declaring he was a former slave, owned by a Mr. Reynolds of Missouri; and that, under the Fugitive Slave Law, he must be arrested and sent back to the slave-owner.

Going to his place of business, the agent, accompanied by an officer, said, "Jerry McHenry, you are an escaped slave, and belong to Mr. Reynolds. You must come with us and stand trial."

Jerry was struck with astonishment and dismay. He said little, but, with despair in his heart, he laid aside his tools, and went with the agent to appear before the Judge.

The testimony was one-sided. The agent thus stated the case: "This man, Jerry McHenry, is by birth a slave. He belongs to Mr.

Reynolds of Missouri. He escaped and has been hiding in the North. The law requires him to be returned to his owner.”

McHenry said nothing in his defense, and was not asked any questions. He sat looking on, and not very closely guarded, though his hands were in hand-cuffs. The Judge and the agent were arranging some papers, and were talking about the case. A young man, standing near the prisoner, leaned over, and whispered, “Now, Jerry, here is a good chance for you to slip out of the court room.”

In a moment McHenry had risen from his seat, slipped through the bystanders, run down the steps, and was in the street below. The crowd cheered him, and made way for him. There was no vehicle for him to escape in, but McHenry was a swift runner, and disappeared up the street.

The police officers raised a great cry, and started in hot pursuit. McHenry had turned a corner, and was fleeing as fast as his manacled condition would let him. He had run about a mile, and was quite out of breath before his pursuers came near to him.

“Stop, and surrender, or it will be the worse for you,” they cried.

“Never!” answered the fugitive, and made one last despairing effort before they closed in on him.

McHenry fought like a tiger, against overwhelming odds. He was surrounded by the police and their followers, and struck from before and behind. He was thrown down, and bruised, his clothes being sadly torn.

In this condition, he was put in a wagon, four policemen guarding him. He was brought back to the city, and confined in the back room of the station, under a heavy guard. The crowd of citizens outside watched the proceedings with ill-concealed anger.

They proposed to rush in, and rescue the poor man. But one of their number advised them in this fashion:

“Wait a little while, and it will be quite dark. Proper arrangements can then be made for the poor fellow to be hidden after we rescue him. Stay nearby until all is made ready.”

In the meantime, McHenry was in a perfect rage of passion. He beat his iron-bound hands on the table before him, and cried out in his fury, “Take these irons off my hands, and give me a chance. I will fight my way through all the guard, and escape; if I do not, you can send me where you will.”

One of his friends came in to quiet him, and told him, in a low voice, that a crowd was getting ready to rescue him when it was dark. He then sat down, with his head on the table, and said nothing else.

About thirty men met outside, and planned how to effect the escape of the prisoner. They did not sympathize with the Fugitive Slave Law, and were anxious to give McHenry a chance to get away. All arrangements were carefully made. At a given signal, the doors and windows were smashed in, and the rescuers rushed into the room. The officers were seized and held. There was little opposition, for the crowd was so determined that any show of force would have been useless.

Several men seized McHenry in their arms, and bore him outside to a waiting buggy, to which a swift horse was hitched and where a willing driver sat ready.

“Now, go for your life,” was the order, and the horse started at a rapid pace. The driver managed to escape all followers, and, after about an hour’s journey, he delivered McHenry into the hands of a kind woman, who gave him shelter for the night. His pursuers were

off the track, and McHenry was safe for a while.

After a day or two, a covered wagon, with a pair of fleet horses, was seen standing in front of the house where McHenry had found lodging. An old and infirm man was noticed coming out of the house and getting into the vehicle, which started off at a rapid rate.

Several persons saw the unusual sight, and told the police that they were suspicious of the old man, and thought he might be McHenry. The police at once started in chase. The pursuit lasted for a short while, but they were not very eager to capture their former prisoner, and did not go very far. After ten miles, they gave up and returned to town.

The supposed old man was in reality McHenry, who was making his way into Canada. There, no person could be held as a slave, and, once there, all fugitive slaves were safe. In fact, there were many provisions made for helping escaped slaves get over the border into Canada.

