



The Man Without a Country

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Characters Discussed

Philip Nolan, a brash young American army officer who becomes involved in Aaron Burr's conspiracy against the United States. At his court-martial, in a show of bravado, the young man curses his country. As a result, he is sentenced to serve out his life aboard naval vessels, never seeing the United States or hearing it mentioned. Even his books and periodicals are excised of all allusions to his country. Through the years, Nolan is transferred from one navy vessel to another, always wearing an army uniform with plain buttons, thus acquiring the nickname of "Plain Buttons." As time passes, authorities in the Navy and in Washington forget Nolan, but he is still passed from one ship to another, never allowed within a hundred miles of the American coast. As the years pass his unconcern, worn bravely at first, fades away, as he wanders the seas an official expatriate—countryless, friendless, even nameless. As he finally lies dying, an old man, the captain of his current prison ship tells Nolan what has happened in the fifty-six years since Nolan left the country—omitting, for the dying man's sake, only the Civil War.

Colonel Morgan, the army officer conducting the court-martial that sends Philip Nolan to his years of wandering over the sea.

Bibliography:

Adams, John R. *Edward Everett Hale*. Boston: Twayne, 1977. Includes a chapter devoted to *The Man Without a Country*. Discusses the work's analogues and sources—mainly the pro-Confederacy pronouncements of the Ohio politician Clement Laird Vallandigham made early in the Civil War—and its factual background, narrative core, and popularity. Discusses Hale's sequel, *Philip Nolan's Friends* (1876).

Brooks, Van Wyck. Introduction to *The Man Without a Country*, by Edward Everett Hale. New York: Franklin Watts, 1960. Succinctly presents a biography of the versatile, conservative, patriotic Hale, and briefly discusses the political inspiration for the story.

Hale, Edward Everett. "Philip Nolan and the 'Levant.'" *National Geographic Magazine* 16 (March, 1905): 114-116. Hale's cocky, rollicking comments on a possible location of the shipwreck of the *Levant*, a real U.S. Navy sloop-of-war that disappeared in 1860, in the Pacific Ocean east of Hawaii. Because of its disappearance, Hale felt free to use it as the fictional vessel aboard which Nolan dies in 1863.

Oxley, Beatrice. "The Man Who Wasn't There." *English Journal* 38 (September, 1949): 396-397. Explains the care with which Hale provided pseudofactual details and data concerning the life and background of his fictional Philip Nolan.

Van Doren, Carl. Introduction to *The Man Without a Country*, by Edward Everett Hale. New York: Heritage Press, 1936. Defines Hale's motive for writing this unrealistic story as fervent patriotism in the face of the jeopardy in which the nation existed at the time of the work's composition.

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