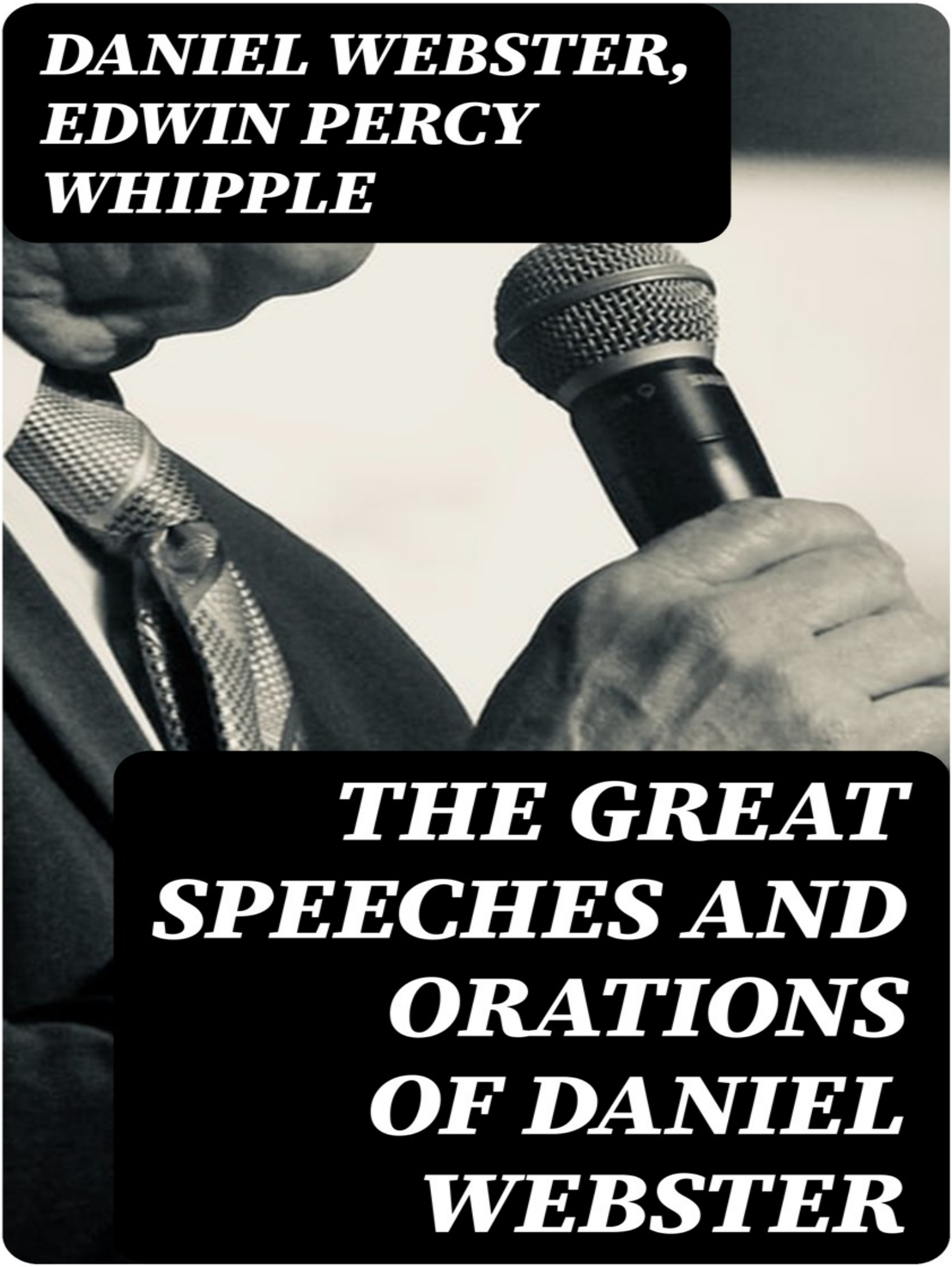
DANIEL WEBSTER, EDWIN PERCY WHIPPLE



THE GREAT SPEECHES AND ORATIONS OF DANIEL WEBSTER

Daniel Webster, Edwin Percy Whipple

The Great Speeches and Orations of Daniel Webster

With an Essay on Daniel Webster as a Master of English Style

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PREFACE.