After several days, McHenry and his rescuers came to one of the Great Lakes, where a friendly Captain took him on board a boat. At dark, the boat sailed across the Lake, and Jerry McHenry landed in Canada, where he soon established himself again in business as a cooper.

## CHAPTER 75

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Lincoln was born in a cabin, in a dreary region of the state of Kentucky. It was a one-room house, about fourteen feet square, built of logs. In this one room the family cooked, ate, and slept. Very few children have started life in so poor and barren a home as did Abraham Lincoln.

When he was seven years old, his parents moved to Indiana, into a wild and wooded region, and there built a rude place to live in. It was still a cabin, with the roughest of furniture. A log, smoothed on one side, was used as a table. The bedsteads were made of poles, fastened to the walls. The chairs were blocks of wood. All the cooking was done in the fireplace.

Here, Lincoln spent his childhood in toil and hardship. The family was poor, and every member had to do hard work on the farm. After laboring all day, the young boy would often lie down before the fireplace, and read by the light of the burning fire. Then, when too tired to read any more, he would climb a ladder, made of pegs driven into the wall, and go to sleep in the loft on a pallet of straw, covered with skins.

He had but little chance to get an education. He did not go to school more than a year, all told, and had very poor teachers. But he learned to read such books as *Aesop's Fables*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and the Bible.

He borrowed the *Life of Washington* from a neighbor, and sat up far into the night reading it. He kept it in a crevice in the wall, near

his bed, for safety. One night it rained, and he found the book soaked through and through. The owner made him work three days to pay for it, and then let him have it. It was the first book the boy owned.

He was accustomed to hear every preacher and stump orator that came into his neighborhood. Once, he walked fourteen miles to hear a trial in Court. When one of the lawyers finished his speech, Lincoln walked across the room in his bare feet, with his trousers rolled up, and said quite audibly, "I want to shake your hand. That is the best speech I ever heard." Years after, when Lincoln was President, the lawyer, grown old and feeble, came to the White House and reminded him of the incident.

When Lincoln was about twenty-one years of age, his father and two of his neighbors moved to Illinois. Through mud and water, and over rough roads, Lincoln walked all the way, driving an ox-team. They settled about ten miles from Decatur, and started life afresh.

Lincoln aided in clearing the land, and he fenced it with rails. He helped build the cabins and plant the spring crops. Though he was of age, and could have done as he pleased, he stayed with the family until they had started in their new surroundings.

He needed some clothes, for he still wore the buckskins of the frontier. He bargained with a neighbor to make him a pair of trousers out of brown jeans, dyed with white walnut bark, agreeing to split rails in payment. He had to split fourteen hundred rails before the trousers were paid for.

Lincoln was now a grown man, six feet and four inches tall, spare of frame, but muscular, and in perfect health. He was much beloved by the community in which he lived, and was popular with

his companions. He could out-run, out-jump, and out-wrestle anybody in the neighborhood. And, as a rail-splitter, nobody could approach him in the number he could split a day.

For he had precision and power with a sharp ax. Every blow fell in the right place, and with great force. To see him cut down a large tree, and split it into rails, was to witness an exhibition of rare skill.

He was also a good story-teller. All his life he had an inexhaustible supply of funny stories to fit any occasion. He gained a reputation for honesty and square dealing in all his business transactions. That is why he was called "Honest Abe."

One day, a woman came into the store where Lincoln was engaged as clerk. After she had gone, he noticed that she had given him six cents too much. That night, after his job was finished, he walked five miles to the woman's house to return her the money.

By dint of hard study and hard work, Lincoln began to be a leader in the town of New Salem, where he was employed. He studied law, was admitted to the bar, and was elected to the Legislature. He was sent to Congress, and was a candidate for the United States Senate.

