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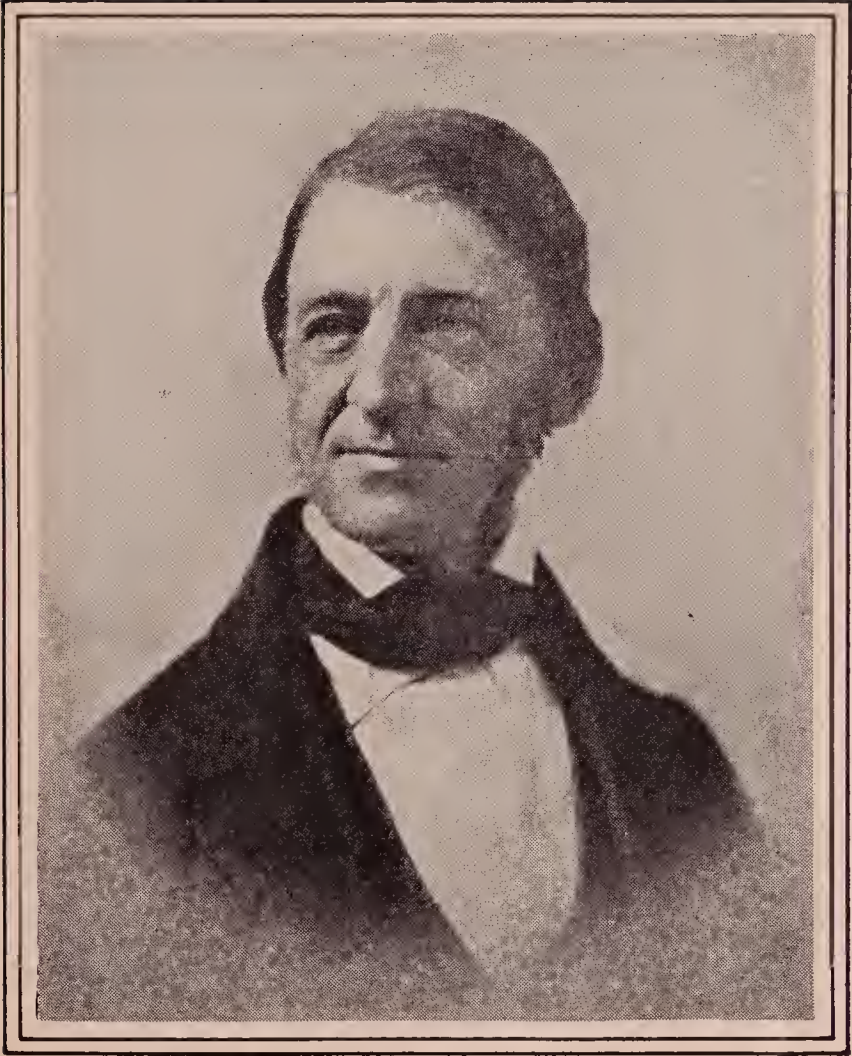
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RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society

*Ralph W. Emerson*

EMERSON'S  
REPRESENTATIVE  
MEN  
AND OTHER ESSAYS

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## PREFACE

The text of these essays has been carefully collated with the best editions published soon after Emerson's death, which undoubtedly represent the author's own revisions. Wherever possible the original punctuation has been retained. Only in cases where more modern practice would better serve the original sense has a change been effected. The Notes, which for greater convenience to the student or reader are placed directly following each essay, are more comprehensive than usual with student editions of Emerson, yet are made as definite and concise as possible. The Suggestions for Study to be found in the Appendix do not insult the intelligence of the teacher by the intrusion of mere methods. Most teachers have their own ways of employing such material and would prefer to be unhampered. These helps are mainly in the nature of study questions, and deal primarily with content of each essay. The Bibliography has been restricted to the most useful books dealing with Emerson and his background, such as are available in most good libraries. Magazine articles, of which there are too many to include, can be easily located by the aid of the various A. L. A. indexes in every library.

It is hoped that this volume will prove of equal value to both high school and college classes in American literature.

E. K. M.



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## INTRODUCTION

**Why We Study Emerson Today.** Most young people of today know very little about the America of the early nineteenth century. Accustomed as they are to hearing of our greatness as a nation and to seeing a land easily encompassed by rapid transportation, they have small appreciation of conditions as they were when Emerson was growing up. Nor can they realize the importance of Emerson in the development of our national consciousness. To them he is but a name found among our native authors; and sometimes, as when they are required to read his essays as a part of their school work, perhaps they would feel no regret if he had never been born. Yet the study of Emerson's Essays is an important element in the education of every American youth, not only because they are regarded as great literature by the entire world, but because they express a spirit that is indigenous to America. Emerson is not only a true embodiment of the spirit of independence but a leader who has done much to open our minds to freedom of thought. Yet he never led an army, nor ran for a political office, nor in any way exemplified the hero. A quiet and unassuming little man, he merely followed his inward convictions and expressed the truth as he felt it. His message awakened the minds of his countrymen from Maine to California. It shook churches out of a century-old lethargy and set people to forming literary societies and to reading books, for the betterment of their minds. Certainly, if all this is so, every true American student should be glad to read this message for himself.

**The United States in 1800.** In the opening years of the nineteenth century the United States hardly extended beyond the Mississippi River; yet so difficult was the means of travel, by stagecoach and canal boat, that the various sections of the country were almost as remote as Europe today. Further-

more, there was little national unity. New England was sparsely settled. It had no large towns, and its communities kept very much to themselves. Its residents were thought to be very proud of their ancestry and rather uncordial to strangers. This reputation for exclusiveness New Englanders have never entirely lived down. New York, while it still remembered proudly that its founders had been Dutch from Amsterdam, was already a melting pot of races from Europe. Pennsylvania, dominated still by Quaker aristocracy in the eastern part and by the Scotch-Irish in the west, was also cosmopolitan and wrapped up in its own affairs. The southern states, as much pure English as New England, were Tory and unpuritanic in their traditions. Their social order, by which families lived on plantations maintained by slave labor, naturally tended to make them independent and undemocratic.

**The War of 1812.** The Revolutionary War had united the colonies only in a patriotic sense, as against a common oppressor, but had not brought them much nearer together in tastes. Industries and commerce were still handicapped by the unwillingness of Great Britain to recognize our rights upon the sea. In Emerson's boyhood the battles between the British *Guerrière* and the American frigate *Constitution*, between the *Frolic* and the *Wasp*, as well as the triumphs of Commander Perry on Lake Erie, were still being fought. Indeed, Emerson once told an audience in Boston about a certain day he remembered while attending the Boston Latin School, when the whole school had been dismissed by the principal so that the boys could help the militia build earthworks on Noddle's Island, in the harbor, in preparation for an expected attack by the British, which did not after all materialize.

**Boston.** Boston, according to the census of 1800, had a population of only 24,937 persons. By 1810 it had gained less than nine thousand. Subsequent growth was correspondingly small until the eighties and nineties, when manufactures and shipping had so increased as to make Boston one of the leading ports of the country.

This older Boston still occupied the narrow peninsula of the

original "three mounts," or Tremont, between the Charles River and the Harbor. The newer part of the city then, where most of the wealthy and aristocratic had built their homes, was between famous old Beacon Hill and the section east of the Common, now the very heart of the wholesale district. The historic Common was still a tract of unimproved ground used as a playground, a drilling field for the militia, and a pasturage for cows. That residents could keep cows, together with the fact that houses in the very heart of the city were provided with ample yards and orchards, proves the rural nature of this Boston of the early part of the nineteenth century. One of Emerson's chores as a boy was to lead the family cow to and from the Common, night and morning, during his school days. On this walk he crossed many open spaces now traversed by numerous streets and packed with tall buildings — while beyond his home, on the side toward the harbor, masts of sailing vessels from distant ports threw their shadows over mudflats on which now stand Atlantic Avenue and the Elevated.

**Emerson's Ancestors.** Emerson's first American ancestor had landed in Boston in 1634, one of many Puritan ministers who had grown dissatisfied with conditions in the church in the old world. He was the Reverend Peter Bulkeley, one of the founders of Concord, the little village where Ralph Waldo Emerson was to live during the greater part of his career. Later Peter Bulkeley accepted a call to the first church built in Cambridge. His son Edward succeeded him in this ministry and was long remembered as a devoted pastor. It was Peter Bulkeley's daughter Elizabeth who united the Bulkeleys with the Emersons in her marriage with the Reverend Joseph Emerson of Ipswich.

Joseph Emerson's father had settled at Ipswich in 1635, and had been succeeded by his son. The son of Joseph and Elizabeth Emerson, named Edward, married Rebecca Waldo, a descendant of an early Protestant sect founded by an ancestor, known as the Waldensians. Their son, in turn, Joseph Emerson II, married Mary Moody, the daughter of Samuel Moody, a Maine clergyman. The result of this union, William

Emerson I, married Phœbe, the daughter of the Reverend Bliss. Their son, William Emerson II, was the father of Ralph Waldo Emerson. He had been graduated from Harvard with Phi Beta Kappa honors, had married Miss Ruth Haskins of Boston, and at the time of Ralph Waldo's birth was settled as the pastor of the First Church of Boston, then Unitarian.

The Reverend William Emerson, father of our essayist, had been a man of accomplishment. He had been not only a brilliant preacher and conversationalist but the inspirer of an interest in art, music, and literature, leading to the founding of the Boston Athenæum and such later institutions as the Lowell Institute, the Boston Public Library, and the Museum of Fine Arts. He had become a minister mainly because it had been his mother's fondest hope to see him carry on the family tradition. He had been called from his first pastorate in the little town of Harvard, at more than twice his salary, and at the time of his death was earning what was then considered a large income, \$2500, with the rent of the parsonage and thirty cords of wood with which to heat it.

He was thirty-six when his fifth son was born. In his diary for the date of May 25, 1803, he records, "This day whilst I was at dinner at Governor Strong's, my son Ralph Waldo was born."

He died in 1810 and was given a most impressive funeral by the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of which he had been chaplain. In later years Ralph Waldo recalled the magnificent cortege of some sixty coaches and the line of uniformed soldiers. To a boy of eight such a scene was bound to be impressive.

**Emerson as a Boy.** Emerson was an odd sort of boy, and in this oddness we can see the shadow of the coming man. To begin with he was frail and very shy. At about the age of ten he is described by a contemporary as "spiritual-looking," and by another as "absolutely faultless in his conduct," courtly in his manners, and so cold in exterior as to appear incapable of warm feeling and affection, though we now know that this last was not strictly true. Now most boys are not always irre-



proachable in their behavior, and although they sometimes appear like saints in company, are regular savages in their play. They invariably have their enthusiasms, whatever their lack of opportunities, whether it is egg collecting, fishing, or swimming, if they are country-bred, or playing pirates and following a gang leader, in the city. Ralph Waldo, apparently, had neither talent nor inclination for play. It is possible that modern opportunities, such as afforded by school gymnasiums and Boy Scout camps would have developed some latent capacity for physical enjoyment, but none of these accessories which the modern youth is privileged to enjoy then existed. Moreover, sports were not well regarded in Puritan Boston of the early nineteenth century. But Emerson did not even take advantage of the sports at hand, for he never owned a sled. Of course, the family was poor, sleds might be regarded as luxuries, and the father's death may have made it necessary for the boy to help his mother in her brave struggle to provide a home and education for her boys, but notwithstanding it is probable that this boy would have amused himself in unusual ways if left to his own inclinations.

What these amusements were we know in part and for the rest must resort to our imaginations, for regarding these intimate matters Emerson the man had told us little, for he was never one to talk much about himself. If he cared to do so, he could have heard some interesting speeches by prominent orators, for it was the day when oratory flourished. He probably heard speeches in Faneuil Hall, at the court house, and very likely at town meeting, for serious-minded boys enjoy such things. He attended singing school once, but was told by the teacher that he had no voice. But one thing we do know, and that is that he spent a great deal of time in reading. And on occasions he tried to write poetry. Once he took a novel from the lending library, but never finished it, because his Aunt Mary reproved him for the sinfulness of spending six cents for such a luxury when his mother so badly needed the money.

**His Aunt Mary.** This Aunt Mary was a very unusual sort of person and probably did much to influence the lives of the

Emerson children. She had been the daughter of that William Emerson who had built the Old Manse at Concord, where she had been born. She was often an inmate of the Emerson home after her brother's death and was of much assistance to Emerson's mother. She was a vivacious lady of most unexpected ways of doing and saying things, devoted to poetry and heavy reading, but very pious, so pious in fact that she hourly awaited her death, though she lived to be very old. She frequently wore a burial gown in order that she might be ready for the summoning angel, and to remind herself of her mortality she slept in a bed built in the shape of a coffin. But she was far from being gloomy or sad, however; to the contrary her wit was known for miles around. She taught Ralph Waldo his first love for poetry and that interest in Plato that lasted throughout his life. You will note the importance he accords to Plato in the series of the *Representative Men*.

**Emerson's Mother.** Emerson's mother should not be forgotten. She was a quiet woman, very devout, always serene in temper, and so self-possessed as to appear almost cold. We can thus understand from whom Ralph Waldo derived his disposition. Most women, accustomed to luxury and the prestige accorded minister's families, finding themselves widowed with a family of five boys, all under eight, to rear and educate, would have fallen prey to despair; but not she. When the calamity of her husband's untimely death came, she merely took it as the Lord's will and proceeded at once to her appointed task of training her boys in the fear of the Lord. For several years the church allowed her a small pension and the use of the parsonage. But later she moved a little farther uptown and took in boarders. She thus not only educated her sons but lived to see at least two of them famous.

**The School Boy.** At eight Ralph Waldo was attending the public grammar school, and a few years later he was able to enter the Boston Latin School, then located on School Street across the road from Old King's Chapel. As a school-boy he was dressed in suits of blue nankeen, an inexpensive cotton cloth imported from China, usually worn by youths of his

age. We fancy that the arms and legs of the growing boy often outstripped these garments, which were also often faded from much washing. Yet the strangest thing of all is that he never stood very high in his classes.