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The object of the present volume is not to supersede the standard edition of Daniel Webster's Works, in six octavo volumes, edited by Edward Everett, and originally issued in the year 1851, by the publishers of this volume of Selections. It is rather the purpose of the present publication to call attention anew to the genius and character of Daniel Webster, as a lawyer, statesman, diplomatist, patriot, and, citizen, and, by republishing some of his prominent orations and speeches of universally acknowledged excellence, to revive public interest in the great body of his works. In the task of selection, it has been impossible to do full justice to his powers; for among the speeches omitted in this collection are to be found passages of superlative eloquence, maxims of political and moral wisdom which might be taken as mottoes for elaborate treatises on the philosophy of law and legislation, and important facts and principles which no student of history of the United States can overlook without betraying an ignorance of the great forces which influenced the legislation of the two Houses of Congress, from the time Mr. Webster first entered public life to the day of his death.

It is to be supposed that, when Mr. Everett consented to edit the six volumes of his works, Mr. Webster indicated to him the orations, speeches, and diplomatic despatches which he really thought might be of service to the public, and that he intended them as a kind of legacy,—a bequest to his countrymen.

The publishers of this volume believe that a study of Mr. Webster's mind, heart, and character, as exhibited in the selections contained in the present volume, will inevitably direct all sympathetic readers to the great body of Mr. Webster's works. Among the eminent men who have influenced legislative assemblies in Great Britain and the United States, during the past hundred and twenty years, it is curious that only two have established themselves as men of the first class in English and American literature. These two men are Edmund Burke and Daniel Webster; and it is only by the complete study of every thing which they authorized to be published under their names, that we can adequately comprehend either their position among the political forces of their time, or their rank among the great masters of English eloquence and style.

DANIEL WEBSTER AS A MASTER OF ENGLISH STYLE

THE DARTMOUTH COLLEGE CASE

Argument before the Supreme Court of the United States, at Washington, on the 10th of March, 1818.

FIRST SETTLEMENT OF NEW ENGLAND

A Discourse delivered at Plymouth, on the 22d of December, 1820.

DEFENCE OF JUDGE JAMES PRESCOTT

The closing Appeal to the Senate of Massachusetts, in Mr. Webster's
"Argument on the Impeachment of James Prescott," April 24th, 1821.

THE REVOLUTION IN GREECE

A Speech delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States, on the 19th of January, 1824.

THE TARIFF

A Speech delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States, on the 1st and 2d of April, 1824.

THE CASE OF GIBBONS AND OGDEN

An Argument made in the Case of Gibbons and Ogden, in the Supreme Court of the United States, February Term, 1824.

THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT

An Address delivered at the Laying of the Corner-Stone of the Bunker
Hill Monument at Charlestown, Massachusetts, on the 17th of June, 1825.

THE COMPLETION OF THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT

An Address delivered on Bunker Hill, on the 17th of June, 1843, on
Occasion of the Completion of the Monument.

OUR RELATIONS TO THE SOUTH AMERICAN REPUBLICS

Extracts from the Speech on "The Panama Mission," delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States, on the 14th of April, 1826.

ADAMS AND JEFFERSON

A Discourse in Commemoration of the Lives and Services of John Adams and
Thomas Jefferson, delivered in Faneuil Hall, Boston, on the 2d of
August, 1826.

THE CASE OF OGDEN AND SAUNDERS

An Argument made in the Case of Ogden and Saunders, in the Supreme Court of the United States, January Term, 1827.

THE MURDER OF CAPTAIN JOSEPH WHITE

An Argument on the Trial of John Francis Knapp, for the Murder of Joseph White, of Salem, in Essex County,

Massachusetts, on the Night of the 6th of April, 1830.

THE REPLY TO HAYNE

Second Speech on "Foot's Resolution," delivered in the Senate of the
United States, on the 26th and 27th of January, 1830.

THE CONSTITUTION NOT A COMPACT BETWEEN SOVEREIGN STATES

A Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 16th of
February, 1833, in Reply to Mr. Calhoun's Speech on the Bill "Further to
Provide for the Collection of Duties on Imports."

