

**HEATH'S ENGLISH
CLASSICS. BURKER'S
SPEECH ON CONCILIATION
WITH AMERICA, 1775**

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Heath's English Classics. Burker's Speech on Conciliation with America, 1775 by A. J. George

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A. J. GEORGE

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BY A. J. GEORGE, A.M.

Wordsworth's Praude. With Notes.

Selections from Wordsworth. With Notes.

**Wordsworth's Prefaces and Essays on Poetry.
With Notes.**

**Burke's Speeches on the American War, and Letter
to the Sheriffs of Bristol. With Notes.**

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I. The Highlands. II. The Border.

Heath's English Classics

BURKE'S
SPEECH ON CONCILIATION WITH
AMERICA

1775

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

A. J. GEORGE, A.M.

INSTRUCTOR IN RHETORIC AND ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE
NEWTON, MASS., HIGH SCHOOL

"Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom"

BOSTON, U.S.A.

D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS

1898

TO
THOMAS EMERSON
IN MEMORY OF PLEASANT ASSOCIATIONS

"BLEST Statesman He, whose Mind's unselfish will
Leaves him at ease among grand thoughts: whose eye
Sees that, apart from magnanimity,
Wisdom exists not; nor the humbler skill
Of Prudence, disentangling good and ill
With patient care. What tho' assaults run high,
They daunt not him who holds his ministry,
Resolute, at all hazards, to fulfil
Its duties; prompt to move, but firm to wait;
Knowing, things rashly sought are rarely found;
That, for the functions of an ancient State —
Strong by her charters, free because imbound,
Servant of Providence, not slave of Fate —
Perilous is sweeping change, all chance unsound."

PREFACE.

WHEN we study the history of those nations which have given to the world models of art in literature, we are surprised often at the meagreness of the literature of oratory in these nations. Numerous as are the occasions when great audiences have been moved to thought and action by the words of a leader, very few are the instances where these words have been so treasured by time that they hold a place among the great classics; whereas the literature of poetry in the same nations is abundant in evidence of immortality. This apparent discrimination in favor of the poet is evidently due to the fact that the occasional oratory, effective as it may have been at the time, did not approach near enough to great poetry to possess the element which the Germans call *unendlichkeit*, infinitude, or universality; it did not rise out of the limitations of time and place into the sphere of great truths where all art must live and move and have its being.

It is interesting and profitable to compare the poetry of oratory with the oratory of poetry. Such a study reveals the kinship of poet and orator; that in the infancy of literary art the two are one, in virtue of the shaping and transforming power of imagination, — “the vision and the faculty divine,” — which protests against the unreality of a life in which the senses are supreme.

In that distant past, when our Saxon forefathers — story-loving, story-telling people —

“Went about their gravest deeds
Like noble boys at play,”

poetry, philosophy, and oratory were born from a common parent; they have now wandered so far from their old home that they hardly recognize it; nor do they treat each other as children of one household. The Gleeman stood forth in the assembly of the tribe on the forest hill-tops—or in the mead-hall hung with glittering armor, shield, spear, and coat of mail — and tuned his harp and voice to the wild passion of victory, or to the pathetic wail of defeat; or with eager joy sang the praise of some hero, strong in body and great in soul, and wove a tale that inspired his listeners to grasp their armor with a determination to do and to be, as he uttered that note of freedom, when

“Woe, woe to tyrants! from his lyre
Broke threateningly in sparkles dire
Of fierce, vindictive song.”

In these modest, sincere, artless, and impassioned songs we have the secret of the poet, the philosopher, and the orator; the secret which baffles analysis and defies definition. These ballads — sung *by* men whose only motive for singing was to reveal bravery and nobility, sung *of* men whose interest in life was loyalty and trueheartedness — still remain models of

“Truth-breathed music, soul-like lays
Not of vain-glory born, nor love of praise.”

By stimulating curiosity, or a desire to know; obedience, or a desire to do; and admiration, or a desire to become; these

unknown singers open wide the doors which lead to the kingdom of life and art. They seem to anticipate Browning's *Abt Vogler*, who sang :—

" Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear;
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and the woe;
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason, and welcome: 'tis we musicians know."

When life becomes "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought"; when the vigor and spontaneity of youth are lost in an over-refined civilization, fortunate are we if we listen to the voice of the prophets who cry,

" Art has truth, take refuge there,"

and seeking these well-springs of health and sweetness, there find comfort and peace,—

" For there is shed
On spirits that have long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world."

On British soil literary art revealed itself naturally and spontaneously in the form of poetry—lyric, epic, and dramatic; and these forms reached perfection before prose—the essay, the novel, and the oration—had given signs of more than a germinal existence. This was the inevitable order with a people whose life was the free, adventurous, and picturesque activity of childhood and youth. There is much in the character of the genial outlaw, Robin Hood, to suggest the English man of action before the seventeenth century.

" For why?—because the good old rule
Sufficeth them, the simple plan,
That they should take, who have the power,
And they should keep who can."