In the fall of 1817 he entered Harvard College. He was then thirteen, tall for his years, and delicate. Slow in his movements and speech and shy in disposition, not making friends easily, he was not impressive. His poverty made it necessary for him to earn a part of his expenses, which he did by becoming errand boy for President Kirkland and by waiting on table at the commons. Later he did tutoring and some teaching as well during winter vacations.

Little is told us about his college days, except a few meager accounts by his contemporaries, who had not paid him much attention, and by the scraps of his *Journal* which have been preserved. If you will take down Volume I of Emerson's *Journals*, as they are now published, you will find some direct evidence of these college years, a little of what he was doing and much more of what he was thinking. Even then he was thinking lofty thoughts. There are accounts of his walks, his reading, and his activities in founding and contributing to a literary society. Most interesting of all is a reproduction of an original sketch of his room in Hollis Hall.

As a student he did fairly well in languages, but he was, by his own account, at least, "a hopeless dunce" in mathematics. He read extensively of books not required by his instructors and dreamed fondly of becoming a poet. In his junior and senior years he surprised every one by taking two Bowdoin Prizes awarded for literary excellence and a Boylston Prize for oratory. He was also given a commencement oration to deliver in his senior year, much to his disappointment, because he had aspired to be class poet. This function came to him ultimately, however, though without much honor, after it had been refused by several others. The oration he did badly, but the poem was accorded brilliant. He was graduated at the middle of his class, thus failing of election to Phi Beta Kappa. Years later, however, that society was to feel honored by inviting him to deliver its annual address.

**Teaching School.** The next few years are not very inspiring reading. After graduation he had not very definite plans for the future. He wanted to be a poet, which ambition was hardly practical enough to afford a livelihood. He also expressed the desire to be a teacher of oratory, but received no offers. So he took the only job awaiting him, an assistantship in his brother William's school for girls, in Boston. William was the eldest of the five Emerson boys. On him naturally had fallen the mantle of the Emerson tradition, to become a preacher. He was now earning the money for his divinity course by conducting this private school. But William was beginning to doubt his fitness for the ministry. He left Ralph Waldo in charge the following year and sailed for Germany for study. Here his doubts became convictions. He had even consulted the great poet Gœthe in his perplexity and had received the good man's advice to return home and preach. Instead he had come home and studied law.

**His One and Only Pastorate.** In the meanwhile the third brother, Edward, by all accounts the most promising of the family, after as brilliant a career at Harvard as Ralph Waldo's had been mediocre, also decided to become a lawyer. The fourth brother, Bulkeley, now being a confirmed invalid, could justify no ambitions, and the youngest brother, Charles, dying on a voyage south for his health, left the burden upon one seemingly unbrilliant to carry on the ministerial tradition. Thus the choice of a profession was thrust upon Ralph Waldo. Today we may not understand why it should seem so necessary that at least one Emerson should be a preacher, but family pride was then strong in old New England.

He was twenty-three when he entered the Harvard Divinity School. He was still frail in body, rather sickly, and even lacking in ambition. He soon received his license as a student preacher, so that he could support himself while in the school. But in 1826 his health and eyesight were so bad that he was obliged to stop work and go to Florida for the winter. He managed to complete his course ultimately, however, and in January 11, 1829, he was ordained as the assistant minister of the Second Church of Boston. Only two months later, the

pastor, Dr. Ware, was obliged to resign through failing health, and Emerson was given full charge of the congregation.

All went well for a time. For any ordinary soul this would have been the beginning of a final career, but Emerson's real life was yet to begin. He performed the duties of pastor well and was acceptable to his congregation. In this period he married the woman of his choice, Miss Ellen Louise Tucker, of Boston, a talented and charming woman. In 1832, however, three important events occurred: first, in January Mrs. Emerson died of what was then known as "consumption"; second, his sudden convictions against administering the Lord's Supper as a formal rite, followed by his resignation; third, his setting out on a sailing vessel for Europe to be gone nearly a year. Thus the year 1832 marks the date of Emerson's rebirth, as a thinker and a citizen of the world.

In Europe Emerson had a most satisfying experience, visiting Italy, France, and England, broadening his mind and meeting many new friends. Among other notable persons he visited Landor, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. He returned the following year and took up his residence at Concord, with his mother as housekeeper.

**Concord.** Concord more than any other spot in America is reminiscent of Emerson. It lies some twenty miles inland from Boston in a northwesterly direction. The village has grown very little since Emerson's day, having now a population of only less than eight thousand souls, and most of the important buildings then standing still remain. Most of the points of interest there are historical as well as literary. There are many Revolutionary landmarks, as well as those which savor of the glorious days when the Lyceum flourished. In both of these periods both Bulkeley and Emersons had their part. It had been a Bulkeley that had helped found the town as well as the church. It was an Emerson, the grandfather of our essayist, who had built the Old Manse close by the scene of the famous fight at the North Bridge, across the Musketaquid. This grandfather had not only witnessed this fight whose shot, as his grandson said, was

"heard 'round the world," but had died of a fever contracted in his country's service while chaplain of the Continental Army, October 20, 1776.

The Old Manse was later occupied by the Reverend Ezra Ripley, who married Emerson's grandmother; then by Emerson himself on his return from abroad in 1834; and still later by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hawthorne's *Mosses of an Old Manse*, written in the old study where many ministers have prepared their sermons and where Emerson had written *Nature*, helps to make the old house a hallowed spot. The Wright Tavern also brings back Revolutionary days, as does the museum of the Concord Antiquarian Society. Then there is the Thoreau house, where Emerson was a frequent visitor, the former home of the pencil-maker naturalist who attracted much attention as the hermit of Walden Pond. The Emerson mansion remains today as its former owner left it, but it is not, unfortunately, the same building in which he spent most of his life, for that was burned in 1872. Not far away from the mansion still stands the Alcott house, where lived another transcendentalist, the strange author of *Orphic Sayings*, Bronson Alcott, with his interesting family. Here his daughter Louisa Alcott wrote *Little Women*, which is practically a history of the family life there. And next door, separated by a grove from the Alcott's, is Wayside, the last home of Hawthorne.

Besides these interesting shrines one may discover tablets which apprise one of other facts. Thus we learn that the Continental Congress was assembled in Concord in 1774 and that Harvard College once held classes here during the Revolution, in 1775-1776, to permit the occupation of its buildings in Cambridge by the Continental troops. Also, a visit to the two historic old cemeteries will acquaint us with the names of many worthies which this remarkable village has produced, including of course the group we have already mentioned.

**Emerson's Attitude.** Up to this time Emerson appears to have had very few real friends, for he was never one to go out of his way to acquire them. Yet we must not get a wrong impression, for he also had no enemies. It was simply that

his nature kept the world always at a distance. One who knew him at all must make the advances, and in this early period, it must be confessed, he had shown the world very little of himself that was worth cultivating very deeply. To all alike he was affable, polite, and kind, and while never unduly self-assertive, he was nevertheless self-confident. Indeed it would appear that friends were not very essential to his happiness. And the reason may not be hard to find: Emerson was a thoroughbred of a stock that had been acquiring those very traits for generations, for breeding counts in men as well as in animals. His ancestors had been not only Puritans but clergymen, mainly, and he had inherited the brain paths of both. The Puritan for generations had trained himself in self-control, had suppressed the desire for worldly pleasures, and lived within himself, believing that salvation was purely a matter for each individual to settle with his God. Emerson thus shows the effect of this repression, quite as many other New Englanders have done. As for the Puritan clergyman, he not only had believed himself, but was regarded by his congregation, to be a man apart, a man of God and a saint, who could not mingle indiscriminately with men of clay. The Puritan minister must have been a very lonesome man. Emerson all his life, though he had no regular pulpit, was instinctively the preacher. Unbend as he would, he could not let men come too close. He was always to some degree the high priest among men.

In the boy these traits had been very manifest. Naturally enough any boy who did not take part in sports would not be popular in any generation. Not only could we infer from this fact Emerson's probable unpopularity, but we know that his Uncle Ripley once reproved him for not getting on with his mates. And in college the situation was not much improved, though few persons admit that they actually disliked him. Some thought him merely stupid and others a bore. He always read heavy treatises as his contribution to the literary club meetings, which are recorded by the secretary without enthusiasm. In his freshman year he had an attractive boy from the south as a roommate, named Gourdin, who made so

little impression upon him that he has nothing to say about him in his diary. Yet another boy whom he did not even try to know, named Martin Gay, he wrote of frequently in almost affectionate terms and wrote a poem about, often stalking him from afar as he went about town. Certainly a strange lad!

Of course, after one makes a success of life and becomes famous, one may have as many friends as one chooses. In later years Emerson had no lack of friends, and even college mates who had previously ignored him then tried to make amends by softening their recollections. To all he gave the same gracious smile, the same friendly conversation, but no more of his inward self than formerly. In spite of his affability, he was always a little cold.

**Return to Concord and Second Marriage.** After his return to Concord he seems for a time to have had no very definite plans. He preached occasionally and gradually came to be in demand as a lecturer. In 1834 he was honored in being asked to deliver the annual poem of the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge. In 1835 he married Miss Lidia Jackson, of Plymouth, bought an old house near the river, where he was to live the remainder of his days, and set up house-keeping. At this time he was only beginning to be known.

In 1836 the Transcendental Club was formed, which proved the beginning of Emerson's greatest influence. It was never a formally organized group of people which constituted this little circle. At least, Emerson has denied that it was. Nor was it called by any one name. Sometimes it was spoken of as the "Symposium," and again as the "Hedge Club," because it usually met on days when its most distant member, the Reverend F. H. Hedge from Maine, could be present. Its founding all came about very naturally. In the fall of 1836 when Emerson and other Unitarian clergymen were attending the bicentennial celebration of Harvard College, several of them were of the opinion that the viewpoint of the churches was far too narrow; so they resolved to do something about it. They met in Willard's Hotel, four men, F. H. Hedge, George Ripley, George Putnam, and Emerson. A few days



later with additional friends they held a conference at Concord at Ripley's home. By the next meeting, at Emerson's house, the Symposium was in full operation.

Out of this grew two projects of note: the printing of an official magazine known as the *Dial* and the establishment of that famous communistic experiment at Brook Farm, where many of their ideas for social betterment were put to the acid test. This ideal community, like all such schemes, failed not because the idea was not wholesome, but because it did not pay. It is rather amusing to note that Emerson, while he was a frequent visitor to the farm and regarded as its inspiration, was too shrewd a Yankee to invest any money in it.

**Emerson's Friends.** Of the many persons drawn together by these Transcendental ideas, all of whom may be said to be Emerson's friends, the following are most remembered: Margaret Fuller (later Marchioness Ossoli), Reverend George Ripley, Dr. Convers Francis, Reverend Theodore Parker, Dr. F. H. Hedge, Reverend James Freeman Clarke, Reverend O. A. Bronson, Reverend William H. Channing, George W. Curtis, Bronson Alcott, Charles K. Newcomb, Henry Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. There are several books dealing with the Transcendental Movement, but one of the most interesting and instructive is Lindsay Swift's *Brook Farm* (Macmillan, 1900). It gives a fairly full account of all of these.

Among the Transcendentalists there were at least three with whom Emerson was most intimate: Thoreau, Alcott, and Miss Fuller. With Thoreau especially he seemed to be most human. We cannot take the time here to discuss the eccentricities of this man. He was a descendant of colonists from the Isle of Jersey, off the French coast, a little land which enjoys simple living even today and disclaims the right of either the French or the British government to rule it. Thoreau, evidently inheriting this independence, tried to be free of modern social obligations. Thus he had performed his experiment of living in a hut at Walden Pond and writing his Book, *Walden*,\* telling the world how little it needed to obtain happiness. He was a pencil-maker by trade, and when

he had perfected his pencil, refused to sell his secret to a New York manufacturer, because he did not believe in commercialism. Emerson used to pay his taxes, it is said, because Thoreau preferred to go to jail than thus help a nation that permitted negro slavery. Once Emerson did find him in jail, and came over at once to bail him out. "Henry, why are you here?" Emerson is reported to have said. "Waldo, why are you *not* here?" was Thoreau's retort. Yet he did not object at being released. Perhaps Thoreau was more of a Yankee than he pretended to be.

Bronson Alcott to most persons was a bore. He kept a school at his house, Fruitlands, where he trained young people in his special theories. In many ways he seems to have been a crank, though a kindly soul. Some people accuse him of stealing Emerson's thunder in his *Orphic Sayings*. At any rate, Emerson liked him. Besides, we can love him for his daughter Louisa's sake, for after all she is a product of his training. In her popular *Little Women* she describes the life of the family at Fruitlands.

Margaret Fuller was one of the most talented of the Transcendental group, but she had been reared too puritanically, with too great a sense of her own importance. To many people she was intolerable, though all accorded her a brilliant mind. She and Emerson were thrown much together by common interests. Both edited the *Dial* at different times.

**Transcendentalism.** Of Transcendentalism itself we shall not attempt to say very much. To define it would tax the resources of a seer. What it is you may gather from Emerson's own works, for all his essays, as well as most of his verse, express this way of thinking. You will gather that it is spiritual and intellectual, rather than material, thinking. It is an appeal to our better selves, to liberate our minds from gross, bread-and-butter living and from petty local interests, to more universal spheres. And it hits us today even harder than it hit our fathers and grandfathers, for we are living in an age when money and the things it will buy have more concern with us than intellectual and spiritual matters. To Emerson and his group the movement meant revolt from

conventional thinking, particularly as exemplified in the Unitarian Church. Thus is it ever with the world. One generation fights for its convictions, and the next is content to accept their views as final without thinking at all. The views which Emerson regarded narrow were, say, in 1805, decidedly radical. And so, in fact, had the opinions been of the Puritans in the beginning. Our first ancestors who braved the dangers of the sea to accept even greater danger in the American wilderness had done so because they had fresh, advanced views that the old-world church was not ready to accept. The Unitarians had staged their revolt when Puritanism had become mere dogma, and so the Transcendentalists were once more asking for the right to think and worship as they pleased. Only the Transcendental Movement was not confined solely to religious matters. The word itself means simply, "something beyond"; that is, a nature in man which is capable of responding to higher things, as represented by nature, art, religion, than can be measured by material standards or probed by the intellect. Emerson's immediate predecessors in these ideas were such men as the English poets Coleridge and Wordsworth, the essayist Carlyle, and the German poet Goethe. Indirectly many philosophers, from Plato down to modern German thinkers, were responsible. Perhaps you will now understand why Emerson makes so many references to men of this type.