PUBLIC DINNER AT NEW YORK

A Speech delivered at a Public Dinner given by a large Number of
Citizens of New York, in Honor of Mr. Webster, on March 10th, 1831.

THE PRESIDENTIAL VETO OF THE UNITED STATES BANK BILL

A Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 11th of
July, 1832, on the President's Veto of the Bank Bill.

THE CHARACTER OF WASHINGTON

A Speech delivered at a Public Dinner in the City of Washington, on the 22d of February, 1832, the Centennial Anniversary of Washington's Birthday.

EXECUTIVE PATRONAGE AND REMOVALS FROM OFFICE

From a Speech delivered at the National Republican Convention, held at
Worcester (Mass.), on the 12th of October, 1832.

EXECUTIVE USURPATION

From the same Speech at Worcester.

THE NATURAL HATRED OF THE POOR TO THE RICH

From a Speech in the Senate of the United States, January 31st, 1834, on
"The Removal of the Deposits."

A REDEEMABLE PAPER CURRENCY

From a Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 22d of February, 1834.

THE PRESIDENTIAL PROTEST

A Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 7th of
May, 1834, on the subject of the President's Protest against

the
Resolution of the Senate of the 28th of March.

THE APPOINTING AND REMOVING POWER

Delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 16th of February, 1835, on the Passage of the Bill entitled "An Act to Repeal the First and Second Sections of the Act to limit the Term of Service of certain Officers therein named."

ON THE LOSS OF THE FORTIFICATION BILL IN 1835

A Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 14th of
January, 1836, on Mr. Benton's Resolutions for Appropriating the Surplus
Revenue to National Defence.

RECEPTION AT NEW YORK

A Speech delivered at Niblo's Saloon, in New York, on the 15th of March, 1837.

SLAVERY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Remarks made in the Senate of the United States, on the 10th of January,
1838, upon a Resolution moved by Mr. Clay as a Substitute for the

Resolution offered by Mr. Calhoun on the Subject of Slavery in the
District of Columbia.

THE CREDIT SYSTEM AND THE LABOR OF THE UNITED STATES

From the Second Speech on the Sub-Treasury, delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 12th of March, 1838.

REMARKS ON THE POLITICAL COURSE OF MR. CALHOUN, IN 1838

From the same Speech.

REPLY TO MR. CALHOUN

A Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 22d of
March, 1838, in Answer to Mr. Calhoun.

A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF BANKRUPTCY

From a Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 18th of May, 1840, on the proposed Amendment to the Bill establishing a Uniform System of Bankruptcy.

"THE LOG CABIN CANDIDATE"

From a Speech delivered at the great Mass Meeting at Saratoga, New York, on the 12th of August, 1840.

ADDRESS TO THE LADIES OF RICHMOND

Remarks at a Public Reception by the Ladies of Richmond, Virginia, on the 5th of October, 1840.

RECEPTION AT BOSTON

A Speech made in Faneuil Hall, on the 30th of September, 1842, at a Public Reception given to Mr. Webster, on his Return to Boston, after the Negotiation of the Treaty of Washington.

THE LANDING AT PLYMOUTH

A Speech delivered on the 22d of December, 1843, at the Public Dinner of the New England Society of New York, in Commemoration of the Landing of the Pilgrims.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AND THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG

A Speech delivered in the Supreme Court at Washington, on the 20th of
February, 1844, in the Girard Will Case.

MR. JUSTICE STORY

THE RHODE ISLAND GOVERNMENT

An Argument made in the Supreme Court of the United States, on the 27th of January, 1848, in the Dorr Rebellion Cases.

OBJECTS OF THE MEXICAN WAR

A Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 23d of
March, 1848, on the Bill from the House of Representatives for raising a
Loan of Sixteen Millions of Dollars.

EXCLUSION OF SLAVERY FROM THE TERRITORIES

Remarks made in the Senate of the United States, on the 12th of August, 1848.

SPEECH AT MARSHFIELD

Delivered at a Meeting of the Citizens of Marshfield, Mass., on the 1st of September, 1848.

JEREMIAH MASON

KOSSUTH

From a Speech delivered in Boston, on the 7th of November, 1849, at a
Festival of the Natives of New Hampshire established in Massachusetts.

