



Essays From the Sketch Book (Classic Reprint)

Washington Irving

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Excerpt from Essays From the Sketch Book

Washington Irving - "the first ambassador whom the New World of Letters sent to the Old" - was born in New York on April 3, 1783. His mother named him after George Washington, and a pleasant anecdote connects his childhood with the great man whose biographer he was to be in later years. One morning, as his Scotch nurse had him out for a walk, she saw the President enter a shop. The nurse hastened in with her charge, and said: "Please, your honor, here 's a bairn was named for you." Washington turned and, laying his hand on the child's head, gave him his blessing.

Born of well-to-do parents, Irving was the youngest of a large family; his formative years were passed under the influence of a cultured home, and with plenty of congenial companionship. The surroundings of his childish days thus were fortunate, and no doubt tended to mould his mind and character for an appreciation of the finer things of life. His boyhood was in no sense remarkable; he was fond of reading, *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Arabian Nights* being among his favorite books, while a youthful inclination towards travel and adventure seems to have been stimulated by a *History of the Civil Wars of Granada*, and stirred still further by a set of voyages called *The World Displayed*. He attended school until the age of sixteen, when for some reason he declined to complete his education in the normal way by following his two brothers William and Peter to Columbia College; instead, he entered a lawyer's office.

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