

**LITTLE MASTERPIECES;
REPRESENTATIVE
SPEECHES, PP. 3-183**

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Little Masterpieces; Representative speeches, pp. 3-183 by Daniel Webster & Bliss Perry

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DANIEL WEBSTER & BLISS PERRY

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Daniel Webster

Little Masterpieces

Edited by Bliss Perry

DANIEL WEBSTER

REPRESENTATIVE SPEECHES

NEW YORK

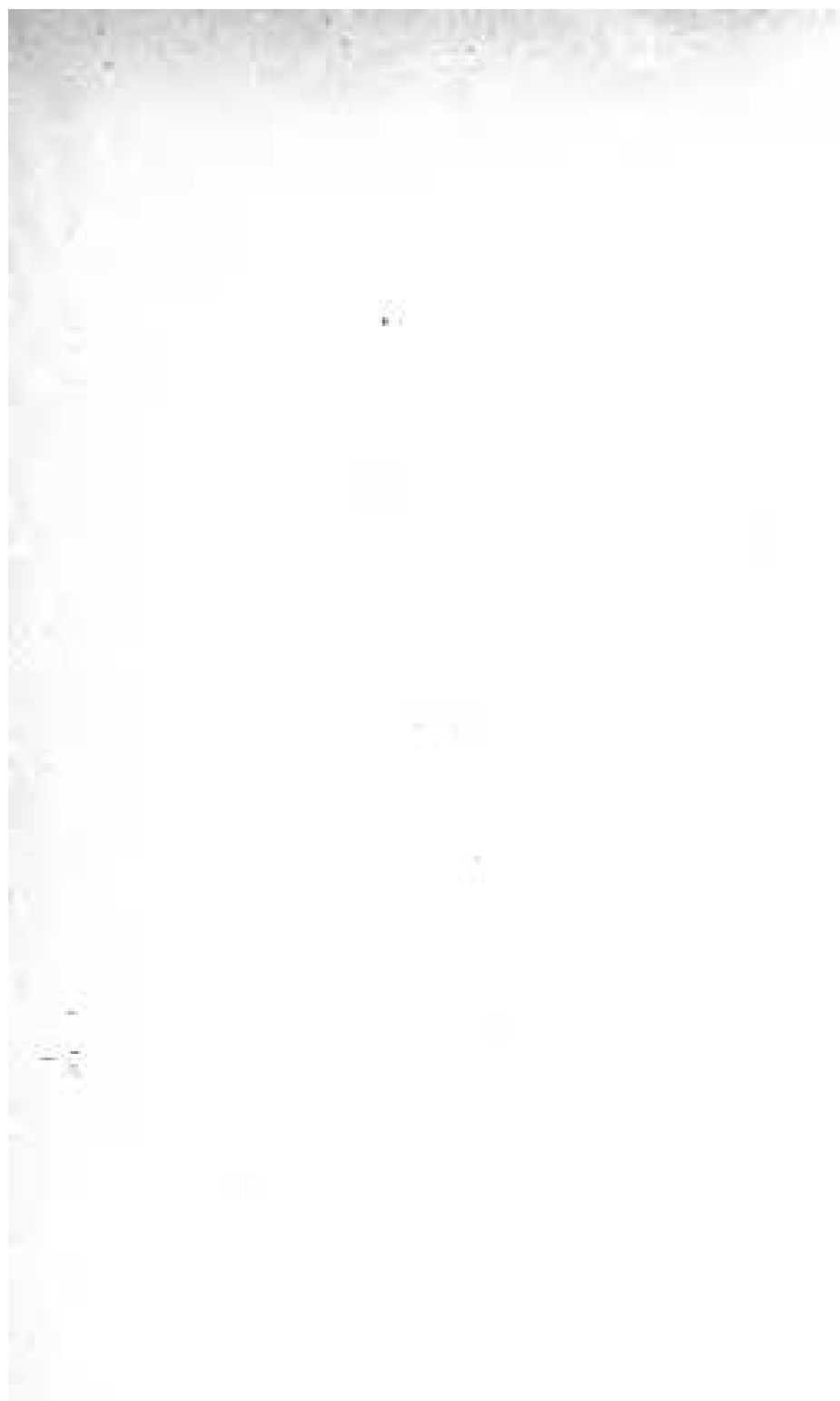
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Introduction



Introduction

If any justification were needed for including two of Daniel Webster's orations in a series of literary masterpieces, it might be found in the words of one of his younger rivals. In his "Remarks on the Death of Mr. Webster" before the Suffolk Bar, on October 28th, 1852—an eulogy only less graceful and memorable than his more elaborate discourse delivered before the alumni of Dartmouth College the following summer—Rufus Choate paid this tribute to the literary quality of Webster's speeches :

"All that he has left, or the larger portion of all, is the record of spoken words. His works, as already collected, extend to many volumes—a library of reason and eloquence, as Gibbon has said of Cicero's—but they are volumes of speeches only or mainly ; and yet who does not rank him as a great American author ? an author as truly expounding, and as characteristically exemplifying, in a pure, genuine, and harmonious English style, the mind, thought, point of view of objects, and essential nationality of his country as any other of our authors, professedly so denominated ? Against the maxim of Mr. Fox, his speeches read well, and yet were good speeches—great speeches—in the deliv-

Introduction

ery. For so grave were they, so thoughtful and true, so much the eloquence of reason at last, so strikingly always they contrived to link the immediate topic with other and broader principles, ascending easily to widest generalizations, so happy was the reconciliation of the qualities which engage the attention of hearers, yet reward the perusal of students, so critically did 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."

Webster was forty-four when he pronounced the commemorative discourse upon John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. His Plymouth address in 1820, six years before, had established his fame as an orator, and the Bunker Hill speech of 1825 had confirmed it. The public mind instantly turned to him in the hour of intense American feeling caused by the simultaneous deaths, upon July 4th, 1826—the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence—of the two most prominent survivors of the Revolutionary struggle. This extraordinary coincidence, and the historical associations suggested by it, stirred the whole country, and the thoughts and emotions of a whole country were never more adequately voiced by any orator than by Webster's eulogy in Faneuil Hall. The speech is best known to-day by two passages, one on the nature of true eloquence, and the