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE UNION

A Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the 7th of
March, 1850.

RECEPTION AT BUFFALO

A Speech delivered before a large Assembly of the Citizens of Buffalo and the County of Erie, at a Public Reception, on the 22d of May, 1851.

THE ADDITION TO THE CAPITOL

An Address delivered at the Laying of the Corner-Stone of the Addition to the Capitol, on the 4th of July, 1851.

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THE RIGHT OF SEARCH

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THE HÜLSEMANN LETTER

DANIEL WEBSTER AS A MASTER OF ENGLISH STYLE.

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From my own experience and observation I should say that every boy, who is ready enough in spelling, grammar, geography, and arithmetic, is appalled when he is commanded to write what is termed "a composition." When he enters college the same fear follows him and the Professor of Rhetoric is a more terrible personage to his

imagination than the Professors of Greek, Latin, Mathematics, and Moral and Intellectual Philosophy. Both boys at school and young men in college show no lack of power in speaking their native language with a vehemence and fluency which almost stuns the ears of their seniors. Why, then, should they find such difficulty in writing it? When you listen to the animated talk of a bright school-boy or college student, full of a subject which really interests him, you say at once that such command of racy and idiomatic English words must of course be exhibited in his "compositions" or his "themes"; but when the latter are examined, they are commonly found to be feeble and lifeless, with hardly a thought or a word which bears any stamp of freshness or originality, and which are so inferior to his ordinary conversation, that we can hardly believe they came from the same mind.

The first quality which strikes an examiner of these exercises in English composition is their *falseness*. No boy or youth writes what he personally thinks and feels, but writes what a good boy or youth is expected to think or feel. This hypocrisy vitiates his writing from first to last, and is not absent in his "Class Oration," or in his "Speech at Commencement." I have a vivid memory of the first time the boys of my class, in a public school, were called upon to write "composition." The themes selected were the prominent moral virtues or vices. How we poor innocent urchins were tormented by the task imposed upon us! How we put more ink on our hands and faces than we shed upon the white paper on our desks! Our conclusions generally agreed with those announced by the greatest moralists of

the world. Socrates and Plato, Cicero and Seneca, Cudworth and Butler, could not have been more austerely moral than were we little rogues, as we relieved the immense exertion involved in completing a single short baby-like sentence, by shying at one companion a rule, or hurling at another a paper pellet intended to light plump on his forehead or nose. Our custom was to begin every composition with the proposition that such or such a virtue "was one of the greatest blessings we enjoy"; and this triumph of accurate statement was not discovered by our teacher to be purely mechanical, until one juvenile thinker, having avarice to deal with, declared it to be "one of the greatest evils we enjoy." The whole thing was such a piece of monstrous hypocrisy, that I once timidly suggested to the schoolmaster that it would be well to allow me to select my own subject. The request was granted; and, as narrative is the natural form of composition which a boy adopts when he has his own way, I filled, in less than half the time heretofore consumed in writing a quarter of a page, four pages of letter-paper with an account of my being in a ship taken by a pirate; of the heroic defiance I launched at the pirate captain; and the sagacity I evinced in escaping the fate of my fellow-passengers, in not being ordered to "walk the plank." The story, though trashy enough, was so much better than any of the moral essays of the other pupils, that the teacher commanded me to read it before the whole school, as an evidence of the rapid strides I had made in the art of "composition."

This falseness of thought and feeling is but too apt to characterize the writing of the student, after he has passed

from the common school to the academy or the college. The term "Sophomorical" is used to describe speeches which are full of emotion which the speaker does not feel, full of words in four or five syllables that mean nothing, and, in respect to imagery and illustrations, blazing with the cheap jewelry of rhetoric,—with those rubies and diamonds that can be purchased for a few pennies an ounce. The danger is that this "Sophomorical" style may continue to afflict the student after he has become a clergyman, a lawyer, or a legislator.

