

**MAYNARD'S ENGLISH
CLASSIC SERIES. -
NO. 44: THE BUNKER HILL
MONUMENT ORATIONS**

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Maynard's English Classic Series. - No. 44: The Bunker Hill Monument Orations by Daniel Webster

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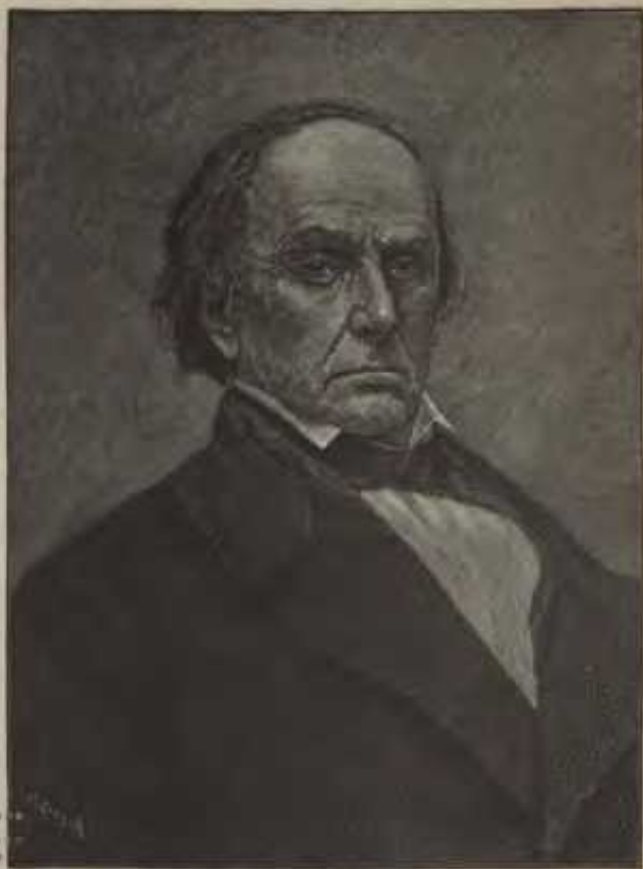
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DANIEL WEBSTER

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1844
1845
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THE
BUNKER HILL MONUMENT
ORATIONS.

THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT. (1825.)
COMPLETION OF THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT. (1843.)

BY
DANIEL WEBSTER.

WITH
INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

EDITED BY
ALBERT F. BLAISDELL.

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LIFE OF DANIEL WEBSTER.

DANIEL WEBSTER, one of the greatest orators and statesmen that this country ever produced, was born in the town of Salisbury (now known as Franklin), New Hampshire, on the 18th of January, 1782. His father, Ebenezer Webster, was a distinguished soldier and officer in the Revolutionary War. After the war, he moved with his large family into what was then the savage wilds of New Hampshire. He was a man of little book-learning, but with his strong mind and vigorous frame he became a sort of intellectual leader in his neighborhood. He was appointed a "side-judge" for the county, a place of considerable influence in those days. His great aim was to educate his children to the utmost of his limited ability. Captain Webster married Abigail Eastman for a second wife. She was a woman of more than ordinary intellect, and possessed a force of character which was felt throughout the humble circle in which she moved. She was ambitious for her two sons, Ezekiel and Daniel, that they should excel. The distinction attained by both, and especially by Daniel, may well be traced in part to her early promptings and judicious guidance. In the last year of the Revolutionary War, in the humble house which his father had built in the woods on the outskirts of civilization, Daniel Webster was born. During his childhood, he was sickly and delicate, and gave no promise of the robust and vigorous frame which he had in his manhood. It may well be supposed that his early opportunities for education were very scanty. Because he was frail and delicate, Daniel's parents took great pains to send him to the winter schools, oftentimes three miles away from home. As an older half-brother said, "Dan was sent to school that he might get to know as much as the other boys." It is probable that the best part of his early education was derived from the judicious and experienced father, and the resolute, affectionate and ambitious mother. In those days books were very scarce and Daniel eagerly read every book he could find. He was fond of poetry and at the age of twelve could repeat from memory the greater part of Watts' "Psalms and Hymns." In his "Autobiography" he says: "I remember that my father brought home from some of the lower towns Pope's *Essay on Man*, published in a sort of pamphlet. I took it, and very soon could repeat it from beginning to end. We had so few books, that to read them once or twice was nothing. We thought they were all to be got by heart." At the age of fourteen, he was sent to Phillips Academy, in Exeter, N. H., but remained only nine months on account of the poverty of