**Emerson's Last Days.** Of Emerson's life there remains little more to be told. Twice more he went abroad, the second time as a reward for his popularity, while his house, which had burned in 1872, was being restored. Before he died he had appeared on lecture platforms in nearly all parts of the country, and his books were read everywhere. He died quietly and serenely, April 27, 1882, of pneumonia. In his last days his memory had partially failed him, but he was intelligent to the end. Thus one day when he could not think of the word "umbrella," he described it as something which people carry away. At the poet Longfellow's funeral he remarked, "That gentleman was a sweet, beautiful soul, but I have entirely forgotten his name."

**Emerson's Works.** There have been numerous editions of Emerson's works since his death, many of which are badly edited and imperfect. The student should beware of any Emerson text which is not published by a reputable firm with the name of its editor on the title page. The only complete authentic edition is that published by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston. The editions in their first printing are as follows:

1836, *Nature, an Essay*

1837, the famous *Concord Hymn*, celebrating the Battle at the North Bridge

1841, *Essays, First Series*, including the essays *Self-Reliance* and *Compensation*

1844, *Essays, Second Series*, including the essay *Manners*

1847, *Poems*

1850, *Representative Men*, based on the lectures given in England during 1847-1848

1856, *English Traits*

1860, *The Conduct of Life*

1867, *May-Day and Other Pieces* (Verse)

1870, *Society and Solitude*

1909-14, *Emerson's Journals*, edited by Emerson's son and grandson, Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes

**Emerson's Style.** As a stylist Emerson was by no means a perfect example for English writers of today. This is partly accounted for by the differences in our standards and partly by virtue of his own temperament. Style, after all, is more a matter of temperament than anything else. Geniuses cannot be expected to conform to convention, and Emerson was inherently a nonconformist. It is your colorless individual who writes like a copybook, who wears the latest style in clothes in the common manner, who is content when he is grammatically and rhetorically correct. Language is after all made for man and not man for language. The late Wendell Phillips' famous remark to the young purist who detected a flaw in his diction comes to our mind: "Young man, when the English language gets in my way, it doesn't stand a

chance." We must not be too critical of these smaller matters, lest we defeat the purposes which language was intended to serve. Meticulousness may be necessary to the small man; freedom may be allowed the great one. Emerson was big enough to make his own standards. If we find him little unified in many of his paragraph structures, and less careful in the joining of his thought than modern style demands, let us look to the habits of the man. Perhaps such methods best express his personality, best serve his immediate aims. In other respects he may be superior. As Emerson himself explains in one of the essays in this collection, "a certain compensation balances every gift and every defect."

What is this man behind the style? Let us look at him for a moment as his contemporaries knew him.

We are told that he was a man of exceeding dignity and serenity of temper. He never moved rapidly, never did anything hurriedly; he always spoke deliberately and never lost his temper. Undoubtedly he likewise thought very slowly. This man lived at peace with the world and was beloved by his family, his neighbors and townspeople, and by his audiences. Everywhere he went he was treated with respect.

Yet he had the courage of his convictions and refused to do or say anything that was contrary to his own conscience. He sacrificed his career as a minister when he could easily have satisfied his congregation by an outward conformity alone. He startled his audience in his famous Phi Beta Kappa address in Cambridge, where a lesser man would not have felt the need. He saw life clearly and faced it frankly.

He was not what the world is pleased to call a practical man; that is, he was not a materialist. Possibly he was too visionary. He had a poet's mind, which may account for everything. He was a dreamer, sharing the spirit of mystic philosophers. He was impervious to mathematical reasoning. He never took the pains to be accurate in statistics. He would quote from memory rather than go back to his source. Sometimes he forgot to give credit for a borrowed line which he places in quotation marks. Yet there is no mistaking the value of his message.

His manner of writing is also instructive. He seldom, if ever, sat down to continuous composition. His way was to catch stray thoughts as they alighted in his mind. Thus he kept a notebook in his pocket, and on walks or at gatherings, when reading or at ease, whenever a thought came to his mind, he would record it by itself. In the course of many weeks, on the eve of an impending lecture, he would bring together these isolated notes, adding whatever amplification seemed suitable, and thus would evolve another discourse. These talks were all carefully revised, however, before publication, and so thus received additional observations from the notebook.

Emerson's style, then, is like the man: calm, serene, dispassionate, individual, and somewhat dogmatic; often more romantic than scientific. His method of composition and the oral purpose for which his essays were originally planned give him a positiveness that we do not find in most literary compositions. He was thus master of the epigrammatic style, that which delights in philosophic truths based on concrete imagery, which is calculated to keep an audience at attention. The many pauses, the overuse of words in series, the trick of balancing one idea over against another, the many short sentences; all these and many more proclaim the master speaker. Could we hear these essays intoned by the rich voice of their author, we should accord them an even greater reputation than they have today. But the mature reader, whether he believe with the author or not, is invariably stimulated. That is why we regard Emerson so highly.

E. K. MAXFIELD

*Washington, Pennsylvania*  
May 25, 1929

# REPRESENTATIVE MEN

## USES OF GREAT MEN

IT is natural to believe in great men. If the companions of our childhood should turn out to be heroes, and their condition regal, it would not surprise us. All mythology opens with demigods, and the circumstance is high and poetic; that is, their genius is paramount. In the legends of the Gautama,<sup>1</sup> the first men ate the earth and found it deliciously sweet.

Nature seems to exist for the excellent. The world is upheld by the veracity of good men: they make the earth wholesome. They who lived with them found life glad and nutritious. Life is sweet and tolerable only in our belief in such society; and, actually or ideally, we manage to live with superiors. We call our children and our lands by their names. Their names are wrought into the verbs of language, their works and effigies are in our houses, and every circumstance of the day recalls an anecdote of them.

The search after the great man is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood. We travel into foreign parts to find his works, — if possible, to get a glimpse of him. But we are put off with fortune instead. You say, the English are practical; the Germans are hospitable; in Valencia<sup>2</sup> the climate is delicious; and in the hills of the Sacramento<sup>3</sup> there is gold for the gathering. Yes, but I do not travel to find comfortable, rich, and hospitable people, or clear sky, or ingots that cost too much. But if there were any magnet that would point to the countries and houses where are the persons

who are intrinsically rich and powerful, I would sell all and buy it, and put myself on the road today.

The race goes with us on their credit. The knowledge that in the city is a man who invented the railroad, raises the credit of all the citizens. But enormous populations, if they be beggars, are disgusting, like moving cheese, like hills of ants or of fleas, — the more, the worse.

Our religion is the love and cherishing of these patrons. The gods of fable are the shining moments of great men. We run all our vessels into one mould. Our colossal theologies of Judaism, Christism, Buddhism, Mahometism, are the necessary and structural action of the human mind. The student of history is like a man going into a warehouse to buy cloths or carpets. He fancies he has a new article. If he go to the factory, he shall find that his new stuff still repeats the scrolls and rosettes which are found on the interior walls of the pyramids of Thebes.<sup>4</sup> Our theism is the purification of the human mind. Man can paint, or make, or think, nothing but man. He believes that the great material elements had their origin from his thought. And our philosophy finds one essence collected or distributed.

If now we proceed to inquire into the kinds of service we derive from others, let us be warned of the danger of modern studies, and begin low enough. We must not contend against love, or deny the substantial existence of other people. I know not what would happen to us. We have social strengths. Our affection towards others creates a sort of vantage or purchase which nothing will supply. I can do that by another which I cannot do alone. [I can say to you what I cannot first say to myself. Other men are lenses through which we read our own minds.] Each man seeks those of different quality from his own, and such as are good of their kind; that is, he seeks other men, and the *otherest*.<sup>5</sup> The stronger the nature, the more it is reactive. Let us have the quality pure. A little genius let us leave alone. A main difference betwixt



men is, whether they attend their own affair or not. Man is that noble endogenous<sup>6</sup> plant which grows, like the palm, from within outward. His own affair, though impossible to others, he can open with celerity and in sport. It is easy to sugar to be sweet and to nitre to be salt. We take a great deal of pains to waylay and entrap that which of itself will fall into our hands. I count him a great man who inhabits a higher sphere of thought, into which other men rise with labor and difficulty; he has but to open his eyes to see things in a true light and in large relations, whilst they must make painful corrections and keep a vigilant eye on many sources of error. His service to us is of like sort. It costs a beautiful person no exertion to paint her image on our eyes; yet how splendid is that benefit! It costs no more for a wise soul to convey his quality to other men. And every one can do his best thing easiest. "*Peu de moyens, beaucoup d'effët.*"<sup>7</sup> He is great who is what he is from nature, and who never reminds us of others.]

But he must be related to us, and our life receive from him some promise of explanation. I cannot tell what I would know; but I have observed there are persons who, in their character and actions, answer questions which I have not skill to put. [One man answers some question which none of his contemporaries put, and is isolated. The past and passing religions and philosophies answer some other question. Certain men affect us as rich possibilities, but helpless to themselves and to their times, — the sport perhaps of some instinct that rules in the air; — they do not speak to our want. But the great are near; we know them at sight. They satisfy expectation and fall into place. What is good is effective, generative; makes for itself room, food, and allies. A sound apple produces seed, — a hybrid<sup>8</sup> does not. Is a man in his place, he is constructive, fertile, magnetic, inundating armies with his purpose, which is thus executed. The river makes its own shores, and each legitimate idea makes its own chan-

nels and welcome, — harvests for food, institutions for expression, weapons to fight with, and disciples to explain it. The true artist has the planet for his pedestal; the adventurer, after years of strife, has nothing broader than his own shoes.

Our common discourse respects two kinds of use or service from superior men. Direct giving is agreeable to the early belief of men; direct giving of material or metaphysical aid, as of health, eternal youth, fine senses, arts of healing, magical power, and prophecy. The boy believes there is a teacher who can sell him wisdom. Churches believe in imputed merit. But, in strictness, we are not much cognizant of direct serving. Man is endogenous, and education is his unfolding. The aid we have from others is mechanical compared with the discoveries of nature in us. What is thus learned is delightful in the doing, and the effect remains. Right ethics are central and go from the soul outward. Gift is contrary to the law of the universe. Serving others is serving us. I must absolve me to myself. "Mind thy affair," says the spirit: — "coxcomb,<sup>9</sup> would you meddle with the skies, or with other people?" Indirect service is left. Men have a pictorial or representative quality, and serve us in the intellect. Behmen<sup>10</sup> and Swedenborg<sup>11</sup> saw that things were representative. Men are also representative; first, of things, and secondly, of ideas.

As plants convert the minerals into food for animals, so each man converts some raw material in nature to human use. The inventors of fire, electricity, magnetism, iron, lead, glass, linen, silk, cotton; the makers of tools; the inventor of decimal notation; the geometer; the engineer; the musician, — severally make an easy way for all, through unknown and impossible confusions. Each man is by secret liking connected with some district of nature, whose agent and interpreter he is; as Linnæus,<sup>12</sup> of plants; Huber,<sup>13</sup> of bees; Fries,<sup>14</sup> of lichens; Van Mons,<sup>15</sup> of pears; Dalton,<sup>16</sup> of atomic forms; Euclid,<sup>17</sup> of lines; Newton,<sup>18</sup> of fluxions.<sup>19</sup>

A man is a centre for nature, running out threads of relation through every thing, fluid and solid, material and elemental. The earth rolls; every clod and stone comes to the meridian: so every organ, function, acid, crystal, grain of dust, has its relation to the brain. It waits long, but its turn comes. Each plant has its parasite, and each created thing its lover and poet. Justice has already been done to steam, to iron, to wood, to coal, to loadstone, to iodine, to corn, and cotton; but how few materials are yet used by our arts! The mass of creatures and of qualities are still hid and expectant. It would seem as if each waited, like the enchanted princess in fairy tales, for a destined human deliverer. Each must be disenchanting and walk forth to the day in human shape. In the history of discovery, the ripe and latent truth seems to have fashioned a brain for itself. A magnet must be made man in some Gilbert,<sup>20</sup> or Swedenborg, or Ørsted,<sup>21</sup> before the general mind can come to entertain its powers.

If we limit ourselves to the first advantages, a sober grace adheres to the mineral and botanic kingdoms, which, in the highest moments, comes up as the charm of nature, — the glitter of the spar, the sureness of affinity, the veracity of angles. Light and darkness, heat and cold, hunger and food, sweet and sour, solid, liquid and gas, circle us round in a wreath of pleasures, and, by their agreeable quarrel, beguile the day of life. The eye repeats every day the first eulogy on things, — “He saw that they were good.” We know where to find them; and these performers are relished all the more, after a little experience of the pretending races. We are entitled also to higher advantages. Something is wanting to science until it has been humanized. The table of logarithms is one thing, and its vital play in botany, music, optics, and architecture, another. There are advancements to numbers, anatomy, architecture, astronomy, little suspected at first, when, by union with intellect and will, they ascend into the life and reappear in conversation, character, and politics.

