

ECLECTIC ENGLISH CLASSICS

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR
SELF-RELIANCE
COMPENSATION

BY
RALPH WALDO EMERSON



AMERICAN · BOOK · COMPANY
NEW YORK · CINCINNATI · CHICAGO

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INTRODUCTION.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, poet, essayist, and philosopher, was born in Boston, May 25, 1803. He was the second of five sons of the Rev. William Emerson, minister of the First (Congregational) Church in Boston. His mother was Ruth Haskins, a woman of strong character and superior mental abilities. He had a minister for an ancestor for eight generations back, either on the paternal or the maternal side. Thus he inherited his spiritual and intellectual tendencies from a long line of distinguished progenitors. His aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, a woman of rare intellectual attainments, was one of his early companions and exerted a remarkable influence over his development.

Emerson began his studies at the public grammar school at the age of eight, and four years later he attended the Latin School. In 1817 he entered Harvard. He was not distinguished for proficiency in the studies of the curriculum, but he was superior to most of his classmates in his knowledge of general literature. He was especially interested in the study of Greek and history, and much of his time was spent in the library. He graduated in 1821.

For five years after leaving college Emerson taught school. In 1823 he began to study for the ministry under Dr. Channing. He was "approbated to preach" in 1826 by the Middlesex

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ECLECTIC ENGLISH CLASSICS

ARNOLD'S SOHRAB AND RUSTUM	20
BURKE'S SPEECH ON CONCILIATION	20
BURNS'S POEMS—Selections	20
BYRON'S POEMS—Selections	25
CARLYLE'S ESSAY ON ROBERT BURNS	20
CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES	25
COLERIDGE'S RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER	20
DEFOE'S HISTORY OF THE PLAGUE IN LONDON	40
DE QUINCEY'S REVOLT OF THE TARTARS	20
DRYDEN'S PALAMON AND ARCITE	20
EMERSON'S AMERICAN SCHOLAR, SELF-RELIANCE, COMPEN- SATION	20
FRANKLIN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY	35
GEORGE ELIOT'S SILAS MARNER	20
GOLDSMITH'S VICAR OF WAKEFIELD	35
GRAY'S POEMS—Selections	20
IRVING'S SKETCH-BOOK—Selections	20
IRVING'S TALES OF A TRAVELER	50
MACAULAY'S SECOND ESSAY ON CHATHAM	20
MACAULAY'S ESSAY ON MILTON	20
MACAULAY'S ESSAY ON ADDISON	20
MACAULAY'S LIFE OF JOHNSON	20
MILTON'S L'ALLEGRO, IL PENSEROSO, COMUS, LYCIDAS	20
MILTON'S PARADISE LOST—Books 1 and 2	20
POPE'S HOMER'S ILLIAD—Books I, VI, XXII, XXIV	20
POPE'S RAPE OF THE LOCK AND ESSAY ON MAN	20
SCOTT'S IVANHOE	50
SCOTT'S MARMION	20
SCOTT'S LADY OF THE LAKE	20
SCOTT'S THE ABBOT	60
SCOTT'S WOODSTOCK	60
SHAKESPEARE'S JULIUS CAESAR	20
SHAKESPEARE'S TWELFTH NIGHT	20
SHAKESPEARE'S MERCHANT OF VENICE	20
SHAKESPEARE'S MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM	20
SHAKESPEARE'S AS YOU LIKE IT	20
SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH	20
SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET	20
SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY—PERS	20
SOUTHEY'S LIFE OF NELSON	20
TENNYSON'S PRINCESS	20
WEBSTER'S BUNKER HILL ORATIONS	20
WORDSWORTH'S POEMS—Selections	20

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