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the family. The future orator found his greatest trouble at Exeter in declaiming. "Many a piece," says Webster "did I commit to memory, and recite and rehearse, in my own room, over and over again; yet when the day came, when the school collected to hear declamations, when my name was called, and I saw all eyes turned to my seat, I could not raise myself from it. When the occasion was over, I went home and wept bitter tears of mortification." He now studied with a clergyman at home and entered Dartmouth College in 1797. The familiar story of how young Webster "worked his way" through college and the self-denial and rigid economy he exercised is told in his "Autobiography." After graduation, hard pushed for money while studying law, how he took charge of an academy at Fryeburg, Maine, for one dollar a day. He paid his board by copying deeds and sent his spare money to help his brother Ezekiel through Dartmouth. Webster was admitted to the bar in 1805, began practice in Boscawen, and afterwards in Portsmouth. He took a high rank in his profession at once, and, in 1812, was elected a member of Congress. In 1816, he declined a re-election and removed to Boston. In the next seven years he worked long and hard in his profession and soon established his reputation as one of the ablest lawyers of the land. In 1822 he was again sent to Congress and in 1828 he was chosen a Senator. He remained in the Senate for twelve years, when he was appointed Secretary of State by President Harrison. In 1845 he returned to the Senate, and remained until 1850, when he became Secretary of State under President Fillmore. He resigned his office early in 1852 on account of his health and retired to his home by the seaside at Marshfield, Mass., where he died October 24 of the same year.

Daniel Webster is universally acknowledged to be the foremost of constitutional lawyers and of parliamentary debaters, and without a peer in the highest realms of classic and patriotic oratory. Many of his orations, as the famous Bunker Hill Monument orations, the eulogy upon Adams and Jefferson, the speech upon the trial of the murderers of Capt. Joseph White, the "Reply to Hayne," and others are universally accepted as classics in modern oratory. Physically, Webster was a magnificent specimen of a man. Such a form, such a face, such a presence, are rarely given to any man. Webster's manner had a wonderful impressiveness that intimacy never wore off. His gracious bearing and gentle courtesy made him the delight of every person he ever met. His oratory was in perfect keeping with the man, gracious, logical, majestic, and often sublime. He was by nature free, generous and lavish in his manner of living. As a result his own private finances were often much embarrassed. His wealthy admirers often tided him over his financial straits. Hampered as he was financially, he never sullied his great fame or enriched himself or others by political *jobbery*.

DANIEL WEBSTER, 1782-1852.

"WHO does not rank him as a great American author? Against the maxim of Mr. Fox his speeches read well, and yet were good speeches—great speeches in delivery. So critically do they keep the right side of the line which parts eloquence from rhetoric, and so far do they rise above the penury of mere debate, that the general reason of the country has enshrined them at once, and forever, among our classics."
— *Rufus Choate's Eulogy on Webster.*

"READ his works, and feel what a blessing civil and religious liberty is. Read them and feel what a blessing it is to live under a free government. Read them; and if, which God forbid, the obligations of the Constitution of your country hang loosely on you, rivet them with his thoughts. His giant efforts are embalmed in our school books, enshrined with the speeches of Burke, Sheridan, and Chatham, to animate and inspire the youth of our country."

"HE has poured the measureless wealth of his own intellect into all the schools and colleges of the land. There is scarcely a child in the country, twelve years old, whose mind has not been enriched by his speeches and orations. His speeches are destined to do more to promote the great objects of education, to form correct habits of thinking and speaking, and to put the rising American race in possession of a chastened, eloquent, powerful, literature, than any other instrumentality of the nineteenth century."—*Rev. Hubbard Winslow.*

"HIS speech had strength, force and dignity; his composition was clear, rational, strengthened by a powerful imagination—in his great orations 'the lightning of passion running along the iron links of argument.' The one lesson which they teach to the youth of America is self-respect, a manly consciousness of power, expressed simply and directly—to look for the substantial qualities of the thing, and utter them distinctly as they are felt intensely. This was the sum of the art which Webster used in his orations."—*E. A. Duyckinck.*

