

of lesser yet considerable brilliancy. It need scarcely be said that oratorical efforts of the finest quality exist in several of the leading fields of human thought, such as those of the parliamentary chamber, the political rostrum, the bar, the pulpit, the lecture platform and the social hall. But many of these lack interest to the general reader. In making selections from the store at command the subject as well as the manner needs to be carefully considered, matters of local or temporary character losing their force and potency as time goes on, however effective they may have seemed when the occasion served. The legal oration, for example, is usually of passing interest, rarely appealing even at the time to more than a few persons, and seldom having a message to deliver to the world. The parliamentary oration, on the contrary, which deals with the great questions of government, political and national relations and the inherent rights of man, is apt to have a perennial hold upon the human mind, keeping its interest fresh even after centuries have passed. These are the two extremes between which it is necessary to choose.

#### A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF THIS BOOK

It may further be said that in many cases the orator owes his fame largely to some one supreme effort, some grand display of his powers which throws all others into the shade, and yields us the product of his intellect and force of expression at their highest elevation. This is, as a rule, a result of the incitement of some stirring contingency, some mighty crisis which can be justly dealt with only by the highest powers of thought and which is apt to arouse the orator to the utmost exercise of his faculties. In our selections we have been guided in a measure by this fact, choosing from the more famous examples of oratory, for the double reason that these present the orator at his best, and usually deal with subjects of permanent interest in themselves—those great occasions or events of history which never grow dull or stale, but retain their freshness through the ages.