

ECLECTIC ENGLISH CLASSICS

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR
SELF-RELIANCE
COMPENSATION

BY
RALPH WALDO EMERSON



AMERICAN · BOOK · COMPANY
NEW YORK · CINCINNATI · CHICAGO

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INTRODUCTION.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, poet, essayist, and philosopher, was born in Boston, May 25, 1803. He was the second of five sons of the Rev. William Emerson, minister of the First (Congregational) Church in Boston. His mother was Ruth Haskins, a woman of strong character and superior mental abilities. He had a minister for an ancestor for eight generations back, either on the paternal or the maternal side. Thus he inherited his spiritual and intellectual tendencies from a long line of distinguished progenitors. His aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, a woman of rare intellectual attainments, was one of his early companions and exerted a remarkable influence over his development.

Emerson began his studies at the public grammar school at the age of eight, and four years later he attended the Latin School. In 1817 he entered Harvard. He was not distinguished for proficiency in the studies of the curriculum, but he was superior to most of his classmates in his knowledge of general literature. He was especially interested in the study of Greek and history, and much of his time was spent in the library. He graduated in 1821.

For five years after leaving college Emerson taught school. In 1823 he began to study for the ministry under Dr. Channing. He was "approbated to preach" in 1826 by the Middlesex

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