But this comes later. We speak now only of our acquaintance with them in their own sphere and the way in which they seem to fascinate and draw to them some genius who occupies himself with one thing, all his life long. The possibility of interpretation lies in the identity of the observer with the observed. Each material thing has its celestial side; has its translation, through humanity, into the spiritual and necessary sphere where it plays a part as indestructible as any other. And to these, their ends, all things continually ascend. The gases gather to the solid firmament: the chemic lump arrives at the plant, and grows; arrives at the quadruped, and walks; arrives at the man, and thinks. But also the constituency determines the vote of the representative. He is not only representative, but participant. Like can only be known by like. The reason why he knows about them is that he is of them; he has just come out of nature, or from being a part of that thing. Animated chlorine knows of chlor<sup>o</sup>ine, and incarnate zinc, of zinc. Their quality makes his career; and he can variously publish their virtues, because they compose him. Man, made of the dust of the world, does not forget his origin; and all that is yet inanimate will one day speak and reason. Unpublished nature will have its whole secret told. Shall we say that quartz mountains will pulverize into innumerable Werners,<sup>22</sup> Von Buchs,<sup>23</sup> and Beaumonts,<sup>24</sup> and the laboratory of the atmosphere holds in solution I know not what Berzeliuses<sup>25</sup> and Davys?<sup>26</sup>

Thus we sit by the fire and take hold on the poles of the earth. This *quasi*<sup>27</sup> omnipresence supplies the imbecility of our condition. In one of those celestial days when heaven and earth meet and adorn each other, it seems a poverty that we can only spend it once: we wish for a thousand heads, a thousand bodies, that we might celebrate its immense beauty in many ways and places. Is this fancy? Well, in good faith, we are multiplied by our proxies. How easily we adopt their labors! Every ship that comes to America got its chart

from Columbus. Every novel is a debtor to Homer. Every carpenter who shaves with a fore-plane borrows the genius of a forgotten inventor. Life is girt all round with a zodiac of sciences, the contributions of men who have perished to add their point of light to our sky. Engineer, broker, jurist, physician, moralist, theologian, and every man, inasmuch as he has any science, — is a definer and map-maker of the latitudes and longitudes of our condition. These road-makers on every hand enrich us. We must extend the area of life and multiply our relations. We are as much gainers by finding a new property in the old earth as by acquiring a new planet.

We are too passive in the reception of these material or semi-material aids. We must not be sacks and stomachs. To ascend one step, — we are better served through our sympathy. Activity is contagious. Looking where others look, and conversing with the same things, we catch the charm which lured them. Napoleon<sup>28</sup> said, “You must not fight too often with one enemy, or you will teach him all your art of war.” Talk much with any man of vigorous mind, and we acquire very fast the habit of looking at things in the same light, and on each occurrence we anticipate his thought.

Men are helpful through the intellect and the affections. Other help I find a false appearance. If you affect to give me bread and fire, I perceive that I pay for it the full price, and at last it leaves me as it found me, neither better nor worse: but all mental and moral force is a positive good. It goes out from you, whether you will or not, and profits me whom you never thought of. I cannot even hear of personal vigor of any kind, great power of performance, without fresh resolution. We are emulous of all that man can do. Cecil's<sup>29</sup> saying of Sir Walter Raleigh,<sup>30</sup> “I know that he can toil terribly,” is an electric touch. So are Clarendon's<sup>31</sup> portraits, — of Hampden,<sup>32</sup> “who was of an industry and vigilance not to be tired out or wearied by the most laborious, and of

parts not to be imposed on by the most subtle and sharp, and of a personal courage equal to his best parts;" — of Falkland,<sup>33</sup> "who was so severe an adorer of truth, that he could as easily have given himself leave to steal, as to dissemble." We cannot read Plutarch<sup>34</sup> without a tingling of the blood; and I accept the saying of the Chinese Mencius:<sup>35</sup> "A sage is the instructor of a hundred ages. When the manners of Loo<sup>36</sup> are heard of, the stupid become intelligent, and the wavering, determined."

This is the moral of biography; yet it is hard for departed men to touch the quick like our own companions, whose names may not last as long. What is he whom I never think of? Whilst in every solitude are those who succor our genius and stimulate us in wonderful manners. There is a power in love to divine another's destiny better than that other can and, by heroic encouragements, hold him to his task. What has friendship so signal as its sublime attraction to whatever virtue is in us? We will never more think cheaply of ourselves, or of life. We are piqued to some purpose, and the industry of the diggers on the railroad will not again shame us.

Under this head too falls that homage, very pure as I think, which all ranks pay to the hero of the day, from Coriolanus<sup>37</sup> and Gracchus<sup>38</sup> down to Pitt,<sup>39</sup> Lafayette,<sup>40</sup> Wellington,<sup>41</sup> Webster,<sup>42</sup> Lamartine.<sup>43</sup> Hear the shouts in the street! The people cannot see him enough. They delight in a man. Here is a head and a trunk! What a front! what eyes! Atlantean shoulders,<sup>44</sup> and the whole carriage heroic, with equal inward force to guide the great machine! This pleasure of full expression to that which, in their private experience is usually cramped and obstructed, runs also much higher, and is the secret of the reader's joy in literary genius. Nothing is kept back. There is fire enough to fuse the mountain of ore. Shakespeare's<sup>45</sup> principal merit may be conveyed in saying that he of all men best understands the English language, and can say what he will. Yet these unchoked channels and floodgates

of expression are only health or fortunate constitution. Shakespeare's name suggests other and purely intellectual benefits.

Senates and sovereigns have no compliment, with their medals, swords, and armorial coats, like the addressing to a human being thoughts out of a certain height, and presupposing his intelligence. This honor, which is possible in personal intercourse scarcely twice in a lifetime, genius perpetually pays; contented if now and then in a century the proffer is accepted. The indicators of the values of matter are degraded to a sort of cooks and confectioners, on the appearance of the indicators of ideas. Genius is the naturalist or geographer of the supersensible regions, and draws their map; and, by acquainting us with new fields of activity, cools our affection for the old. These are at once accepted as the reality, of which the world we have conversed with is the show.

We go to the gymnasium and the swimming-school to see the power and beauty of the body; there is the like pleasure and a higher benefit from witnessing intellectual feats of all kinds; as feats of memory, of mathematical combination, great power of abstraction, the transmutings of the imagination, even versatility and concentration, — as these acts expose the invisible organs and members of the mind, which respond, member for member, to the parts of the body. For we thus enter a new gymnasium, and learn to choose men by their truest marks, taught, with Plato,<sup>46</sup> “to choose those who can, without aid from the eyes or any other sense, proceed to truth and to being.” Foremost among these activities are the summersaults, spells, and resurrections wrought by the imagination. When this wakes, a man seems to multiply ten times or a thousand times his force. It opens the delicious sense of indeterminate size and inspires an audacious mental habit. We are as elastic as the gas of gunpowder, and a sentence in a book, or a word dropped in conversation, sets free our fancy, and instantly our heads are bathed with

galaxies, and our feet tread the floor of the Pit.<sup>47</sup> And this benefit is real because we are entitled to these enlargements, and once having passed the bounds shall never again be quite the miserable pedants we were.

The high functions of the intellect are so allied that some imaginative power usually appears in all eminent minds, even in arithmeticians of the first class, but especially in meditative men of an intuitive habit of thought. This class serve us, so that they have the perception of identity and the perception of reaction. The eyes of Plato, Shakespeare, Swedenborg, Gœthe,<sup>48</sup> never shut on either of these laws. The perception of these laws is a kind of metre of the mind. Little minds are little through failure to see them.

Even these feasts have their surfeit. Our delight in reason degenerates into idolatry of the herald. Especially when a mind of powerful method has instructed men, we find the examples of oppression. The dominion of Aristotle,<sup>49</sup> the Ptolemaic astronomy,<sup>50</sup> the credit of Luther,<sup>51</sup> of Bacon,<sup>52</sup> of Locke;<sup>53</sup> — in religion the history of hierarchies, of saints, and the sects which have taken the name of each founder, are in point. Alas! every man is such a victim. The imbecility of men is always inviting the impudence of power. It is the delight of vulgar talent to dazzle and to blind the beholder. But true genius seeks to defend us from itself. True genius will not impoverish, but will liberate, and add new senses. If a wise man should appear in our village he would create, in those who conversed with him, a new consciousness of wealth, by opening their eyes to unobserved advantages; he would establish a sense of immovable equality, calm us with assurances that we could not be cheated; as every one would discern the checks and guaranties of condition. The rich would see their mistakes and poverty, the poor their escapes and resources.

But nature brings all this about in due time. Rotation is her remedy. The soul is impatient of masters and eager for



change. Housekeepers say of a domestic who has been valuable, "She had lived with me long enough." [We are tendencies, or rather, symptoms, and none of us complete. We touch and go, and sip the foam of many lives. Rotation is the law of nature.] When nature removes a great man, people explore the horizon for a successor; but none comes, and none will. His class is extinguished with him. In some other and quite different field the next man will appear; not Jefferson,<sup>54</sup> not Franklin,<sup>55</sup> but now a great salesman, then a road-contractor, then a student of fishes, then a buffalo-hunting explorer, or a semi-savage Western general. Thus we make a stand against our rougher masters; but against the best there is a finer remedy. The power which they communicate is not theirs. When we are exalted by ideas, we do not owe this to Plato, but to the idea, to which also Plato was debtor.

I must not forget that we have a special debt to a single class. Life is a scale of degrees. Between rank and rank of our great men are wide intervals. Mankind have in all ages attached themselves to a few persons who either by the quality of that idea they embodied or by the largeness of their reception were entitled to the position of leaders and law-givers. These teach us the qualities of primary nature, — admit us to the constitution of things. We swim, day by day, on a river of delusions and are effectually amused with houses and towns in the air, of which the men about us are dupes. But life is a sincerity. In lucid intervals we say, "Let there be an entrance opened for me into realities; I have worn the fool's cap too long." We will know the meaning of our economies and politics. Give us the cipher, and if persons and things are scores of a celestial music, let us read off the strains. We have been cheated of our reason; yet there have been sane men, who enjoyed a rich and related existence. What they know, they know for us. [With each new mind, a new secret of nature transpires;] nor can the Bible be closed until

the last great man is born. These men correct the delirium of the animal spirits, make us considerate, and engage us to new aims and powers. The veneration of mankind selects these for the highest place. Witness the multitude of statues, pictures, and memorials which recall their genius in every city, village, house, and ship: —

“Ever their phantoms arise before us,  
Our loftier brothers, but one in blood;  
At bed and table they lord it o'er us  
With looks of beauty and words of good.”<sup>56</sup>

How to illustrate the distinctive benefit of ideas, the service rendered by those who introduce moral truths into the general mind? — I am plagued, in all my living, with a perpetual tariff of prices. If I work in my garden and prune an apple-tree, I am well enough entertained, and could continue indefinitely in the like occupation. But it comes to mind that a day is gone, and I have got this precious nothing done. I go to Boston or New York and run up and down on my affairs: they are sped, but so is the day. I am vexed by the recollection of this price I have paid for a trifling advantage. I remember the *peau d'âne*<sup>57</sup> on which whoso sat should have his desire, but a piece of the skin was gone for every wish. I go to a convention of philanthropists. Do what I can, I cannot keep my eyes off the clock. But if there should appear in the company some gentle soul who knows little of persons or parties, of Carolina or Cuba, but who announces a law that disposes these particulars, and so certifies me of the equity which checkmates every false player, bankrupts every self-seeker, and apprises me of my independence on any conditions of country, or time, or human body, — that man liberates me; I forget the clock. I pass out of the sore relation to persons. I am healed of my hurts. I am made immortal by apprehending my possession of incorruptible goods. Here is great competition of rich and

poor. We live in a market, where is only so much wheat, or wool, or land: and if I have so much more, every other must have so much less. I seem to have no good without breach of good manners. Nobody is glad in the gladness of another, and our system is one of war, of an injurious superiority. Every child of the Saxon race is educated to wish to be first. It is our system; and a man comes to measure his greatness by the regrets, envies, and hatreds of his competitors. But in these new fields there is room: here are no self-esteems, no exclusions.

I admire great men of all classes, those who stand for facts, and for thoughts; I like rough and smooth, "Scourges of God," and "Darlings of the human race." I like the first Cæsar;<sup>58</sup> and Charles V.,<sup>59</sup> of Spain; and Charles XII.,<sup>60</sup> of Sweden; Richard Plantagenet;<sup>61</sup> and Bonaparte,<sup>62</sup> in France. I applaud a sufficient man, an officer equal to his office; captains, ministers, senators. I like a master standing firm on legs of iron, well-born, rich, handsome, eloquent, loaded with advantages, drawing all men by fascination into tributaries and supporters of his power. Sword and staff, or talents sword-like or staff-like, carry on the work of the world. But I find him greater when he can abolish himself and all heroes, by letting in this element of reason, irrespective of persons, this subtilizer and irresistible upward force, into our thought, destroying individualism; the power is so great that the potentate is nothing. Then he is a monarch who gives a constitution to his people; a pontiff who preaches the equality of souls and releases his servants from their barbarous homages; an emperor who can spare his empire.

But I intended to specify, with a little minuteness, two or three points of service. Nature never spares the opium or nepenthe,<sup>63</sup> but wherever she mars her creature with some deformity or defect, lays her poppies plentifully on the bruise, and the sufferer goes joyfully through life, ignorant of the ruin and incapable of seeing it, though all the world point their

finger at it every day. The worthless and offensive members of society, whose existence is a social pest, invariably think themselves the most ill-used people alive, and never get over their astonishment at the ingratitude and selfishness of their contemporaries. Our globe discovers its hidden virtues, not only in heroes and archangels, but in gossips and nurses. Is it not a rare contrivance that lodged the due inertia in every creature, the conserving, resisting energy, the anger at being waked or changed? Altogether independent of the intellectual force in each is the pride of opinion, the security that we are right. Not the feeblest grandame, not a mowing idiot, but uses what spark of perception and faculty is left, to chuckle and triumph in his or her opinion over the absurdities of all the rest. Difference from me is the measure of absurdity. Not one has a misgiving of being wrong. Was not it a bright thought that made things cohere with this bitumen, fastest of cements? But, in the midst of this chuckle of self-gratulation, some figure goes by which Ther-sites<sup>64</sup> too can love and admire. This is he that should marshall us the way we were going. There is no end to his aid. Without Plato we should almost lose our faith in the possibility of a reasonable book. We seem to want but one, but we want one. We love to associate with heroic persons, since our receptivity is unlimited; and, with the great, our thoughts and manners easily become great. We are all wise in capacity, though so few in energy. There needs but one wise man in a company and all are wise, so rapid is the contagion.