As a lawyer, he was very shrewd and successful. Upon one occasion he defended the son of a poor woman, who



**Abraham Lincoln with his son,  
Todd Lincoln**

was accused of murdering a man at night. Lincoln was satisfied in his own mind that the boy was innocent. The trial began, and the witnesses were called.

The chief witness said, "I saw him strike the man and kill him."

Lincoln inquired, "What time was it when you saw him?"

"It was about eleven o'clock," the witness replied.

"How could you see so well at night?" asked the lawyer.

The man replied, "The moon was shining, and I could easily see by its light."

Lincoln sent for an almanac, and showed the jury that there was no moon shining on that night, whereupon the witness retired in confusion, and the man was acquitted of the crime.

In after years, Lincoln was President of the United States, during the trying period of the Civil War. His was a deep responsibility, and he felt the burden of saving the Union very keenly.

He was a man of strong convictions and of great firmness. He was cast by nature in a heroic mold, yet he was always sympathetic and tender in his dealings with men. His disposition was melancholy, in spite of his humor, and he brooded deeply over the welfare of the country. His great hope was to save the Union at any cost, and it grieved him profoundly to see the Southern States secede.

## CHAPTER 82

### THROUGH THE HEART OF THE SOUTH

The Civil War was drawing to a close. The exhausted Confederacy was bleeding to death. There was a shortage of men and supplies, but the South was hanging on desperately to a cause that already was doomed. Grant and Lee were fighting it out in Virginia, while Sherman, the Northern General, having captured Atlanta, was making ready for his march to the sea.

His army of sixty thousand men was unopposed. The fair, open country was before them, with the harvests of the fall already gathered in the barns. It was to be a march of destruction, but without violence to the people themselves.

“The people must feel the hard hand of war. It is better to lose property than to lose lives. This is the best means to end the war,” were the reflections of General Sherman, as his men started out on their six-week long march to the sea.

The distance was three hundred miles, and the soldiers were told to live on the country, as they advanced. There was no need of wagon trains, when the land was provided with food which was being gathered for the Confederate soldiers in Virginia.

The Federal army spread out to cover a front of forty miles. The men had orders to march about fifteen miles a day, and to forage as they went along. These foragers brought in poultry, vegetables, cattle, and food supplies of all kinds. They had orders not to destroy property needlessly, but these orders were not strictly observed, and, in many instances, farm houses, gin houses, and cotton crops were

burned, while fields were laid waste. Often, the horses were taken from the farms, and the cows and hogs were driven away or else slaughtered for the immediate use of the soldiers.

In spite of regulations, a large number of “bummers” and thieves followed the army, who were not responsible to any orders. Before these bandits the Southern people were helpless. They not only robbed houses of their provisions, but took away silverware, clothing and valuable articles of furniture.

In order to do as much damage to the Confederacy as possible, the Union soldiers tore up the railroad tracks, burned the ties, and, heating the rails, bent many of them around the telegraph poles. In this way, a path of desolation was cut through the heart of the South, that did much to hasten the inevitable end of the conflict.

The Union army was followed by crowds of slaves, many of them neither knowing where they were headed, nor what the march meant. They were just moving along with the soldiers, careless and happy, singing songs by night, and helping the marching men by day.

“Bless the Lord, we are free, and we’re going along with these soldiers,” said one old woman with a child in her arms.

“But where are you going, and what will you do when you get there?” asked one of the officers.

“That makes no difference now. That’s a month off. I never look that far ahead,” was the woman’s philosophical reply.

The soldiers traveled along leisurely. The weather was good, the supplies were sufficient, the march was unopposed. All the telegraph lines were cut, and no news of their whereabouts was sent to the North.

Finally, General Sherman reached Savannah. On Christmas Eve he sent a message to President Lincoln:

“I beg to present to you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with one hundred and fifty guns, and plenty of ammunition; also about twenty-five thousand bales of cotton.”

