



Ten Selections From the Sketch-Book (Classic Reprint)

Washington Irving

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Excerpt from Ten Selections From the Sketch-Book

Washington Irving, the eighth and youngest son of William and Sarah Irving, was born in a house on William Street, in New York City, April 3, 1783. His father was a descendant of an old Orkney family, and his mother was a native of Falmouth, England. Young Washington began his school days at the age of four. At the age of sixteen his school days were over, and he began the study of law. Though his education was of a rudimentary and incomplete character, consisting of a smattering of Latin, music, and the ordinary English branches, he gave early signs of a natural avidity for reading, and of a power of rapidly assimilating what he read. Sinbad, Robinson Crusoe, and Gulliver made a deep impression on his young mind. His early fondness for romance showed itself in many ways, and the theater in John Street possessed for him a seductive charm, to which he succumbed as often as he could steal away from home; for his father, of the stem ways and habits of the Scotch Covenanter, looked upon theaters with hearty disfavor. In 1802 he entered the law office of Josiah Ogden Hoffman, and, together with his "Blackstone," he read general literature voraciously. About this time his health began to fail, and he made frequent trips up the Hudson and the Mohawk, to Ogdensburg, Montreal, Albany, Schenectady, and Saratoga.

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