Great men are thus a collyrium<sup>65</sup> to clear our eyes from egotism and enable us to see other people and their works. But there are vices and follies incident to whole populations and ages. Men resemble their contemporaries even more than their progenitors. It is observed in old couples, or in persons who have been housemates for a course of years, that they grow like, and if they should live long enough we should not be able to know them apart. Nature abhors these com-

plaisances which threaten to melt the world into a lump, and hastens to break up such maudlin agglutinations. The like assimilation goes on between men of one town, of one sect, of one political party; and the ideas of the time are in the air, and infect all who breathe it. Viewed from any high point, this city of New York, yonder city of London, the Western civilization, would seem a bundle of insanities. We keep each other in countenance and exasperate by emulation the frenzy of the time. The shield against the stings of conscience is the universal practice, or our contemporaries. Again, it is very easy to be as wise and good as your companions. We learn of our contemporaries what they know, without effort, and almost through the pores of the skin. We catch it by sympathy, or as a wife arrives at the intellectual and moral elevations of her husband. But we stop where they stop. Very hardly can we take another step. The great, or such as hold of nature and transcend fashions by their fidelity to universal ideas, are saviors from these federal errors, and defend us from our contemporaries. They are the exceptions which we want, where all grows like. A foreign greatness is the antidote for cabalism.

Thus we feed on genius, and refresh ourselves from too much conversation with our mates, and exult in the depth of nature in that direction in which he leads us. What indemnification is one great man for populations of pigmies! Every mother wishes one son a genius, though all the rest should be mediocre. But a new danger appears in the excess of influence of the great man. His attractions warp us from our place. We have become underlings and intellectual suicides. Ah! yonder in the horizon is our help; — other great men, new qualities, counterweights and checks on each other. We cloy of the honey of each peculiar greatness. Every hero becomes a bore at last. Perhaps Voltaire <sup>66</sup> was not bad-hearted, yet he said of the good Jesus, even, "I pray you, let me never hear that man's name again." They cry up the virtues of

George Washington, — “Damn George Washington!” is the poor Jacobin’s <sup>67</sup> whole speech and confutation. But it is human nature’s indispensable defence. The centripetence augments the centrifugence. We balance one man with his opposite, and the health of the state depends on the see-saw.

There is however a speedy limit to the use of heroes. Every genius is defended from approach by quantities of unavailability. They are very attractive, and seem at a distance our own: but we are hindered on all sides from approach. The more we are drawn, the more we are repelled. There is something not solid in the good that is done for us. The best discovery the discoverer makes for himself. It has something unreal for his companion until he too has substantiated it. It seems as if the Deity dressed each soul which he sends into nature in certain virtues and powers not communicable to other men, and sending it to perform one more turn through the circle of beings, wrote “*Not transferable*” and “*Good for this trip only*,” on these garments of the soul. There is something somewhat deceptive about the intercourse of minds. The boundaries are invisible, but they are never crossed. There is such good will to impart, and such good will to receive, that each threatens to become the other; but the law of individuality collects its secret strength: you are you, and I am I, and so we remain.

For nature wishes every thing to remain itself; and whilst every individual strives to grow and exclude and to exclude and grow, to the extremities of the universe, and to impose the law of its being on every other creature, Nature steadily aims to protect each against every other. Each is self-defended. Nothing is more marked than the power by which individuals are guarded from individuals, in a world where every benefactor becomes so easily a malefactor only by continuation of his activity into places where it is not due; where children seem so much at the mercy of their foolish parents, and where almost all men are too social and inter-

fering. We rightly speak of the guardian angels of children. How superior in their security from infusions of evil persons, from vulgarity and second thought! They shed their own abundant beauty on the objects they behold. Therefore they are not at the mercy of such poor educators as we adults. If we huff and chide them they soon come not to mind it and get a self-reliance; and if we indulge them to folly, they learn the limitation elsewhere.

We need not fear excessive influence. A more generous trust is permitted. Serve the great. Stick at no humiliation. Grudge no office thou canst render. Be the limb of their body, the breath of their mouth. Compromise thy egotism. Who cares for that, so thou gain aught wider and nobler? Never mind the taunt of Boswellism:<sup>68</sup> the devotion may easily be greater than the wretched pride which is guarding its own skirts. Be another: not thyself, but a Platonist;<sup>69</sup> not a soul, but a Christian; not a naturalist, but a Cartesian;<sup>70</sup> not a poet, but a Shakesperian. In vain, the wheels of tendency will not stop, nor will all the forces of inertia, fear, or of love itself hold thee there. On, and forever onward! The microscope observes a monad or wheel-insect among the infusions circulating in water. Presently a dot appears on the animal, which enlarges to a slit, and it becomes two perfect animals. The ever-proceeding detachment appears not less in all thought and in society. Children think they cannot live without their parents. But, long before they are aware of it, the black dot has appeared and the detachment taken place. Any accident will now reveal to them their independence.

But *great men*: — the word is injurious. Is there caste? is there fate? What becomes of the promise to virtue? The thoughtful youth laments the superfœtation of nature. “Generous and handsome,” he says, “is your hero; but look at yonder poor Paddy, whose country is his wheelbarrow; look at his whole nation of Paddies.” Why are the masses,

from the dawn of history down, food for knives and powder? The idea dignifies a few leaders, who have sentiment, opinion, love, self-devotion; and they make war and death sacred; — but what for the wretches whom they hire and kill? The cheapness of man is every day's tragedy. It is as real a loss that others should be low as that we should be low; for we must have society.

Is it a reply to these suggestions to say, Society is a Pestalozzian <sup>71</sup> school: all are teachers and pupils in turn? We are equally served by receiving and by imparting. Men who know the same things are not long the best company for each other. But bring to each an intelligent person of another experience, and it is as if you let off water from a lake by cutting a lower basin. It seems a mechanical advantage, and great benefit it is to each speaker, as he can now paint out his thought to himself. We pass very fast, in our personal moods, from dignity to dependence. And if any appear never to assume the chair, but always to stand and serve, it is because we do not see the company in a sufficiently long period for the whole rotation of parts to come about. As to what we call the masses, and common men, — there are no common men. All men are at last of a size; and true art is only possible on the conviction that every talent has its apotheosis somewhere. Fair play and an open field and freshest laurels to all who have won them! But heaven reserves an equal scope for every creature. Each is uneasy until he has produced his private ray unto the concave sphere and beheld his talent also in its last nobility and exaltation.

The heroes of the hour are relatively great; of a faster growth; or they are such in whom, at the moment of success, a quality is ripe which is then in request. Other days will demand other qualities. Some rays escape the common observer, and want a finely adapted eye. Ask the great man if there be none greater. His companions are; and not the less great but the more that society cannot see them. Nature



never sends a great man into the planet without confiding the secret to another soul.

One gracious fact emerges from these studies, — that there is true ascension in our love. The reputations of the nineteenth century will one day be quoted to prove its barbarism. The genius of humanity is the real subject whose biography is written in our annals. We must infer much, and supply many chasms in the record. The history of the universe is symptomatic, and life is mnemonical.<sup>72</sup> [No man, in all the procession of famous men, is reason or illumination or that essence we were looking for; but is an exhibition, in some quarter, of new possibilities.] Could we one day complete the immense figure which these flagrant points compose! The study of many individuals leads us to an elemental region wherein the individual is lost, or wherein all touch by their summits. Thought and feeling that break out there cannot be impounded by any fence of personality. This is the key to the power of the greatest men, — their spirit diffuses itself. A new quality of mind travels by night and by day, in concentric circles from its origin, and publishes itself by unknown methods: the union of all minds appears intimate; what gets admission to one, cannot be kept out of any other; the smallest acquisition of truth or of energy, in any quarter, is so much good to the commonwealth of souls. [If the disparities of talent and position vanish when the individuals are seen in the duration which is necessary to complete the career of each, even more swiftly the seeming injustice disappears when we ascend to the central identity of all the individuals, and know that they are made of the substance which ordaineth and doeth.]

The genius of humanity is the right point of view of history. The qualities abide; the men who exhibit them have now more, now less, and pass away; the qualities remain on another brow. No experience is more familiar. Once you saw phœnixes:<sup>73</sup> they are gone; the world is not therefore dis-

enchanted. The vessels on which you read sacred emblems turn out to be common pottery; but the sense of the pictures is sacred, and you may still read them transferred to the walls of the world. For a time our teachers serve us personally, as metres or milestones of progress. Once they were angels of knowledge and their figures touched the sky. Then we drew near, saw their means, culture, and limits; and they yielded their place to other geniuses. Happy, if a few names remain so high that we have not been able to read them nearer, and age and comparison have not robbed them of a ray. [But at last we shall cease to look in men for completeness, and shall content ourselves with their social and delegated quality. All that respects the individual is temporary and prospective, like the individual himself, who is ascending out of his limits into a catholic existence.] We have never come at the true and best benefit of any genius so long as we believe him an original force. In the moment when he ceases to help us as a cause, he begins to help us more as an effect. Then he appears as an exponent of a vaster mind and will. The opaque self becomes transparent with the light of the First Cause.<sup>74</sup>

Yet, within the limits of human education and agency, we may say great men exist that there may be greater men. The destiny of organized nature is amelioration, and who can tell its limits? It is for man to tame the chaos; on every side, whilst he lives, to scatter the seeds of science and of song, that climate, corn, animals, men, may be milder, and the germs of love and benefit may be multiplied.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The family name of the great religious teacher of early India, popularly known as Buddha, or the "enlightened one," who lived in the sixth century B.C. He taught that the cause of misery and sorrow was desire, and that to pluck desire from the heart was the way to peace.

<sup>2</sup> A city and province of Spain.

<sup>3</sup> A river in California. Emerson is referring to the region at the time when it was the center of the gold rush in 1848.

<sup>4</sup> Thebes was a celebrated city of ancient Egypt, for centuries the capital of the country. The tombs of the Egyptian kings were located there, their invariable design being in the form of the pyramid.

<sup>5</sup> Emerson coined this form, in the sense of "the most different."

<sup>6</sup> Literal meaning, "growing from within"; applied erroneously in the science of botany to species of plants once thought to attain their structure in that fashion.

<sup>7</sup> "Little effort, great result."

<sup>8</sup> Anything composed of mixed elements. Commonly used in stock or plant breeding.

<sup>9</sup> A pretentious, conceited, or affected person. The name is derived from the peculiar cap worn by court jesters, which had a semblance to a cock's comb.

<sup>10</sup> *Behmen*, (Bøehme, Bøehm) Jacob, a German philosopher and mystic (1575-1624).

<sup>11</sup> *Swedenborg*, Emanuel, Swedish scientist and theologian, founder of the modern sect called "The New Church" or "The Church of the New Jerusalem" (1688-1772).

<sup>12</sup> *Linnæus*, Carlous. Latin form of the name Carl von Linné. Swedish naturalist who originated the modern system of naming plants and animals (1707-1778).

<sup>13</sup> *Huber*, François, a Swiss naturalist famous for his pioneer researches concerning the life and habits of honeybees (1750-1831).

<sup>14</sup> *Fries*, Elias Magnus, eminent Swedish botanist, who made especial contributions to the knowledge of fungi, lichens, and mosses (1794-1878).

<sup>15</sup> *Von Mons*, Dr. J. R., a Belgian chemist noted for agriculture and fruit-growing, especially pears (1765-1842).

<sup>16</sup> *Dalton*, John, a celebrated English chemist and natural philosopher distinguished for his development of the atomic theory (1766-1844).

<sup>17</sup> *Euclid*, an eminent geometrician of Alexandria who taught about 300 B.C. He derived his renown from his work, *The Elements of Geometry*.

<sup>18</sup> *Newton*, Sir Isaac, a most illustrious English philosopher, who made remarkable discoveries in science, mathematics, and astronomy. Popularly known for his formulation of the law of gravitation (1642-1727).

<sup>19</sup> A mathematical term indicating the rate of change of a continuously varying quantity. The "method of fluxions" was invented by Sir Isaac Newton.

<sup>20</sup> *Gilbert*, William, a learned English physician who first discovered some of the properties of the magnet (1540-1603).

<sup>21</sup> *Ærsted*, Hans Christian, a distinguished Danish scientist who discovered electro-magnetism, which led to the development of the electric telegraph (1777-1851).

<sup>22</sup> *Werner*, Abraham Gottlob, a celebrated German mineralogist (1750-1817).

<sup>23</sup> *Von Buch*, Christian Leopold, Baron, an eminent Prussian geographer, geologist, and paleontologist (1774-1853).

<sup>24</sup> *Beaumont*, William, an American physician who attained wide celebrity through his experiments on the processes of digestion (1785-1853).

<sup>25</sup> *Berzelius*, Baron, a native of Sweden, one of the eminent chemists of modern times (1779-1848).

<sup>26</sup> *Davy*, Sir Humphrey, an eminent English chemist (1778-1829).

<sup>27</sup> "As if," *e.g.*, not fully genuine.

<sup>28</sup> *Napoleon Bonaparte*, emperor of France, defeated by the Duke of Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 (1769-1821).

<sup>29</sup> *Cecil*, William, Lord Burleigh, lord treasurer of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1520-1598).

<sup>30</sup> *Raleigh*, Sir Walter, British explorer, poet, and historian (1552-1618).

<sup>31</sup> *Clarendon*, Edward Hyde, first Earl of, an adherent of the Stuart cause and lord chancellor of England after the Restoration. He wrote a history of the Civil War (1609-1674).

<sup>32</sup> *Hampden*, John, an illustrious English patriot, a leader of the House of Commons (1594-1643).

<sup>33</sup> *Falkland*, Lucius Carey, Viscount of, an illustrious English statesman, noted for brilliance and integrity (1610-1643).

<sup>34</sup> Greek philosopher and historian. He was appointed consul by the Roman emperor Trajan. His most important work was *The Lives of Illustrious Men* (ca. 46-120 A. D.).

<sup>35</sup> Chinese moral teacher second only to Confucius (372-287 B.C.).

<sup>36</sup> Lu was the ancient seat of the Chinese royal family, the state or province of China associated with Confucius and his followers. Naturally, manners there would be superior.

<sup>37</sup> *Coriolanus*, Gaius Marcius, Roman legendary hero of patrician descent.

<sup>38</sup> There were two Roman statesmen by this name, brothers; Gaius Sempronius, (ca. 153-121 B.C.) and Tiberius Sempronius, (ca. 162-133 B.C.).

<sup>39</sup> *Pitt*, William, Earl of Chatham, English statesman of the reign of George III (1708-1778).