Practical men who may not be "college educated" still have the great virtue of using the few words they employ as identical with facts. When they meet a man who has half the dictionary at his disposal, and yet gives no evidence of apprehending the real import and meaning of one word among the many thousands he glibly pours forth, they naturally distrust him, as a person who does not know the vital connection of all good words with the real things they represent. Indeed, the best rule that a Professor of Rhetoric could adopt would be to insist that no student under his care should use an unusual word until he had *earned the right to use it* by making it the verbal sign of some new advance in his thinking, in his acquirements, or in his feelings. Shakspeare, the greatest of English writers, and perhaps the greatest of all writers, required fifteen thousand words to embody all that his vast exceptional intelligence acquired, thought, imagined, and discovered; and he had earned the right to use every one of them. Milton found that eight thousand words could fairly and fully represent all the power, grandeur, and creativeness of his almost seraphic soul, when he attempted to express his whole nature in a

literary form. All the words used by Shakspeare and Milton are *alive*; "cut them and they will *bleed*." But it is ridiculous for a college student to claim that he has the mighty resources of the English language at his supreme disposal, when he has not verified, by his own thought, knowledge, and experience, one in a hundred of the words he presumptuously employs.

Now Daniel Webster passed safely through all the stages of the "Sophomoric" disease of the mind, as he passed safely through the measles, the chicken-pox, and other eruptive maladies incident to childhood and youth. The process, however, by which he purified his style from this taint, and made his diction at last as robust and as manly, as simple and as majestic, as the nature it expressed, will reward a little study.

The mature style of Webster is perfect of its kind, being in words the express image of his mind and character,—plain, terse, clear, forcible; and rising from the level of lucid statement and argument into passages of superlative eloquence only when his whole nature is stirred by some grand sentiment of freedom, patriotism, justice, humanity, or religion, which absolutely lifts him, by its own inherent force and inspiration, to a region above that in which his mind habitually lives and moves. At the same time it will be observed that these thrilling passages, which the boys of two generations have ever been delighted to declaim in their shrillest tones, are strictly illustrative of the main purpose of the speech in which they appear. They are not mere purple patches of rhetoric, loosely stitched on the homespun gray of the reasoning, but they seem to be

inwoven with it and to be a vital part of it. Indeed we can hardly decide, in reading these magnificent bursts of eloquence in connection with what precedes and follows them, whether the effect is due to the logic of the orator becoming suddenly morally impassioned, or to his moral passion becoming suddenly logical. What gave Webster his immense influence over the opinions of the people of New England was, first, his power of so "putting things" that everybody could understand his statements; secondly, his power of so framing his arguments that all the steps, from one point to another, in a logical series, could be clearly apprehended by every intelligent farmer or mechanic who had a thoughtful interest in the affairs of the country; and thirdly, his power of inflaming the sentiment of patriotism in all honest and well-intentioned men by overwhelming appeals to that sentiment, so that, after convincing their understandings, he clinched the matter by sweeping away their wills.

Perhaps to these sources of influence may be added another which many eminent statesmen have lacked. With all his great superiority to average men in force and breadth of mind, he had a genuine respect for the intellect, as well as for the manhood, of average men. He disdained the ignoble office of misleading the voters he aimed to instruct; and the farmers and mechanics who read his speeches felt ennobled when they found that the greatest statesman of the country frankly addressed them, as man to man, without pluming himself on his exceptional talents and accomplishments. Up to the crisis of 1850, he succeeded in domesticating himself at most of the pious, moral, and

intelligent firesides of New England. Through his speeches he seemed to be almost bodily present wherever the family, gathered in the evening around the blazing hearth, discussed the questions of the day. It was not the great Mr. Webster, "the godlike Daniel," who had a seat by the fire. It was a person who talked *to* them, and argued *with* them, as though he was "one of the folks,"—a neighbor dropping in to make an evening call; there was not the slightest trace of assumption in his manner; but suddenly, after the discussion had become a little tiresome, certain fiery words would leap from his lips and make the whole household spring to their feet, ready to sacrifice life and property for "the Constitution and the Union." That Webster was thus a kind of invisible presence in thousands of homes where his face was never seen, shows that his rhetoric had caught an element of power from his early recollections of the independent, hard-headed farmers whom he met when a boy in his father's house. The bodies of these men had become tough and strong in their constant struggle to force scanty harvests from an unfruitful soil, which only persistent toil could compel to yield any thing; and their brains, though forcible and clear, were still not stored with the important facts and principles which it was his delight to state and expound. In truth, he ran a race with the demagogues of his time in an attempt to capture such men as these, thinking them the very backbone of the country. Whether he succeeded or failed, it would be vain to hunt through his works to find a single epithet in which he mentioned them with contempt. He was as incapable of insulting one member of this landed democracy,—sterile as most of their

acres were,—as of insulting the memory of his father, who belonged to this class.