President Lincoln replied, “Many, many thanks for your Christmas gift – the capture of Savannah. When you were leaving Atlanta for the Atlantic coast, I was anxious, if not fearful; but feeling that you were the better judge, and remembering that 'nothing risked, nothing gained' I did not interfere. Now, the undertaking being a success, the honor is all yours . . . Not only does it afford the obvious and immediate military advantage; but . . . it brings those who sat in darkness, to see a great light. But what next? I suppose it will be safer if I leave Gen. Grant and yourself to decide. Please make my grateful acknowledgements to your whole army, officers and men.”

Thus it was that Sherman’s army marched through Georgia, doing no violence to the people, but doing a property damage that was estimated at one hundred million dollars. Such is the sad havoc of war.

## CHAPTER 93

### FRANK LUKE, JR., AVIATOR

The life of an aviator is full of danger and adventure; the annals of the World War are filled with his exploits. It is the business of the aircraft, its pilot, and observer to note the enemies' positions and movements, to take photographs, to direct the fire of big guns, to bring down observation balloons, to drop bombs, and to destroy or drive off the enemy's machines. The aviators fly all the way from a hundred feet to three miles high, and often at a rate of a hundred miles an hour.

Frank Luke, Jr., came from Phoenix, Arizona. He was twenty years old when he entered the service. He had his training as an aviator, and found himself near Chateau-Thierry, France, late in July, 1918. He had an insatiable appetite for flying, and was deeply interested in machine-guns and incendiary bullets.

About the middle of August, the enemy planes were in large



Frank Luke Jr.

number over the sector where Lieutenant Luke's squadron was operating. He felt that if he could get across the lines unobserved, he could take the enemy's formation unaware, and swoop upon the rear man and shoot him down.

One day, he went off alone, rose to a great height, and crossed into the enemy's territory. Far below him he spied six machines getting ready to land on their own aerodrome. The odds were against him, six to one, but he was not an aviator to count the odds, and prepared for action.

He swooped down from fifteen thousand to three thousand feet in one long dive, speeding at a rate of two hundred miles an hour; he closed in on the rear man, and, from a distance of twenty yards, sent him crashing down.

The enemy formation was taken completely by surprise. Before they could realize what had happened, or engage Luke in combat, he had dropped to four hundred feet, had dodged all anti-aircraft fire and machine-guns, and was off like a rocket to his own lines.

On September 12, 1918, began the St. Mihiel offensive. At day-break, Luke rose in his plane, and observed a German balloon far to the right. He returned to his aerodrome, and learned that the balloon was doing great damage by directing an enfilading fire on our advancing troops. He volunteered to destroy the balloon, and flew away with his flying partner, Lieutenant Wehner.

In a short while, he was seen to drop out of the clouds, surprise the balloon, and, at the second dive, he shot it down in flames. This was Luke's first experience with a balloon-gun, a gun designed to shoot a heavy incendiary bullet.

Two days later, the enemy were keeping three observation balloons in the air. They were operating at a low altitude, so low, indeed, that an observer could not use his parachute to escape, the

height not being sufficient for the parachute to open and land the observer safely. Luke volunteered to destroy these balloons, and was sent out with other pilots detailed for protection.

A few moments before Luke was ready to shoot down one of the balloons, his escort became engaged in a fight with an enemy formation, and it seemed hopeless to make the attack. Undaunted, however, Luke darted in underneath the fight raging above him in the air, and, descending repeatedly on the balloon, sent it down in flames, despite the shower of machine-gun bullets that rained around him.

When he reached his own lines, it was found that his machine was so riddled with holes that it was on the verge of a collapse. Under a little more strain, it would probably have fallen to pieces in the air. "A narrow escape, that," was all the daring aviator said, when he looked at his riddled plane.

The same afternoon, he set out to bring down one of the other balloons. Again, his escort was engaged with the enemy aircraft. Again, Luke dived under the fight to attack his prey; but he himself was attacked by a formation of eight enemy planes. Diving with great speed to the level of the balloon, he delivered a burst of machine-gun bullets, saw the envelope blaze into fire, and then escaped his pursuers by a zig-zag course, back to his own aerodrome.