<sup>40</sup> *Lafayette*, Gilbert Mottier, Marquis de, one of the most distinguished patriots of the eighteenth century. He espoused the cause of the American Revolution and served as major-general in the American army. Later, he was exiled from France as a result of his patriotic efforts in the French Revolution (1757-1834).

<sup>41</sup> *Wellington*, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of, English general who conquered Napoleon at Waterloo (1769–1852).

<sup>42</sup> *Webster*, Daniel, one of the greatest of American statesmen and jurists (1782–1832).

<sup>43</sup> *Lamartine*, Alphonse Marie Louis de Prat de, French poet, historian, and statesman (1790–1869).

<sup>44</sup> Pertaining to Atlas, the mythical giant who was supposed to hold up the world on his shoulders.

<sup>45</sup> (1564–1616).

<sup>46</sup> Athenian philosopher, founder of the first great philosophical school, called the Academy (427–347 B.C.).

<sup>47</sup> Hell.

<sup>48</sup> Gøethe, Johann Wolfgang von, Germany's greatest poet (1749–1832).

<sup>49</sup> The most celebrated of the Greek philosophers (384–322 B.C.).

<sup>50</sup> Ptolemy wrote a cyclopædia of astronomy in which he held that the earth is fixed as the center of the universe (ca. 130 A.D.).

<sup>51</sup> *Luther*, Martin, German leader of the Reformation (1483–1546).

<sup>52</sup> *Bacon*, Sir Francis, English philosopher and scientist of the age of Queen Elizabeth (1561–1626).

<sup>53</sup> *Locke*, John, English philosopher (1632–1704).

<sup>54</sup> *Jefferson*, Thomas, third president of the United States and writer of the Declaration of Independence (1743–1826).

<sup>55</sup> (1706–1790).

<sup>56</sup> From John Sterling's poem, *Dædalus*.

<sup>57</sup> "Skin of an ass," used by Balzac in the plot of *The Wild Asses' Skin*.

<sup>58</sup> Gaius Julius Cæsar (102–44 B.C.).

<sup>59</sup> Roman emperor, German king, Duke of Burgundy, and, (as Charles I), king of Spain and the Sicilies (1500–1558).

<sup>60</sup> A Swedish king, ambitious for conquest (1682–1718).

<sup>61</sup> Known as Cœur de Lion or the Lion-hearted (1157–1197).

<sup>62</sup> See note 28 on Napoleon.

<sup>63</sup> A drug or potion reputed among the ancients to banish care and sorrow.

<sup>64</sup> An officer, the most deformed and illiberal of the Greeks during the Trojan War. He was killed by Achilles because he ridiculed that hero.

<sup>65</sup> A medicated application for diseased eyes; sometimes used as a beautifier.

<sup>66</sup> *Voltaire*, François Marie Arouet de, French historian, dramatist, and philosopher, noted for his radical views (1694–1778).

<sup>67</sup> A member of a radical society in France during the French Revolution, which, under Robespierre, led to the Reign of Terror.

<sup>68</sup> An adjective referring to James Boswell, a Scottish lawyer, famous as the biographer of Dr. Johnson (1740–1795).

<sup>69</sup> A follower of the system of teaching set forth by Plato.

<sup>70</sup> A follower of the French philosopher, Descartes (1596-1650).

<sup>71</sup> Followers of a Swiss pioneer in modern psychological methods of teaching, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827).

<sup>72</sup> Pertaining to, aiding, or designed to aid the memory.

<sup>73</sup> Fabulous birds, one of which was the supposed mythological ancestor of the Phœnician race. Later, associated with the worship of Ra, the sun god of Egypt. In alchemy, a symbol of fire; in religion, a symbol of immortality.

<sup>74</sup> The Creator.

## II

### PLATO; OR, THE PHILOSOPHER

**A**MONG secular books, Plato only is entitled to Omar's<sup>1</sup> fanatical compliment to the Koran,<sup>2</sup> when he said, "Burn the libraries; for their value is in this book." These sentences contain the culture of nations; these are the cornerstone of schools; these are the fountain-head of literatures. A discipline it is in logic, arithmetic, taste, symmetry, poetry, language, rhetoric, ontology,<sup>3</sup> morals, or practical wisdom. There was never such range of speculation. Out of Plato come all things that are still written and debated among men of thought. Great havoc makes he among our originalities. We have reached the mountain from which all these drift boulders were detached. The Bible of the learned for twenty-two hundred years, every brisk young man who says in succession fine things to each reluctant generation, — Boëthius,<sup>4</sup> Rabelais,<sup>5</sup> Erasmus,<sup>6</sup> Bruno,<sup>7</sup> Locke,<sup>8</sup> Rousseau,<sup>9</sup> Alfieri,<sup>10</sup> Coleridge,<sup>11</sup> — is some reader of Plato, translating into the vernacular,<sup>12</sup> wittily, his good things. Even the men of grander proportion suffer some deduction from the misfortune (shall I say?) of coming after this exhausting generalizer. St. Augustine,<sup>13</sup> Copernicus,<sup>14</sup> Newton,<sup>15</sup> Behmen,<sup>16</sup> Swedenborg,<sup>17</sup> Goëthe,<sup>18</sup> are likewise his debtors and must say after him. For it is fair to credit the broadest generalizer with all the particulars deducible from his thesis.

Plato is philosophy, and philosophy, Plato, — at once the glory and the shame of mankind, since neither Saxon<sup>19</sup> nor Roman<sup>20</sup> have availed to add any idea to his categories. No wife, no children had he, and the thinkers of all civilized nations are his posterity and are tinged with his mind. How

many great men Nature is incessantly sending up out of night, to be *his men*, — Platonists! the Alexandrians,<sup>21</sup> a constellation of genius; the Elizabethans,<sup>22</sup> not less; Sir Thomas More,<sup>23</sup> Henry More,<sup>24</sup> John Hales,<sup>25</sup> John Smith,<sup>26</sup> Lord Bacon,<sup>27</sup> Jeremy Taylor,<sup>28</sup> Ralph Cudworth,<sup>29</sup> Sydenham,<sup>30</sup> Thomas Taylor,<sup>31</sup> Marcilius Ficinus,<sup>32</sup> and Picus Mirandola.<sup>33</sup> Calvinism<sup>34</sup> is in his Phædo:<sup>35</sup> Christianity is in it. Mahometanism draws all its philosophy, in its handbook of morals, the Akhlak-y-Jalaly,<sup>36</sup> from him. Mysticism<sup>37</sup> finds in Plato all its texts. This citizen of a town in Greece is no villager nor patriot. An Englishman reads and says, "How English!", a German, — "How Teutonic!", an Italian, — "How Roman and how Greek!" As they say that Helen of Argos<sup>38</sup> had that universal beauty that every body felt related to her, so Plato seems to a reader in New England an American genius. His broad humanity transcends all sectional lines.

This range of Plato instructs us what to think of the vexed question concerning his reputed works, — what are genuine what spurious. It is singular that wherever we find a man higher by a whole head than any of his contemporaries, it is sure to come into doubt what are his real works. Thus Homer,<sup>39</sup> Plato, Raffælle,<sup>40</sup> Shakespeare. For these men magnetise their contemporaries, so that their companions can do for them what they can never do for themselves; and the great man does thus live in several bodies, and write, or paint or act, by many hands; and after some time it is not easy to say what is the authentic work of the master and what is only of his school.

Plato, too, like every great man, consumed his own times. What is a great man but one of great affinities, who takes up into himself all arts, sciences, all knowables, as his food? He can spare nothing; he can dispose of every thing. What is not good for virtue, is good for knowledge. Hence his contemporaries tax him with plagiarism.<sup>41</sup> But the inventor



only knows how to borrow; and society is glad to forget the innumerable laborers who ministered to this architect, and reserves all its gratitude for him. When we are praising Plato, it seems we are praising quotations from Solon<sup>42</sup> and Sophron<sup>43</sup> and Philolaus.<sup>44</sup> Be it so. Every book is a quotation; and every house is a quotation out of all forests and mines and stone quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors. And this grasping inventor puts all nations under contribution.

Plato absorbed the learning of his times, — Philolaus, Timæus,<sup>45</sup> Heraclitus,<sup>46</sup> Parmenides,<sup>47</sup> and what else; then his master, Socrates;<sup>48</sup> and finding himself still capable of a larger synthesis, — beyond all example then or since, — he travelled into Italy, to gain what Pythagoras<sup>49</sup> had for him; then into Egypt, and perhaps still farther East, to import the other element, which Europe wanted, into the European mind. This breadth entitles him to stand as the representative of philosophy. He says, in the Republic,<sup>50</sup> "Such a genius as philosophers must of necessity have, is wont but seldom in all its parts to meet in one man, but its different parts generally spring up in different persons." Every man who would do anything well, must come to it from a higher ground. A philosopher must be more than a philosopher. Plato is clothed with the powers of a poet, stands upon the highest place of the poet, and (though I doubt he wanted the decisive gift of lyric expression), mainly is not a poet because he chose to use the poetic gift to an ulterior purpose.

Great geniuses have the shortest biographies. Their cousins can tell you nothing about them. They lived in their writings, and so their house and street life was trivial and commonplace. If you would know their tastes and complexions, the most admiring of their readers most resembles them. Plato especially has no external biography. If he had lover, wife, or children, we hear nothing of them. He ground them all into

paint. As a good chimney burns its smoke, so a philosopher converts the value of all his fortunes into his intellectual performances.

He was born 427, B.C.,<sup>51</sup> about the time of the death of Pericles;<sup>52</sup> was of patrician connection in his times and city, and is said to have had an early inclination for war, but, in his twentieth year, meeting with Socrates, was easily dissuaded from this pursuit and remained for ten years his scholar, until the death of Socrates. He then went to Megara,<sup>53</sup> accepted the invitations of Dion<sup>54</sup> and of Dionysius<sup>55</sup> to the court of Sicily, and went thither three times, though very capriciously treated. He travelled into Italy; then into Egypt, where he stayed a long time; some say three, — some say thirteen years. It is said he went farther, into Babylonia: this is uncertain. Returning to Athens, he gave lessons in the Academy<sup>56</sup> to those whom his fame drew thither; and died, as we have received it, in the act of writing, at eighty-one years.

But the biography of Plato is interior. We are to account for the supreme elevation of this man in the intellectual history of our race, — how it happens that in proportion to the culture of men they become his scholars; that, as our Jewish Bible has implanted itself in the table-talk and household life of every man and woman in the European and American nations, so the writings of Plato have preoccupied every school of learning, every lover of thought, every church, every poet, — making it impossible to think, on certain levels, except through him. He stands between the truth and every man's mind, and has almost impressed language and the primary forms of thought with his name and seal. I am struck, in reading him, with the extreme modernness of his style and spirit. Here is the germ of that Europe we know so well, in its long history of arts and arms; here are all its traits, already discernible in the mind of Plato, — and in none before him. It has spread itself since into a hundred histories,

but has added no new element. This perpetual modernness is the measure of merit in every work of art; since the author of it was not misled by any thing short-lived or local, but abode by real and abiding traits. How Plato came thus to be Europe, and philosophy, and almost literature, is the problem for us to solve.

This could not have happened without a sound, sincere, and catholic <sup>57</sup> man, able to honor, at the same time, the ideal, or laws of the mind, and fate, or the order of nature. The first period of a nation, as of an individual, is the period of unconscious strength. Children cry, scream, and stamp with fury, unable to express their desires. As soon as they can speak and tell their want and the reason of it, they become gentle. In adult life, whilst the perceptions are obtuse, men and women talk vehemently and superlatively, blunder and quarrel: their manners are full of desperation; their speech is full of oaths. As soon as, with culture, things have cleared up a little, and they see them no longer in lumps and masses but accurately distributed, they desist from that weak vehemence and explain their meaning in detail. If the tongue had not been framed for articulation, man would still be a beast in the forest. The same weakness and want, on a higher plane, occurs daily in the education of ardent young men and women. "Ah! you don't understand me; I have never met with any one who comprehends me:" and they sigh and weep, write verses and walk alone, — fault of power to express their precise meaning. In a month or two, through the favor of their good genius, they meet some one so related as to assist their volcanic estate, and, good communication being once established, they are thenceforward good citizens. It is ever thus. The progress is to accuracy, to skill, to truth, from blind force.

There is a moment in the history of every nation, when, proceeding out of this brute youth, the perceptive powers reach their ripeness and have not yet become microscopic:

so that man, at that instant, extends across the entire scale, and, with his feet still planted on the immense forces of night, converses by his eyes and brain with solar and stellar creation. That is the moment of adult health, the culmination of power.

Such is the history of Europe, in all points; and such is philosophy. Its early records, almost perished, are of the immigrations from Asia, bringing with them the dreams of barbarians; a confusion of crude notions of morals and of natural philosophy, gradually subsiding through the partial insight of single teachers.

Before Pericles came the Seven Wise Masters,<sup>58</sup> and we have the beginnings of geometry, metaphysics, and ethics: then the partialists,<sup>59</sup> — deducing the origin of things from flux or water, or from air, or from fire, or from mind. All mix with these causes mythologic pictures. At last comes Plato, the distributor, who needs no barbaric paint, or tattoo, or whooping;<sup>60</sup> for he can define. He leaves with Asia the vast and superlative; he is the arrival of accuracy and intelligence. "He shall be as a god to me, who can rightly divide and define."

This defining is philosophy. [Philosophy is the account which the human mind gives to itself of the constitution of the world. Two cardinal facts lie forever at the base; the one, and the two. — 1. Unity, or Identity; and, 2. Variety. We unite all things by perceiving the law which pervades them; by perceiving the superficial differences and the profound resemblances. But every mental act, — this very perception of identity or oneness, recognizes the difference of things. Oneness and otherness. It is impossible to speak or to think without embracing both.]