The late Mr. Peter Harvey used to tell with much zest a story illustrating the hold which these early associations retained on Webster's mind throughout his life. Some months after his removal from Portsmouth to Boston, a servant knocked at his chamber door late in an April afternoon in the year 1817, with the announcement that three men were in the drawing-room who insisted on seeing him. Webster was overwhelmed with fatigue, the result of his Congressional labors and his attendance on courts of law; and he had determined, after a night's sleep, to steal a vacation in order to recruit his energies by a fortnight's fishing and hunting. He suspected that the persons below were expectant clients; and he resolved, in descending the stairs, not to accept their offer. He found in the parlor three plain, country-bred, honest-looking men, who were believers in the innocence of Levi and Laban Kenniston, accused of robbing a certain Major Goodridge on the highway, and whose trial would take place at Ipswich the next day. They could find, they said, no member of the Essex bar who would undertake the defence of the Kennistons, and they had come to Boston to engage the services of Mr. Webster. Would he go down to Ipswich and defend the accused? Mr. Webster stated that he could not and would not go. He had made arrangements for an excursion to the sea-side; the state of his health absolutely demanded a short withdrawal from all business cares; and that no fee could tempt him to abandon his purpose. "Well," was the reply of one of the delegation, "it isn't the fee that we think of at all, though we

are willing to pay what you may charge; but it's justice. Here are two New Hampshire men who are believed in Exeter, and Newbury, and Newburyport, and Salem to be rascals; but we in Newmarket believe, in spite of all evidence against them, that they are the victims of some conspiracy. We think you are the man to unravel it, though it seems a good deal tangled even to us. Still we suppose that men whom we know to have been honest all their lives can't have become such desperate rogues all of a sudden." "But I cannot take the case," persisted Mr. Webster; "I am worn to death with over-work. I have not had any real sleep for forty-eight hours. Besides, I know nothing of the case." "It's hard, I can see," continued the leader of the delegation; "but you're a New Hampshire man, and the *neighbors* thought that you would not allow two innocent New Hampshire men, however humble they may be in their circumstances, to suffer for lack of your skill in exposing the wiles of this scoundrel Goodridge. The *neighbors* all desire you to take the case." That phrase "the neighbors" settled the question. No resident of a city knows what the phrase means. But Webster knew it in all the intense significance of its meaning. His imagination flew back to the scattered homesteads of a New England village, where mutual sympathy and assistance are the necessities, as they are the commonplaces, of village life. The phrase remotely meant to him the combination of neighbors to resist an assault of Indian savages, or to send volunteers to the war which wrought the independence of the nation. It specially meant to him the help of neighbor to neighbor, in times of sickness, distress, sorrow, and calamity. In his childhood and

boyhood the Christian question, "Who is my neighbor?" was instantly solved the moment a matron in good health heard that the wife of Farmer A, or Farmer B, was stricken down by fever, and needed a friendly nurse to sit by her bedside all night, though she had herself been toiling hard all day. Every thing philanthropists mean when they talk of brotherhood and sisterhood among men and women was condensed in that homely phrase, "the neighbors." "Oh!" said Webster, ruefully, "if the neighbors think I may be of service, of course I must go";—and, with his three companions, he was soon seated in the stage for Ipswich, where he arrived at about midnight. The court met the next morning; and his management of the case is still considered one of his masterpieces of legal acumen and eloquence. His cross-examination of Goodridge rivalled, in mental torture, every thing martyrologists tell us of the physical agony endured by the victim of the inquisitor, when roasted before slow fires or stretched upon the rack. Still it seemed impossible to assign any motive for the self-robbery and the self-maiming of Goodridge, which any judge or jury would accept as reasonable. The real motive has never been discovered. Webster argued that the motive might have originated in a desire to escape from the payment of his debts, or in a whimsical ambition to have his name sounded all over Maine and Massachusetts as the heroic tradesman who had parted with his money only when overpowered by superior force. It is impossible to say what motives may impel men who are half-crazed by vanity, or half-demonized by malice. Coleridge describes Iago's hatred of Othello as the hatred which a base nature instinctively feels for a noble

one, and his assignment of motives for his acts as the mere "motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity."