"WEBSTER'S style is remarkable for clearness of statement. It is singularly emphatic. It is impressive rather than brilliant, and occasionally rises to absolute grandeur. It is evidently formed on the higher English models; and the reader conjectures his love of Milton from the noble simplicity of his language. Independent of their logical and rhetorical merit, these orations are invaluable from the nationality of their tone and spirit. They awaken patriotic reflection and sentiment, and are better adapted to warn, to enlighten, and to cheer the consciousness of the citizen, than any American works, of a didactic kind, yet produced."—*H. T. Tuckerman.*

"HE was probably the grandest looking man of his time. Wherever he went, men turned to gaze at him; and he could not enter a room without having every eye fastened upon him. His face was very striking, both in form and color. The eyebrow, the eye, and the dark and deep socket in which it glowed, were full of power. His smile was beaming, warming, fascinating; lighting up his whole face like a sudden sunrise. His voice was rich, deep, and strong, filling the largest space without effort, and when under excitement, rising and swelling into a violence of sound, like the roar of a tempest."—*George & Ballard.*

REFERENCES.

THE ablest and most complete life of Daniel Webster is that written by George T. Curtis. It is full of most interesting material. The most scholarly article on Webster is the eulogy delivered by George S. Hilliard. For a compact and interesting life, read Lodge's Webster in the "American Statesmen Series." A valuable and suggestive essay has been written by E. P. Whipple and serves as an introduction to his "Webster's Great Speeches." The last mentioned work is the best and most complete of the various compilations of Webster's works. Harvey's *Reminiscences of Webster* and March's *Reminiscences in Congress* are interesting works for general reading. Telf's *Webster and his Master-pieces*, Banvard's *The American Statesman* and Harsha's *Orators and Statesmen* contain much popular and interesting matter.

WHAT TO READ OF WEBSTER.

THE student who wishes to become familiar with the works of Webster should secure a copy of Whipple's *Great Speeches and Orations of Webster* and mark with pencil the best passages in several speeches. The "Bunker Hill Monument Orations" are well adapted to elementary study. Extracts from the argument on the "Murder of Capt. Joseph White," especially the famous preliminary remarks, are of absorbing interest. The Plymouth oration, on the "First Settlement of New England," has been called a series of eloquent fragments. The thoughts are fine, and are expressed in simple and beautiful words. The celebrated eulogy upon "Adams and Jefferson," the speeches on the "Character of Washington," the "Landing at Plymouth," and the "Addition to the Capitol," should form a part of the education of every American school-boy. Next read Mr. Webster's remarks on the death of Judge Story and of Jeremiah Mason, and finally the speech on laying the corner-stone for the addition to the Capitol in 1851. Of Webster's speeches in the United States Senate, the student should become familiar with portions of the "Reply to Hayne." It is one of those grand speeches which are landmarks in the history of eloquence. The speech as a whole has all the qualities which made Mr. Webster a great orator. He said that his whole life had been a preparation for the reply to Hayne. After selections from these orations and speeches have been studied, over and over again, the student will be well prepared to continue his studies in Webster with the strictly parliamentary speeches and discussions which have become a part of the intellectual life of the country.

WEBSTER AS A MASTER OF ENGLISH STYLE.

WEBSTER ranks high among the prose writers of the country as a master of English style. Like his oratory, his composition is plain, natural, easy, strong, dignified, and sometimes very lofty. His diction is entirely English. His words are the commonest in the language. They are those that we use in our own homes, and when talking with every-day friends. He had a powerful historic imagination, and could describe with great vividness, brevity, and force what had happened in the past or might happen in the dim future. As a rule, his sentences are short, pointed, and easily understood. Mr. Webster was a severe critic of his own style, sparing neither time or pains in revising and correcting his written orations. Aside from their profound thought and glowing patriotism, his great speeches can be read and studied to-day for their style alone, with the deepest interest, instruction, and pleasure. The young man who is training himself to think and speak on his feet should study Webster if he would attain to a perfect clearness of statement, joined to the highest skill in argument. He who would become a skilled debater and is ambitious "to learn the science of logical defence" should study the productions of this great master of eloquence until they become part and parcel of his own intellectual capital.