The mind is urged to ask for one cause of many effects; then for the cause of that; and again the cause, diving still into the profound: self-assured that it shall arrive at an absolute and sufficient one, — a one that shall be all. "In the

midst of the sun is the light, in the midst of the light is truth, and in the midst of truth is the imperishable being," say the Vedas.<sup>61</sup> All philosophy, of East and West, has the same centripetence.<sup>62</sup> Urged by an opposite necessity, the mind returns from the one to that which is not one, but other or many; from cause to effect; and affirms the necessary existence of variety, the self-existence of both, as each is involved in the other. These strictly-blended elements it is the problem of thought to separate and to reconcile. Their existence is mutually contradictory and exclusive; and each so fast slides into the other that we can never say what is one, and what it is not. The Proteus<sup>63</sup> is as nimble in the highest as in the lowest grounds; when we contemplate the one, the true, the good, — as in the surfaces and extremities of matter.

In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental Unity. The raptures of prayer and ecstasy of devotion lose all being in one Being. This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the Vedas, the Bhagavat Geeta,<sup>64</sup> and the Vishnu Purana.<sup>65</sup> Those writings contain little else than this idea, and they rise to pure and sublime strains in celebrating it.

The Same, the Same: friend and foe are of one stuff; the ploughman, the plough, and the furrow are of one stuff; and the stuff is such and so much that the variations of form are unimportant. "You are fit" (says the supreme Krishna<sup>66</sup> to a sage) "to apprehend that you are not distinct from me. That which I am, thou art, and that also is this world, with its gods and heroes and mankind. Men contemplate distinctions, because they are stupefied with ignorance." "The words *I* and *mine* constitute ignorance. What is the great end of all, you shall now learn from me. It is soul, — one in all bodies, pervading, uniform, perfect, preëminent over nature, exempt from birth, growth, and decay, omnipresent, made up of true knowledge, independent, unconnected with unreali-

ties, with name, species, and the rest, in time past, present, and to come. The knowledge that this spirit, which is essentially one, is in one's own and in all other bodies, is the wisdom of one who knows the unity of things. As one diffusive air, passing through the perforations of a flute, is distinguished as the notes of a scale, so the nature of the Great Spirit is single, though its forms be manifold, arising from the consequences of acts. When the difference of the investing form, as that of god or the rest, is destroyed, there is no distinction." "The whole world is but a manifestation of Vishnu, who is identical with all things, and is to be regarded by the wise as not differing from but as the same as themselves. I neither am going nor coming; nor is my dwelling in any one place; nor art thou, thou; nor are others, others; nor am I, I." As if he had said, "All is for the soul, and the soul is Vishnu; and animals and stars are transient paintings; and light is white-wash; and durations are deceptive; and form is imprisonment; and heaven a decoy." That which the soul seeks is resolution into being above form, out of Tartarus<sup>67</sup> and out of heaven, — liberation from nature.

If speculation tends thus to a terrific unity, in which all things are absorbed, action tends directly backwards to diversity. The first is the course or gravitation of mind; the second is the power of nature. Nature is the manifold. The unity absorbs, and melts or reduces. Nature opens and creates. These two principles reappear and interpenetrate all things, all thought; the one, the many. One is being; the other, intellect: one is necessity; the other, freedom: one, rest; the other, motion: one, power; the other, distribution: one, strength; the other, pleasure: one, consciousness; the other, definition: one, genius; the other, talent: one, earnestness; the other, knowledge: one, possession; the other, trade: one, caste; the other, culture: one, king; the other, democracy: and, if we dare carry these generalizations a step higher, and name the last tendency of

both, we might say, that the end of the one is escape from organization, — pure science; and the end of the other is the highest instrumentality, or use of means, or executive deity.

Each student adheres, by temperament and by habit, to the first or to the second of these gods of the mind. By religion, he tends to unity; by intellect, or by the senses, to the many. A too rapid unification, and an excessive appliance to parts and particulars, are the twin dangers of speculation.

To this partiality the history of nations corresponded. The country of unity, of immovable institutions, the seat of a philosophy delighting in abstractions, of men faithful in doctrine and in practice to the idea of a deaf, unimplorable, immense fate, is Asia; and it realizes this faith in the social institution of caste.<sup>68</sup> On the other side, the genius of Europe is active and creative: it resists caste by culture; its philosophy was a discipline; it is a land of arts, inventions, trade, freedom. If the East loved infinity, the West delighted in boundaries.

European civility is the triumph of talent, the extension of system, the sharpened understanding, adaptive skill, delight in forms, delight in manifestation, in comprehensible results. Pericles, Athens, Greece, had been working in this element with the joy of genius not yet chilled by any foresight of the detriment of an excess. They saw before them no sinister political economy; no ominous Malthus;<sup>69</sup> no Paris or London; no pitiless subdivision of classes, — the doom of the pin-makers,<sup>70</sup> the doom of the weavers, of dressers, of stockings, of carders, of spinners, of colliers; no Ireland; no Indian caste, superinduced by the efforts of Europe to throw it off. The understanding was in its health and prime. Art was in its splendid novelty. They cut the Pentelican marble<sup>71</sup> as if it were snow, and their perfect works in architecture and sculpture seemed things of course, not more difficult than the

completion of a new ship at the Medford yards,<sup>72</sup> or new mills at Lowell.<sup>73</sup> These things are in course, and may be taken for granted. The Roman legion, Byzantine legislation,<sup>74</sup> English trade, the saloons of Versailles,<sup>75</sup> the cafés of Paris, the steam-mill, steamboat, steam-coach, may all be seen in perspective; the town-meeting,<sup>76</sup> the ballot-box, the newspaper, and cheap press.

Meantime, Plato, in Egypt and in Eastern pilgrimages, imbibed the idea of one Deity, in which all things are absorbed. The unity of Asia and the detail of Europe; the infinitude of the Asiatic soul and the defining, result-loving, machine-making, surface-seeking, opera-going Europe, — Plato came to join, and, by contact, to enhance the energy of each. The excellence of Europe and Asia are in his brain. Metaphysics and natural philosophy expressed the genius of Europe; he substructs the religion of Asia, as the base.

In short, a balanced soul was born, perceptive of the two elements. It is as easy to be great as to be small. The reason why we do not at once believe in admirable souls is because they are not in our experience. In actual life, they are so rare as to be incredible; but primarily there is not only no presumption against them, but the strongest presumption in favor of their appearance. But whether voices were heard in the sky, or not; whether his mother or his father dreamed that the infant man-child was the son of Apollo;<sup>77</sup> whether a swarm of bees settled on his lips,<sup>78</sup> or not; — a man who could see two sides of a thing was born. The wonderful synthesis so familiar in nature; the upper and the under side of the medal of Jove;<sup>79</sup> the union of impossibilities, which reappears in every object; its real and its ideal power, — was now also transferred entire to the consciousness of a man.

The balanced soul came. If he loved abstract truth, he saved himself by propounding the most popular of all principles, the absolute good, which rules rulers, and judges the judge. If he made transcendental distinctions, he fortified



himself by drawing all his illustrations from sources disdained by orators and polite conversers; from mares and puppies; from pitchers and soup-ladles; from cooks and criers; the shops of potters, horse-doctors, butchers, and fishmongers. He cannot forgive in himself a partiality, but is resolved that the two poles of thought shall appear in his statement. His argument and his sentence are self-poised and spherical. The two poles appear; yes, and become two hands, to grasp and appropriate their own.

Every great artist has been such by synthesis. Our strength is transitional, alternating; or, shall I say, a thread of two strands. The sea-shore, sea seen from shore, shore seen from sea; the taste of two metals in contact; and our enlarged powers at the approach and at the departure of a friend; the experience of poetic creativeness, which is not found in staying at home, nor yet in travelling, but in transitions from one to the other, which must therefore be adroitly managed to present as much transitional surface as possible; this command of two elements must explain the power and the charm of Plato. Art expresses the one or the same by the different. Thought seeks to know unity in unity; poetry to show it by variety; that is, always by an object or symbol. Plato keeps the two vases, one of æther and one of pigment, at his side, and invariably uses both. Things added to things, as statistics, civil history, are inventories. Things used as language are inexhaustibly attractive. Plato turns incessantly the obverse and the reverse of the medal of Jove.<sup>79</sup>

To take an example:—The physical philosophers had sketched each his theory of the world; the theory of atoms, of fire, of flux, of spirit; theories mechanical and chemical in their genius. Plato, a master of mathematics, studious of all natural laws and causes, feels these, as second causes, to be no theories of the world but bare inventories and lists. To the study of nature he therefore prefixes the dogma,—“Let us declare the cause which led the Supreme Ordainer to

produce and compose the universe. He was good; and he who is good has no kind of envy. Exempt from envy, he wished that all things should be as much as possible like himself. Whosoever, taught by wise men, shall admit this as the prime cause of the origin and foundation of the world, will be in the truth." "All things are for the sake of the good, and it is the cause of every thing beautiful." This dogma animates and impersonates his philosophy.

The synthesis <sup>80</sup> which makes the character of his mind appears in all his talents. Where there is great compass of wit, we usually find excellencies that combine easily in the living man, but in description appear incompatible. The mind of Plato is not to be exhibited by a Chinese catalogue, but is to be apprehended by an original mind in the exercise of its original power. In him the freest abandonment is united with the precision of a geometer. His daring imagination gives him the more solid grasp of facts; as the birds of highest flight have the strongest alar bones.<sup>81</sup> His patrician polish, his intrinsic elegance, edged by an irony so subtle that it stings and paralyzes, adorn the soundest health and strength of frame. According to the old sentence, "If Jove should descend to the earth, he would speak in the style of Plato."

With this palatial air there is, for the direct aim of several of his works and running through the tenor of them all, a certain earnestness, which mounts, in the Republic and in the Phaedo, to piety. He has been charged with feigning sickness at the time of the death of Socrates. But the anecdotes that have come down from the times attest his manly interference before the people in his master's behalf, since even the savage cry of the assembly to Plato is preserved; and the indignation towards popular government, in many of his pieces, expresses a personal exasperation. He has a probity, a native reverence for justice and honor, and a humanity which makes him tender for the superstitions of the people. Add to this, he believes that poetry, prophecy, and the high insight

are from a wisdom of which man is not master; that the gods never philosophize, but by a celestial mania these miracles are accomplished. Horsed on these winged steeds, he sweeps the dim regions, visits worlds which flesh cannot enter; he saw the souls in pain, he hears the doom of the judge, he beholds the penal metempsychosis,<sup>82</sup> the Fates,<sup>83</sup> with the rock and shears, and hears the intoxicating hum of their spindle.

But his circumspection never forsook him. One would say he had read the inscription on the gates of Busyrane,<sup>84</sup> — “Be bold,” and on the second gate, — “Be bold, be bold, and evermore be bold”; and then again had paused well at the third gate, — “Be not too bold.” His strength is like the momentum of a falling planet, and his discretion the return of its due and perfect curve, — so excellent is his Greek love of boundary and his skill in definition. In reading logarithms one is not more secure than in following Plato in his flights. Nothing can be colder than his head, when the lightnings of his imagination are playing in the sky. He has finished his thinking before he brings it to the reader, and he abounds in the surprises of a literary master. He has that opulence which furnishes, at every turn, the precise weapon he needs. As the rich man wears no more garments, drives no more horses, sits in no more chambers than the poor, — but has that one dress, or equipage, or instrument, which is fit for the hour and the need; so Plato, in his plenty, is never restricted, but has the fit word. There is indeed no weapon in all the armory of wit which he did not possess and use, — epic, analysis, mania, intuition, music, satire, and irony, down to the customary and polite. His illustrations are poetry and his jests illustrations. Socrates’ profession of obstetric art is good philosophy; and his finding that word “cooking,” and “adulatory art,” for rhetoric, in the *Gorgias*,<sup>85</sup> does us a substantial service still. No orator can measure in effect with him who can give good nicknames.

What moderation and understatement and checking his thunder in mid volley! He has good-naturedly furnished the courtier and citizen with all that can be said against the schools. "For philosophy is an elegant thing, if any one modestly meddles with it; but if he is conversant with it more than is becoming, it corrupts the man." He could well afford to be generous, — he, who from the sunlike centrality and reach of his vision, had a faith without cloud. Such as his perception, was his speech: he plays with the doubt and makes the most of it: he paints and quibbles; and by and by comes a sentence that moves the sea and land. The admirable earnest comes not only at intervals, in the perfect yes and no of the dialogue, but in bursts of light. "I, therefore, Callicles,<sup>86</sup> am persuaded by these accounts, and consider how I may exhibit my soul before the judge in a healthy condition. Wherefore, disregarding the honors that most men value, and looking to the truth, I shall endeavor in reality to live as virtuously as I can; and when I die, to die so. And I invite all other men, to the utmost of my power; and you too I in turn invite to this contest, which, I affirm, surpasses all contests here."

He is a great average man; one who, to the best thinking, adds a proportion and equality in his faculties, so that men see in him their own dreams and glimpses made available and made to pass for what they are. A great common-sense is his warrant and qualification to be the world's interpreter. He has reason, as all the philosophic and poetic class have: but he has also what they have not, — this strong solving sense to reconcile his poetry with the appearances of the world, and build a bridge from the streets of cities to the Atlantis.<sup>87</sup> He omits never this graduation, but slopes his thought, however picturesque the precipice on one side, to an access from the plain. He never writes in ecstasy, or catches us up into poetic raptures.

Plato apprehended the cardinal facts. He could prostrate

himself on the earth and cover his eyes whilst he adored that which cannot be numbered, or gauged, or known, or named: that of which every thing can be affirmed and denied: that "which is entity and nonentity." He called it super-essential. He even stood ready, as in the *Parmenides*,<sup>88</sup> to demonstrate that it was so, — that this Being exceeded the limits of intellect. No man ever more fully acknowledged the Ineffable. Having paid his homage, as for the human race, to the Illimitable, he then stood erect, and for the human race affirmed, "And yet things are knowable!" — that is, the Asia in his mind was first heartily honored, — the ocean of love and power, before form, before will, before knowledge, the Same, the Good, the One; and now, refreshed and empowered by this worship, the instinct of Europe, namely, culture, returns; and he cries, "Yet things are knowable!" They are knowable, because being from one, things correspond. [There is a scale; and the correspondence of heaven to earth, of matter to mind, of the part to the whole, is our guide. As there is a science of stars, called astronomy; a science of quantities, called mathematics; a science of qualities, called chemistry; so there is a science of sciences, — I call it *Dialectic*,<sup>89</sup> — which is the Intellect discriminating the false and the true. It rests on the observation of identity and diversity; for to judge is to unite to an object the notion which belongs to it. These sciences, even the best, — mathematics and astronomy, — are like sportsmen, who seize whatever prey offers, even without being able to make any use of it. *Dialectic* must teach the use of them.] "This is of that rank that no intellectual man will enter on any study for its own sake, but only with a view to advance himself in that one sole science which embraces all."

