

**THE READING CLUB AND HANDY
SPEAKER: BEING SELECTIONS IN PROSE
AND POETRY, SERIOUS, HUMOROUS,
PATHETIC, PATRIOTIC, AND DRAMATIC,
FOR READINGS AND RECITATIONS**

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The Reading Club and Handy Speaker: Being Selections in Prose and Poetry, Serious, Humorous, Pathetic, Patriotic, and Dramatic, for Readings and Recitations by George M. Baker

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GEORGE M. BAKER

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Rescue. <i>John Brownjohn</i>	5
The Pickwickians on Ice. <i>Dickens</i>	8
A Picture. <i>Mrs. H. A. Bingham</i>	15
Tobe's Monument. <i>Elizabeth Kilham</i>	18
The Two Anchors. <i>R. H. Stoddard</i>	22
The Old Ways and the New. <i>John H. Yates</i>	24
By the Alma River. <i>Miss Mulock</i>	26
The Trial Scene from Shakspeare's "Merchant of Venice"	28
The Sisters. <i>John G. Whittier</i>	37
Farm-Yard Song	39
The Fortune Hunter. <i>John G. Saxe</i>	41
Curing a Cold. <i>Mark Twain</i>	43
In the Bottom Drawer	44
Two Irish Idyls. <i>Alfred Perceval Graves</i>	45
Over the River. <i>Priest</i>	47
The Modest Cousin. <i>Sheridan Knowles</i>	49
Biddy's Troubles	53
The Man with a Cold in his Head	57
Harry and I	59
The Shadow on the Wall	61
The Little Puzzler. <i>Sarah M. B. Piatt</i>	63
A Traveller's Evening Song. <i>Mrs. Hemans</i>	64
Calling a Boy in the Morning	65
Cooking and Courting. <i>Tom to Ned</i>	66
A Tragical Tale of the Tropics	68
The Paddock Elms. <i>B. E. Woolf</i>	69
The Bobolink. <i>Aldine</i>	72
Toothache	74

The Opening of the Piano. <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>	75
Press On. <i>Park Benjamin</i>	76
The Beauty of Youth. <i>Theodore Parker</i>	77
Queen Mab. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	78
A Militia General. <i>Thomas Corwin</i>	79
Address of Spottycus	81
Our Visitor, and What He Came For	84
"What's the Matter with that Nose?" <i>Our Fat Contributor</i>	86
Workers and Thinkers. <i>Ruskin</i>	88
The Last Ride. <i>Nora Perry</i>	89
Baby Atlas	91
Possession. <i>Owen Meredith</i>	92
There is no Death. <i>Sir E. Bulwer Lytton</i>	93
The Learned Negro. <i>Congregationalist</i>	94
Nearer, my God, to Thee. <i>Sarah F. Adams</i>	95
A Short Sermon. <i>Not by a Hard-shell Baptist</i>	96
Goin' Home To-day. <i>W. M. Carleton</i>	98
The Broken Pitcher. <i>Anonymous</i>	99
A Baby's Soliloquy	100
The Double Sacrifice. <i>Arthur Wm. Austin</i>	101
Sunday Morning. <i>George A. Baker, jun.</i>	103
The Quaker Meeting. <i>Samuel Lover</i>	105

THE READING-CLUB.

THE RESCUE.

NEARER and nearer and nearer and near!
Hark how his horse's hoofs ring out
On the river-bottom, loud and clear!
He waves his *sombrero*, and utters a shout;
His long black hair floats free in the wind;
His gray-hued *serape* is fallen behind.
Nearer and nearer,
He has reached the river, yet does not seem
To notice the ford
Above, where 'tis broad;
But straight down the shelving bank into the stream
He urges his steed like a man in a dream.
Great God! The horse's head is under!
Not so, he swims: 'twas the quicksand, 'tis past.
See his broad breast cleave the waves asunder!
He comes straight onward; he's over at last:
He is here.

Poor mustang, panting and trembling and faint!
Not another rod to-night shall ye stir.

The dusky rider springs to ground,
And looks with questioning glance around.
" *Americanos?* Ah! *Senors*,
What hand so quick to save as yours?
Por amor de Dios, mount and ride!
Los Comanches! " The captain cried, —
" Stranger, enough! we know the rest.
God willing, we will do our best."

Hark to the bugle's roundelay!
Boot and saddle! Up and away!
 Mount and ride as ye ne'er rode before;
 Spur till your horses' flanks run gore;
 Ride for the sake of human lives;
 Ride as ye would were your sisters and wives
 Cowering under their scalping-knives.
Boot and saddle! Away, away!

Never did order
 Come more welcome to us on the border;
 Never more promptly did we obey.
 Every thing dropped in drear disorder;
 Supper half-finished was left on the ground;
 Each man sprang to his horse's side;
 Cheerily the word went round, —
 Rescue, rescue! Mount and ride!
 Death to the redskins far and wide!
 Then quickly we galloped off into the night,
 "All saddled, all bridled, all fit for a fight."

The evening sun has sunk full soon,
 Tinging the west with crimson and gold;
 But over each man's left shoulder the moon —

Evil omen
 As e'er foretold
 To other foemen
 In days of old

Danger and death — in majesty
 Silently climbs the eastern sky.
 The moon behind, the stars shining o'er us,
 Shadows and darkness around;
 But we only know straight before us
 Are twenty miles of ground.
 O God! To think of the terrible fate
 Awaiting that home if we come too late!
 To think twenty miles and two hours hence
 May make such fearful difference!
 Ah, noble steeds, do all ye know
 That twenty miles we draw not rein,
 But after that ye shall rest again.

Galloping, galloping, galloping on,
 Four times thirty hoofs as one,

Gallop on at a fearful pace,
 In terrible race,
 One by one the miles go by,
 Quickly the horses and moments fly.
 "Stranger, are we almost there?"
 The Mexican, he shook his head:
 "Ten miles farther on," he said,
 Then bowed his head in muttered prayer.
 Ten miles more! Will they never pass?
 On and on and on we go:
 We brush the dew from the buffalo-grass;
 We're in the Badlands now.
 Still the miles are passing by,
 Still the horses and moments fly:
 "Stranger, do we near the place?"
 The Mexican nods in mute reply,
 Then suddenly, with ghastly face,
 Points to the western sky.
 Aha! What means that lurid glow?
 Surely the sun set long ago.
 "Pause not for your lives," the captain said:
 "'Tis a house in flames, five miles ahead!"

God grant that rarely on human sight
 There dawn such a scene as we saw that night!
 Such horrible pictures no brush could produce,
 Such terrible story no pen could tell;
 As if in an instant had been let loose
 A thousand fiends of hell.
 A bit of timber, a patch of green,
 A house in a winding-sheet of flame,
 Smoke and fire and ghastly glare,
 The shrieks of a poor wretch tortured there,
 The cries of women bemoaning their fate,
 The yells of the devils incarnate,
 Playing their devil's game, —
 This is the story filling the air,
 This the terrible scene.

A painted savage, with rapid stride,
 Places himself by a captive's side,
 A moment toys with her beautiful hair,
 Then raises his hatchet high in air.
 But the threatening weapon never fell;