Day after day, Luke went up for enemy planes, or in search of observation balloons. Escorting patrols engaged the enemy, while he darted in, and fired upon the balloons, bringing them down in flames, and escaping the terrible machine-gun fire from the ground.

In seventeen days, he brought down eighteen enemy machines and balloons. His name became a terror to the Huns, and they lived in dread of his daring attacks upon their observation balloons. The

observers in those balloons would frequently leap into their parachutes and descend before Luke had actually set fire to the balloons.

On September 29, he went out for the purpose of destroying three balloons. On his way, he flew over an American aerodrome and dropped a weighted message, asking that a sharp lookout be kept for three German planes which he had sighted. His machine was then seen to go over in that direction, and to rise to a very high altitude. When nearly over the three machines, he was attacked by ten enemy planes. He engaged all of them, single-handed, and sent two crashing to the ground.

He then dropped out of the fight, and descended to the level of the balloons, which he shot down, one after another all three of them. This made five victims in one engagement.

Now, the sad story of his death is to be related. His machine, surrounded by a flock of enemy planes, was forced to descend on to Germany territory. He was wounded in the shoulder, but was full of fight to the last. Drawing his pistol, he opened fire until he was killed by an overwhelming number of the enemy.

The Germans took his clothing, and rifled his pockets of their contents, and left his grave unmarked. Months afterwards, the inhabitants of the village told the Americans the story of his last brave fight, and showed them the grave in which the great American ace was buried.



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**RACHEL LEBOWITZ** is the owner of A Charlotte Mason Plenary. She and her husband have always homeschooled their two children using the Charlotte Mason method of education. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Houston where she studied Communications and Political Science. Before attending college, she travelled as a member of Up With People, a performing arts organization with a mission to transcend cultural barriers and create global understanding through music. After college, she spent many years as a Radio and Television Journalist. She currently resides in Texas with her husband, two children, two dogs, and one guinea pig.

## **OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR**

### THE PLENARY ANNOTATED HOME EDUCATION SERIES

Home Education: Plenary Annotated Edition of Volume 1  
by Charlotte Mason, Rachel Lebowitz, and Ruk Martin

(Other Annotated Volumes by Charlotte Mason coming soon)

### THE PLENARY PLUTARCH SERIES

Plutarch's Life of Publicola: Plenary Annotated Study Guide

Plutarch's Life of Pericles: Plenary Annotated Study Guide

For a complete listing of books and study guides,  
or for more info about the Charlotte Mason method of education,  
please see The Plenary website at:

[WWW.CMPLEINARY.COM](http://WWW.CMPLEINARY.COM)





# UPDATED AND REVISED FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS

AMERICA FIRST by Lawton Evans has always been my favorite book for elementary American History. The author has such a wonderful narrative style that always keeps students engaged.

Unfortunately, the book also contains language and attitudes that are racially insensitive, as it was first published in the early 1900s.

I have tried to remedy this so that parents can enjoy reading this book to their children without having to edit as they read it aloud.

**AMERICA FIRST: UPDATED EDITION** includes the following changes:

- Any language that described Native Americans as savages or blood-thirsty has been removed.
- The term “Indian” has been replaced with “Native American” or simply, “natives” or “people” in most instances.
- The term “negro” has been replaced with “person” or “citizen,” or, when referring to enslaved peoples prior to or during the Civil War, the term “negro” has been replaced with “slave.”
- All instances of the term “master” and “marse” have been removed.
- The term “white men” has been changed to “explorers,” “English colonists,” “colonists,” or simply, “citizens” or “people,” depending on the context.
- Other updates to the book include restoring dignity to the descriptions of enslaved peoples.
- Dates have been updated and new illustrations have been added to most chapters.

I hope you and your children enjoy this updated edition of  
**AMERICA FIRST.**

For a complete listing of books and study guides, or for more information regarding the Charlotte Mason method of education, please see **THE PLENARY** website at [CMPLINARY.COM](http://CMPLINARY.COM).

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