

**SELECT ESSAYS OF MACAULAY:  
MILTON, BUNYAN, JOHNSON,  
GOLDSMITH, MADAME  
D'ARBLAY**

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Select Essays of Macaulay: Milton, Bunyan, Johnson, Goldsmith, Madame D'Arblay by Samuel Thurber

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**SAMUEL THURBER**

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA  
SELECT

ESSAYS OF MACAULAY

MILTON, BUNYAN, JOHNSON, GOLDSMITH,  
MADAME D'ARBLAY

EDITED BY

SAMUEL THURBER

*Boston*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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To be perfectly adapted for reading and study in the class-room, a selection from our literature must meet these conditions: it must be interesting, both in matter and in manner, to the young persons for whom it is intended; it must have a genuinely important content, that is, its subject must be worthy of serious attention and must promise a substantial gain in knowledge; it must be a masterpiece of English, a model of clearness, simplicity, and vigor.

The literary essays of Macaulay not only fulfil these conditions, but they offer other advantages for school-room study which render them, for a certain stage of the high-school course, perhaps the most eligible prose writings in our literature. Macaulay's reading had been wonderfully comprehensive, and his memory retained the results of this reading in a manner unexampled among modern writers. Hence he illustrates his meaning, as he develops his subject, with constant allusion and citation, challenging his reader with comparisons, and never suffering him to relax his attention. His paragraphs are full of names or of suggestions of names. He assumes that his reader has the same acquaintance with the older literature as himself. To catch instantly the entire pertinency and appositeness of every allusion of this writer would require that the reader should him-

self be endowed with equal gifts and possessed of equal stores. The reader of Macaulay must often stop and think; he must summon up all his historical and literary memories; often he must inaugurate fresh reading under the stimulus of an off-hand citation that evidently was deemed by the author to throw a flood of light on the subject in hand.

While, therefore, many writers are interesting in their several ways, Macaulay's way lies peculiarly in the direction of provocation to further examination both of his main topics and of his incidental references. An interested reader always reads concentrically; that is, with some nucleus about which books and authors group themselves with more or less mutual relation. Such a centre is sure to be found in one or another essay of Macaulay. Each essay requires at once certain further research. The other essays are soon found to help wonderfully towards the understanding of the one first read. This reading must be done with pencil in hand. The reader's own notes thus become his all-sufficient guide in choosing his next books. Thus reading becomes organic, having a principle of structure, a clear aim and purpose, instead of being amorphous, with here a book and there a book picked up by chance or at the advice of another person. For example, the essays of Macaulay touching eighteenth-century themes suggest an immense range of possible reading of a most interesting character. The stimulus which these essays give to such reading is far more potent than the pages of histories of literature could be, for the reason that in the essays we see and feel the effects of reading upon the culture and the power of a writer, while the histories give us only exter-



nal facts. The young reader is apt to ask for a list of books to read, and the old adviser is often too willing to accede to the request. But prearranged lists of books are fatal to inner, spontaneous interest. No one reads through a list except under duress. Not a list of items to be checked off, but a centre, a starting-point, is the true gift of the school-room Mentor to his learners. The lines of progress that radiate from a good centre are infinite both in their number and in their extent. All good reading is gradually included within their reach. The atoms of acquisition come in this way to cohere and to take shape in well-rounded culture.

For yet another reason Macaulay is a writer peculiarly stimulating to youth: he is himself always a youth in the fervor and the intensity of his sympathies. What he admires he admires extremely, and what he hates he hates with most cordial hatred. It is usual to say that he goes too far, and praises too highly, or depreciates more than is fair. It is plain, however, that were Macaulay's feelings less ardently enlisted in his expositions, these expositions would tend to approach the commonplace, and would never have become the power in literature that they are. It is impossible to conceive an earnest and moving piece of writing whose chief concern should be to balance praise and blame, and show up merits and demerits in equal measure. Macaulay's function in literature was not cold criticism. He was far removed from indifference towards the persons and the things he describes. His service was to arouse in English readers an interest in the great events of their history and their literature. He is the most popular of writers. Nor will it be said that his judgments, though

often expressed in strong language, are wrong and perverted judgments. For youthful readers he may be accepted as a safe guide. His exaggerated expressions are never intended to conceal insufficiency of knowledge. He never indulges in mere conventional phrasing, the besetting sin of young and ambitious writers. He is absolutely sincere and original. Familiarity with such a writer during the period of life when habits are forming must be altogether wholesome.

The English teacher will naturally find an advantage in reading with his class selections that discuss his own especial theme. As lessons in literary history, as well as lessons in English composition, these studies will be fruitful and memorable. In connection with the incidental researches which they suggest, they will constitute an opportunity for the acquisition of knowledge, and for the general discipline of the taste that, from the pedagogic point of view, lacks absolutely no element of desirableness.

Such reading as is here offered the young student must be done as work, not as mere amusement. The pencil must be kept in constant use, and the note-book must be always at hand. The student must be his own annotator. No more in reading a piece of English than in working out an algebra lesson should the learner expect to have his work done for him. Only what he earns will he ever possess, though what he borrows from another, or has given him, may meet the requirements of an examination.

No pedagogic maxim can be adduced that shall favor giving the learner results without leading him through the processes through which the results were obtained.

Results without research are dead and useless. Research without results is excellent and vital, because always accompanied with hope. Notes are usually a mere incubus upon interest. They put an obstacle in the way of the teacher, who would like to exercise his skill by leading his pupils through the various stages of growing curiosity and zealous search up to the consummation of successful finding. Those editors who steal from the teacher his opportunity of teaching are really his worst foes. Strange ideas of the pedagogic province seem to be held by annotators who try to tell the pupil everything, as if all the teacher had to do was to ask questions and get things told again, — *re-cited*.

As there is appended to the present selection of the essays of Macaulay a body of "notes," the annotator desires to explain exactly what ground these notes cover, and for what purpose they were prepared. In nearly every case where a note appears, it will be found to ask a question or to suggest a bit of research, with a hint as to the direction in which the research must be made. In no instance is a note given where the needed investigation is obvious and can be readily planned. That any notes at all of this kind are given is hereby confessed to be, so far forth, a trenching on the proper field of the teacher, whose duty it is to prescribe tasks and furnish the needful helps for their performance; and the annotator accordingly offers his apologies to those teachers who find his suggestions superfluous, and he would rejoice to be able to think that all teachers belonged to this class. On the proper field of the pupil, however, he has not trenched. If, like a visitor to the class-room, he has asked a few ques-