Whatever may have been Goodridge's motive in his attempt to ruin the innocent men he falsely accused, it is certain that Webster saved these men from the unjust punishment of an imputed crime. Only the skeleton of his argument before the jury has been preserved; but what we have of it evidently passed under his revision. He knew that the plot of Goodridge had been so cunningly contrived, that every man of the twelve before him, whose verdict was to determine the fate of his clients, was inwardly persuaded of their guilt. Some small marked portions of the money which Goodridge swore he had on his person on the night of the pretended robbery were found in their house. Circumstantial evidence brought their guilt with a seemingly irresistible force literally "home" to them. It was the conviction of the leaders of the Essex bar that no respectable lawyer could appear in their defence without becoming, in some degree, their accomplice. But Webster, after damaging the character of the prosecutor by his stern cross-examination, addressed the jury, not as an advocate bearing down upon them with his arguments and appeals, but rather as a thirteenth juryman, who had cosily introduced himself into their company, and was arguing the case with them after they had retired for consultation among themselves. The simplicity of the language employed is not more notable than the power evinced in seizing the main points on which the question of guilt or innocence turned. At every quiet but deadly stab aimed at the theory of the prosecution, he is careful to remark, that "it is for the jury to say under their

oaths" whether such inconsistencies or improbabilities should have any effect on their minds. Every strong argument closes with the ever-recurring phrase, "It is for the jury to say"; and, at the end, the jury, thoroughly convinced, said, "Not guilty." The Kennistons were vindicated; and the public, which had been almost unanimous in declaring them fit tenants for the State prison, soon blamed the infatuation which had made them the accomplices of a villain in hunting down two unoffending citizens, and of denouncing every lawyer who should undertake their defence as a legal rogue.

The detected scoundrel fled from the place where his rascality had been exposed, to seek some other locality, where the mingled jeers and curses of his dupes would be unheard. Some twenty years after the trial, Mr. Webster, while travelling in Western New York, stopped at an obscure village tavern to get a glass of water. The hand of the man behind the bar, who gave it to him, trembled violently; and Webster, wondering at the cause, looked the fellow steadily in the eye. He recognized Goodridge, and understood at once that Goodridge had just before recognized *him*. Not a word passed between the felon and the intrepid advocate who had stripped his villany of all its plausible disguises; but what immense meaning must there have been in the swift interchange of feeling as their eyes met! Mr. Webster entered his carriage and proceeded on his journey; but Goodridge,—who has since ever heard of him?

This story is a slight digression, but it illustrates that hold on reality, that truth to fact, which was one of the sources of the force and simplicity of Mr. Webster's mature style. He, however, only obtained these good qualities of rhetoric by

long struggles with constant temptations, in his early life, to use resounding expressions and flaring images which he had not earned the right to use. His Fourth of July oration at Hanover, when he was only eighteen, and his college addresses, must have been very bad in their diction if we can judge of them by the style of his private correspondence at the time. The verses he incorporates in his letters are deformed by all the faults of false thinking and borrowed expression which characterized contemporary American imitators of English imitators of Pope and Gray. Think of the future orator, lawyer, and senator writing, even at the age of twenty, such balderdash as this!

"And Heaven grant me, whatever luck betide,
Be fame or fortune given or denied,
Some cordial friend to meet my warm desire,
Honest as John and good as Nehemiah."

In reading such couplets we are reminded of the noted local poet of New Hampshire (or was it Maine?) who wrote "The Shepherd's Songs," and some of whose rustic lines still linger in the memory to be laughed at, such, for instance, as these:—

"This child who perished in the fire,—
His father's name was Nehemiah."

Or these:—

"Napoleon, that great ex_ile_,
Who scoured all Europe like a file."

