

**THE CABLE STORY  
BOOK. SELECTIONS  
FOR SCHOOL READING**

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The Cable Story Book. Selections for School Reading by George Washington Cable & Mary E. Burt & Lucy Leffingwell Cable

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# THE CABLE STORY BOOK

SELECTIONS FOR SCHOOL READING

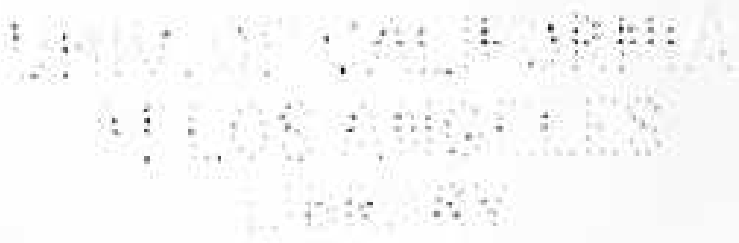
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"THE EUGENE FIELD BOOK," ETC.

AND

LUCY LEFFINGWELL CABLE



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## PREFACE

THE CABLE STORY BOOK has been prepared in response to a revival of interest in Mr. Cable's works among his early admirers, as well as to the newly awakened enthusiasm of a younger audience and the urgent demand from various sources for selections from his books for school-readers.

Southern life and Southern history have never heretofore been well represented in school reading. The Adirondacks, the Catskills, and the Hudson have become enchanted regions to school students through the works of Washington Irving, John Burroughs, and Charles Dudley Warner. Hawthorne has created an American Wonderland in New England. Longfellow has brought Grand Pré and all Acadia into the schoolroom through *Evangeline*, and he has interpreted Indian life to us through *Hiawatha*; but the great balmy South, with its "endless colonnades of cypresses,—long motionless drapings of gray

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moss,—and constellations of water-lilies," has been a matter of dry geographical statistics, and not the land of song. To read Cable is to live in the South, to bask in its sunshine, eat of its figs and pomegranates, and dream its dreams. No other writer has so recorded its pulse-beats. This book comes to fill a great gap, to furnish the interpretation of a wide district of our country before unrepresented in our schools. For these reasons the stories are pre-eminently profitable school reading.

Then, Cable's way of placing what is vital in character before the child's mind (I might better say the child's heart), at the same time that he bends down the boughs of the magnolia or orange-tree to regale him with its sweet odors, is transcendent. The child breathes in the very atmosphere of the South, but, what is of more significance, he breathes in the virtue and nobility of the writer. In no case have I ever edited a book for schools where I have felt more deeply the importance of the work. It has been a matter of the most enthusiastic pride with me. This book is one that I love. A country is sweet and beautiful and worthy of our patriotic devotion only as far as it is the home of noble souls. Those of our writers who have portrayed its natural beauty and il-

luminated what is heroic in its commonplaces, in a way to endear the very ground to our feet, deserve the first recognition in our schools.

The stories in this book, and many more from Mr. Cable's pen, have been read and re-read with several classes of pupils from eight to fifteen years of age; and their reception has influenced both the choice and the arrangement of the selections, the easiest reading being placed first. The stories were received with an interest so genuine that requests were often pressed urgently to "go on with the story" instead of the regular lesson. In using these stories many interesting incidents have occurred. Only yesterday I picked up a picture from the floor which a little boy had drawn to illustrate the fire in the story "The Taxidermist." An excited crowd was represented standing around the fire, and "me at this fire" was printed under the most excited individual there. The stream of water was larger than the house. Mr. Cable is notably delicate in his composition, and it might be a matter of conjecture whether an author so exclusive and cultured would be comprehended by the children. But I have only to refer to their little written reviews to be reassured on this point. A boy of ten writes: "The Taxidermist tried

to put the soul back into the little humming-bird." An older boy writes: "You would think that such a big hand could not handle such a tender animal very well." Yet another child says: "He made nice work because he was sorry the little bird was dead, and he wanted to bring the life back to the bird." A boy less than ten years old writes: "I think Jean-ah Poquelin was very brave to hide his brother and take care of him when he had the leprosy, for he might have taken it himself." *Bras Coupé*, too, is a hero close to the heart of children. His roar of delight on seeing his bride-elect at his wedding always called out a responsive roar of laughter, and his capture with the lasso a sigh of pity. His disdain of slaveship found willing endorsement, for children are really freemen. And there is not any temperance tale more suitably adapted to the necessities of responsive reading than "Gregory's Island." Hawthorne says: "Children possess an unestimated sensibility to whatever is deep or high in imagination or feeling so long as it is simple, likewise. It is only the artificial and complex that bewilder them."

I have spoken only of the needs of the schools of our own country; but I have often observed in book-stores and at book-stalls in