



# Stories of the Civil War: Adapted for Supplementary Reading: civil war historynonfiction

*Albert Franklin Blaisdell*

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Excerpt:

STORIES OF THE CIVIL WAR

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THE NATION'S PERIL

Thirty years ago there took place, in this country, one of the most exciting political campaigns in American history. Abraham Lincoln, the candidate of the Republican party, was elected President of the United States on November 6, 1860.

A large book would not suffice to give the young student the full history of this campaign and the memorable events which followed during the next six months. It was the culmination of affairs which had taken place during the half-century before. It was the outburst of a storm which had been brewing for many long years. Wise statesmen of a former generation had foreseen, with mingled sorrow and dismay, just such a crisis in our country's history. The deep-seated cause, of which a long and costly war was the natural result, is a subject for earnest study in connection with the formal history of the United States. It does not come within the scope of this book.

As soon as the election of Lincoln was announced, men of extreme views at the South proceeded at once to carry out their threats of attempting to withdraw from the Union. Seven States seceded, at intervals more or less brief, from the Union, and organized what was known as the Southern Confederacy. Four States seceded later. The people at the North were amazed at the rapidity with which the organization against the national government established itself. The humiliating events of that dread winter of 1860-61 are a part of our history. The government at Washington stood as if paralyzed. The President was a weak, old man, and did not know what to do. Most of his cabinet officers were friendly to the South, and took advantage of their official positions to allow the enemies of the country to take possession of the national stores, arms, arsenals, forts, and navy yards, within the limits of the seceding States. The government did not even dare to send reinforcements to the forts along the southern seacoast lest such action should precipitate a civil war. This weak and irresolute action gave the seceding States ample opportunity to prepare for the coming strife at the expense of the nation. This cost the country many millions of dollars and thousands of lives to regain during the next four years.

Such, briefly, was the condition of the country when Abraham Lincoln, fearful of life, came to Washington in March, 1861, and quietly took the reins of the government. How little could the good President, or even the wisest of his advisers, realize the overwhelming responsibility of his position.

With the stirring events which followed we are familiar. The story, of how Major Anderson removed his little band of United States troops from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbor, for greater safety, is a familiar one; likewise, how the Confederates fired upon a vessel sent with supplies intended for it; and, finally, after a severe bombardment, how they compelled the fort to surrender. Forbearance had ceased to be a virtue. It was seen even by the most timid and conservative that something must be done at once to assert the majesty and power of the national government. President Lincoln acted resolutely and promptly. On the 15th of April, 1861, he issued a proclamation calling out seventy-five thousand militia, for three months, to suppress the rebellion.

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