

**REMINISCENCES OF SAMUEL  
DEXTER. ORIGINALLY  
WRITTEN FOR THE BOSTON  
EVENING TRANSCRIPT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649430970

Reminiscences of Samuel Dexter. Originally Written for the Boston Evening Transcript by  
Sigma

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**SIGMA**

**REMINISCENCES OF SAMUEL  
DEXTER. ORIGINALLY  
WRITTEN FOR THE BOSTON  
EVENING TRANSCRIPT**



SAMUEL DEXTER.

REMINISCENCES  
OF  
SAMUEL DEXTER.

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN FOR THE

BOSTON EVENING TRANSCRIPT.

---

BY SIGMA, &c.  
*Lucius Manlius Sargent*

---

BOSTON.  
HENRY W. DUTTON & SON,  
1857.

## TO THE READER.

---

THE gathering together of these fourteen numbers, and their embodiment in a little volume, are wholly the work of our friends, the publishers. I looked no farther than to the agency of the journal, in which these papers were originally published, for their dissemination. I had no thought of making a book. Indeed, it has often seemed to me a much more satisfactory course, upon such an occasion as the present, to address some ten, twenty, or thirty thousand readers, through the columns of a popular newspaper, of good repute; than to embark one's thoughts, in a portly volume, which may never come before the eyes of half as many hundreds. If, among these floating fragments, there is anything of value, sooner or later some literary chiffonier, as they pass down the stream, may arrest their progress, and gather them to the shore; and, all that is destined to perish, cannot gravitate into oblivion, too cheaply, or too speedily. These remarks, of course, apply not to authors by profession, who thrive by their literary labors.

As I have said, the publishers have made a little book ; and now they ask me for a preface. But, it seems to me, that a formal preface will give to these light labors an air of importance, which does not belong to them. Let me say then, in a word, that it was my object to record a few reminiscences of my honored master, and to pay the humble tribute of my cordial respect to his memory.

SIGMA.



REMINISCENCES  
OF  
SAMUEL DEXTER.

---

No. I.

\*\*\*\* eum statuebam disertum, qui posset satis acute, atque dilucide, apud mediocres homines, ex communi quadam opinione, dicere; eloquentem vero, qui mirabilius et magnificentius sugere posset, atque ornare, que vallet, omnesque omnium rerum, que ad dicendum pertinerent, fontes animo ac memoria contineret. *Cic. de Oratore. Lib. I. 21.*

There appears to be no immediate prospect of assistance from *Macedonia*; though I have long cherished a hope, that a friend of mine, eminently qualified for the work, would come over, and help us to a faithful and well-merited memorial of this extraordinary man.

My recollections of Mr. Dexter are so full of a sentiment of affectionate respect, for his great kindness and condescension towards me, some fifty years ago, that I should be unwilling to speak of him, as I think and feel; were it not, that many yet live, who knew him well; who cherish a cordial respect for the lofty tone of his character; and who remember how difficult it

was, even for twelve headstrong and predetermined jurymen to resist his great talent for conversion. It may be said of him, in very simple language, that reasoning came easier to him, than to most men. In the words of Mr. Webster, "*his very statements were arguments*;" and the conclusions arose, in the mind of every intelligent listener, so very easily, that he might almost believe the whole process to have been elaborated in the work-shop of his own brain. And yet, in many cases, the effort to move forward, from premises to conclusions, so steadily, and surely, and gracefully withal, would tax severely the intellectual powers of more than one, who, at the present day, are justly famous for their peculiar eloquence. I have heard him argue many causes, involving such questions, as arise, in the ordinary business litigation, between man and man; and, occasionally, such, as, above all others, are calculated to excite the strongest emotions of the heart: but I recollect no one occasion, upon which he endeavored to be fine, or flowery—or to amaze the panel, with quaint and extraordinary illustrations—or to argue the cause, as though he expected a verdict, rather from the surrounding audience, than from the jury. Mr. Dexter could never be charged with "*amphibology of language, vagueness of description, or vacuity of expression*." The professional reader will remember to have met with this amusing assemblage of words, in the work of Mr. Roberts, on frauds. The phraseology of this great lawyer was exceedingly simple; and he rarely employed a long word, however elegant, to express his meaning, when a shorter would suffice. He led the

jury straight forward, from the commencement to the close of his argument, by the shortest route, and without any unnecessary flourishes, or rhetorical coruscations, by the way. He was the strong man of his time. There was the same difference, between him, and the majority of his associates, at the forum, as there has been, in these later years, between *the great lawyer*, and those, by whom he was surrounded. There was no coeval, at the bar of Massachusetts, whose abilities were a fair match for Mr. Dexter's. Men there were, undoubtedly, of splendid talents, and more deeply versed in professional lore, than he—but none—not one, who, in a seemingly desperate cause, where, to common observation, there appeared no inch of ground, on which to build an argument, could, so adroitly, after having demolished the work of his antagonist, construct, of the very *disjecta membra*, a fabric, so firm, and so fair.

There were men, whose eloquence was of the highest order; and of some of whom it might be said, in the words, facetiously employed by Mr. Dexter himself, upon a certain occasion, that they had the happy talent of "keeping the sound agoing, after the sense had gone." There he stood, like some supereminent oak, but for whose colossal proportions, more than one of the surrounding group would have appeared gigantic. This ancient commonwealth never produced a man of more extraordinary, intellectual powers: and yet a generation is springing up, who, upon the mention of his name, may be pardoned, for inquiring — "*Who was Samuel Dexter?*"