And Webster's prose was then almost as bad as his verse, though it was modelled on what was considered fine writing at the opening of the present century. He writes to his dearest student friends in a style which is profoundly

insincere, though the thoughts are often good, and the fact of his love for his friends cannot be doubted. He had committed to memory Fisher Ames's noble speech on the British Treaty, and had probably read some of Burke's great pamphlets on the French Revolution. The stripling statesman aimed to talk in their high tone and in their richly ornamented language, before he had earned the right even to mimic their style of expression. There is a certain swell in some of his long sentences, and a kind of good sense in some of his short ones, which suggest that the writer is a youth endowed with elevation as well as strength of nature, and is only making a fool of himself because he thinks he must make a fool of himself in order that he may impress his correspondents with the idea that he is a master of the horrible jargon which all bright young fellows at that time innocently supposed to constitute eloquence. Thus, in February, 1800, he writes thus to his friend Bingham: "In my melancholy moments I presage the most dire calamities. I already see in my imagination the time when the banner of civil war shall be unfurled; when Discord's hydra form shall set up her hideous yell, and from her hundred mouths shall howl destruction through our empire; and when American blood shall be made to flow in rivers by American swords! But propitious Heaven prevent such dreadful calamities! Internally secure, we have nothing to fear. Let Europe pour her embattled millions around us, let her thronged cohorts cover our shores, from St. Lawrence to St. Marie's, yet United Columbia shall stand unmoved; the manes of her deceased Washington shall guard the liberties of his country, and direct the sword of freedom in the day of

battle." And think of this, not in a Fourth of July oration, but in a private letter to an intimate acquaintance! The bones of Daniel Webster might be supposed to have moved in their coffin at the thought that this miserable trash—so regretted and so amply atoned for—should have ever seen the light; but it is from such youthful follies that we measure the vigor of the man who outgrows them.

It was fortunate that Webster, after he was admitted to the bar, came into constant collision, in the courts of New Hampshire, with one of the greatest masters of the common law that the country has ever produced, Jeremiah Mason. It has been said that Mr. Mason educated Webster into a lawyer by opposing him. He did more than this; he cured Webster of all the florid foolery of his early rhetorical style. Of all men that ever appeared before a jury, Mason was the most pitiless realist, the most terrible enemy of what is—in a slang term as vile almost as itself—called "Hifalutin"; and woe to the opposing lawyer who indulged in it! He relentlessly pricked all rhetorical bubbles, reducing them at once to the small amount of ignominious suds, which the orator's breath had converted into colored globes, having some appearance of stability as well as splendor. Six feet and seven inches high, and corpulent in proportion, this inexorable representative of good sense and sound law stood, while he was arguing a case, "quite near to the jury," says Webster,—"so near that he might have laid his finger on the foreman's nose; and then he talked to them in a plain conversational way, in short sentences, and using no word that was not level to the comprehension of the least educated man on the panel. This led me," he adds, "to

examine my own style, and I set about reforming it altogether."

Mr. Mason was what the lawyers call a "cause-getting man," like Sir James Scarlett, Brougham's great opponent at the English bar. It was said of Scarlett, that he gained his verdicts because there were twelve Scarletts in the jury-box; and Mason so contrived to blend his stronger mind with the minds of the jurymen, that his thoughts appeared to be theirs, expressed in the same simple words and quaint illustrations which they would have used if asked to give their opinions on the case. It is to be added, that Mason's almost cynical disregard of ornament in his addresses to the jury gave to an opponent like Webster the advantage of availing himself of those real ornaments of speech which spring directly from a great heart and imagination. Webster, without ever becoming so supremely plain and simple in style as Mason, still strove to emulate, in his legal statements and arguments, the homely, robust common-sense of his antagonist; but, wherever the case allowed of it, he brought into the discussion an element of *un*-common sense, the gift of his own genius and individuality, which Mason could hardly comprehend sufficiently to controvert, but which was surely not without its effect in deciding the verdicts of juries.

It is probable that Webster was one of the few lawyers and statesmen that Mason respected. Mason's curt, sharp, "vitriolic" sarcasms on many men who enjoyed a national reputation, and who were popularly considered the lights of their time, still remain in the memories of his surviving associates, as things which may be quoted in conversation,