"The essence or peculiarity of man is to comprehend a whole; or that which in the diversity of sensations can be comprised under a rational unity." "The soul which has never perceived the truth, cannot pass into the human form." I

announce to men the Intellect. I announce the good of being interpenetrated by the mind that made nature: this benefit, namely, that it can understand nature, which it made and maketh. Nature is good, but intellect is better: as the law-giver is before the law-receiver. I give you joy, O sons of men! that truth is altogether wholesome; that we have hope to search out what might be the very self of everything. The misery of man is to be baulked of the sight of essence and to be stuffed with conjectures; but the supreme good is reality; the supreme beauty is reality; and all virtue and all felicity depend on this science of the real: for courage is nothing else than knowledge; the fairest fortune that can befall man is to be guided by his dæmon<sup>90</sup> to that which is truly his own. This also is the essence of justice, — to attend every one his own: nay, the notion of virtue is not to be arrived at except through direct contemplation of the divine essence. Courage then! for “the persuasion that we must search that which we do not know, will render us, beyond comparison, better, braver, and more industrious than if we thought it impossible to discover what we do not know, and useless to search for it.” He secures a position not to be commanded, by his passion for reality; valuing philosophy only as it is the pleasure of conversing with real being.

Thus, full of the genius of Europe, he said, *Culture*. He saw the institutions of Sparta<sup>91</sup> and recognized, more genially one would say than any since, the hope of education. He delighted in every accomplishment, in every graceful and useful and truthful performance; above all in the splendors of genius and intellectual achievement. “The whole of life, O Socrates,” said Glauco,<sup>92</sup> “is, with the wise, the measure of hearing such discourses as these.” What a price he sets on the feats of talent, on the powers of Pericles, of Isocrates,<sup>93</sup> of Parmenides!<sup>94</sup> What price above price on the talents themselves! He called the several faculties, gods, in his beautiful personation. What value he gives to the art of

gymnastic in education; what to geometry; what to music; what to astronomy, whose appeasing and medicinal power he celebrates! In the *Timæus* <sup>95</sup> he indicates the highest employment of the eyes. "By us it is asserted that God invented and bestowed sight on us for this purpose, — that on surveying the circles of intelligence in the heavens, we might properly employ those of our own minds, which, though disturbed when compared with the others that are uniform, are still allied to their circulations; and that having thus learned, and being naturally possessed of a correct reasoning faculty, we might, by imitating the uniform revolutions of divinity, set right our own wanderings and blunders." And in the *Republic*, — "By each of these disciplines a certain organ of the soul is both purified and reanimated which is blinded and buried by studies of another kind; an organ better worth saving than ten thousand eyes, since truth is perceived by this alone."

He said, Culture; but he first admitted its basis, and gave immeasurably the first place to advantages of nature. His patrician tastes laid stress on the distinctions of birth. In the doctrine of the organic character and disposition is the origin of caste. "Such as were fit to govern, into their composition the informing Deity mingled gold; into the military, silver; iron and brass for husbandmen and artificers." The East confirms itself, in all ages, in this faith. The Koran is explicit on this point of caste. "Men have their metal, as of gold and silver. Those of you who were the worthy ones in the state of ignorance, will be the worthy ones in the state of faith, as soon as you embrace it." Plato was not less firm. "Of the five orders of things, only four can be taught to the generality of men." In the *Republic* he insists on the temperaments of the youth, as first of the first.

A happier example of the stress laid on nature is in the dialogue with the young Theages,<sup>96</sup> who wishes to receive lessons from Socrates. Socrates declares that if some have

grown wise by associating with him, no thanks are due to him; but, simply, whilst they were with him they grew wise, not because of him; he pretends not to know the way of it. "It is adverse to many, nor can those be benefited by associating with me whom the Dæmon opposes; so that it is not possible for me to live with these. With many, however, he does not prevent me from conversing, who yet are not at all benefited by associating with me. Such, O Theages, is the association with me; for, if it pleases the God, you will make great and rapid proficiency: you will not, if he does not please. Judge whether it is not safer to be instructed by some one of those who have power over the benefit which they impart to men, than by me, who benefit or not, just as it may happen." As if he had said, "I have no system. I cannot be answerable for you. You will be what you must. If there is love between us, inconceivably delicious and profitable will our intercourse be; if not, your time is lost and you will only annoy me. I shall seem to you stupid, and the reputation I have, false. Quite above us, beyond the will of you or me, is this secret affinity or repulsion laid. All my good is magnetic, and I educate, not by lessons, but by going about my business."

He said, Culture; he said, Nature; and he failed not to add, "There is also the divine." There is no thought in any mind but it quickly tends to convert itself into a power and organizes a huge instrumentality of means. Plato, lover of limits, loved the illimitable, saw the enlargement and nobility which come from truth itself and good itself, and attempted as if on the part of the human intellect, once for all to do it adequate homage, — homage fit for the immense soul to receive, and yet homage becoming the intellect to render. He said then, "Our faculties run out into infinity, and return to us thence. We can define but a little way; but here is a fact which will not be skipped, and which to shut our eyes upon is suicide. All things are in a scale; and, begin



where we will, ascend and ascend. All things are symbolical; and what we call results are beginnings.”

A key to the method and completeness of Plato is his twice bisected line. After he has illustrated the relation between the absolute good and true and the forms of the intelligible world, he says: — “Let there be a line cut in two unequal parts. Cut again each of these two main parts, — one representing the visible, the other the intelligible world, — and let these two new sections represent the bright part and the dark part of each of these worlds. You will have, for one of the sections of the visible world, images, that is, both shadows and reflections; — for the other section, the objects of these images, that is, plants, animals, and the works of art and nature. Then divide the intelligible world in like manner; the one section will be of opinions and hypotheses, and the other section of truths.” To these four sections, the four operations of the soul correspond, — conjecture, faith, understanding, reason. As every pool reflects the image of the sun, so every thought and thing restores us an image and creature of the supreme Good. The universe is perforated by a million channels for his activity. All things mount and mount.

All his thought has this ascension; in Phædrus,<sup>97</sup> teaching that beauty is the most lovely of all things, exciting hilarity and shedding desire and confidence through the universe wherever it enters, and it enters in some degree into all things: — but that there is another, which is as much more beautiful than beauty as beauty is than chaos; namely, wisdom, which our wonderful organ of sight cannot reach unto, but which, could it be seen, would ravish us with its perfect reality. He has the same regard to it as the source of excellence in works of art. When an artificer, he says, in the fabrication of any work, looks to that which always subsists according *to the same*; and, employing a model of this kind, expresses its idea and power in his work, — it must follow

that his production should be beautiful. But when he beholds that which is born and dies, it will be far from beautiful.

Thus ever: the Banquet <sup>98</sup> is a teaching in the same spirit, familiar now to all the poetry and to all the sermons of the world, that the love of the sexes is initial, and symbolizes at a distance the passion of the soul for that immense lake of beauty it exists to seek. This faith in the Divinity is never out of mind, and constitutes the ground of all his dogmas. Body cannot teach wisdom; — God only. In the same mind he constantly affirms that virtue cannot be taught; that it is not a science, but an inspiration; that the greatest goods are produced to us through mania and are assigned to us by a divine gift.

This leads me to that central figure which he has established in his Academy as the organ through which every considered opinion shall be announced, and whose biography he has likewise so labored that the historic facts are lost in the light of Plato's mind. Socrates and Plato are the double star which the most powerful instruments will not entirely separate. Socrates again, in his traits and genius, is the best example of that synthesis which constitutes Plato's extraordinary power. Socrates, a man of humble stem, but honest enough; of the commonest history; of a personal homeliness so remarkable as to be a cause of wit in others: — the rather that his broad good nature and exquisite taste for a joke invited the sally, which was sure to be paid. The players personated him on the stage; <sup>99</sup> the potters copied his ugly face on their stone jugs. He was a cool fellow, adding to his humor a perfect temper and a knowledge of his man, be he who he might whom he talked with, which laid the companion open to certain defeat in any debate, — and in debate he immoderately delighted. The young men are prodigiously fond of him and invite him to their feasts, whither he goes for conversation. He can drink, too; has the strongest head in Athens; and after leaving the whole party under the table,

goes away as if nothing had happened, to begin new dialogues with somebody that is sober. In short, he was what our country-people call *an old one*.

He affected a good many citizen-like tastes, was monstrously fond of Athens, hated trees, never willingly went beyond the walls, knew the old characters, valued the bores and philistines, thought every thing in Athens a little better than anything in any other place. He was plain as a Quaker in habit and speech,<sup>100</sup> affected low phrases, and illustrations from cocks and quails, soup-pans and sycamore-spoons, grooms and farriers, and unnameable offices, — especially if he talked with any superfine person. He had a Franklin-like wisdom. Thus he showed one who was afraid to go on foot to Olympia, that it was no more than his daily walk within doors, if continuously extended, would easily reach.

Plain old uncle as he was, with his great ears, an immense talker, — the rumor ran that on one or two occasions, in the war with Bœotia,<sup>101</sup> he had shown a determination which had covered the retreat of a troop; and there was some story that under cover of folly, he had, in the city government, when one day he chanced to hold a seat there, evinced a courage in opposing singly the popular voice, which had well-nigh ruined him. He is very poor; but then he is hardy as a soldier, and can live on a few olives; usually, in the strictest sense, on bread and water, except when entertained by his friends. His necessary expenses were exceedingly small, and no one could live as he did. He wore no under garment; his upper garment was the same for summer and winter, and he went barefooted; and it is said that to procure the pleasure, which he loved, of talking at his ease all day with the most elegant and cultivated young men, he will now and then return to his shop and carve statues, good or bad, for sale. However that be, it is certain that he had grown to delight in nothing else than this conversation; and that, under his hypocritical pretence of knowing nothing, he attacks

and brings down all the fine speakers, all the fine philosophers of Athens, whether natives or strangers from Asia Minor and the islands. Nobody can refuse to talk with him, he is so honest and really curious to know; a man who was willingly confuted if he did not speak the truth, and who willingly confuted others asserting what was false; and not less pleased when confuted than when confuting; for he thought not any evil happened to men of such a magnitude as false opinion respecting the just and unjust. A pitiless disputant, who knows nothing, but the bounds of whose conquering intelligence no man had ever reached; whose temper was imperturbable; whose dreadful logic was always leisurely and sportive; so careless and ignorant as to disarm the wariest and draw them, in the pleasantest manner, into horrible doubts and confusion. But he always knew the way out; knew it, yet would not tell it. No escape; he drives them to terrible choices by his dilemmas, and tosses the Hippiases and Gorgias<sup>102</sup> with their grand reputations, as a boy tosses his balls. The tyrannous realist! — Meno<sup>103</sup> has discoursed a thousand times, at length, on virtue, before many companies, and very well, as it appeared to him; but at this moment he cannot even tell what it is, — this cramp-fish<sup>104</sup> of a Socrates has so bewitched him.

This hard-headed humorist, whose strange conceits, drollery, and *bonhomie*<sup>105</sup> diverted the young patricians, whilst the rumor of his sayings and quibbles gets abroad every day, — turns out, in the sequel, to have a probity as invincible as his logic, and to be either insane, or at least, under cover of this play, enthusiastic in his religion.<sup>106</sup> When accused before the judges of subverting the popular creed, he affirms the immortality of the soul, the future reward and punishment; and refusing to recant, in a caprice of the popular government was condemned to die, and sent to the prison. Socrates entered the prison and took away all ignominy from the place, which could not be a prison whilst

he was there. Crito <sup>107</sup> bribed the jailer; but Socrates would not go out by treachery. "Whatever inconvenience ensue, nothing is to be preferred before justice. These things I hear like pipes and drums, whose sound makes me deaf to every thing you say." The fame of this prison, the fame of the discourses there and the drinking of the hemlock <sup>108</sup> are one of the most precious passages in the history of the world.

The rare coincidence, in one ugly body, of the droll and the martyr, the keen street and market debater with the sweetest saint known to any history at that time, had forcibly struck the mind of Plato, so capacious of these contrasts; and the figure of Socrates by a necessity placed itself in the foreground of the scene, as the fittest dispenser of the intellectual treasures he had to communicate. It was a rare fortune that this Æsop <sup>109</sup> of the mob and this robed scholar should meet, to make each other immortal in their mutual faculty. The strange synthesis in the character of Socrates capped the synthesis in the mind of Plato. Moreover by this means he was able, in the direct way and without envy to avail himself of the wit and weight of Socrates, to which unquestionably his own debt was great; and these derived again their principal advantage from the perfect art of Plato.

It remains to say that the defect of Plato in power is only that which results inevitably from his quality. He is intellectual in his aim; and therefore, in expression, literary. Mounting into heaven, diving into the pit, expounding the laws of the state, the passion of love, the remorse of crime, the hope of the parting soul, — he is literary, and never otherwise. It is almost the sole deduction from the merit of Plato that his writings have not, — what is no doubt incident to this regnancy <sup>110</sup> of intellect in his work, — the vital authority which the screams of prophets and the sermons of unlettered Arabs and Jews possess. There is an interval; and to cohesion, contact is necessary.

I know not what can be said in reply to this criticism but

that we have come to a fact in the nature of things: an oak is not an orange. The qualities of sugar remain with sugar, and those of salt with salt.

In the second place, he has not a system. The dearest defenders and disciples are at fault. He attempted a theory of the universe, and his theory is not complete or self-evident. One man thinks he means this, and another that; he has said one thing in one place, and the reverse of it in another place. He is charged with having failed to make the transition from ideas to matter. Here is the world, sound as a nut, perfect, not the smallest piece of chaos <sup>111</sup> left, never a stitch nor an end, not a mark of haste, or botching, or second thought; but the theory of the world is a thing of shreds and patches.

The longest wave is quickly lost in the sea. Plato would willingly have a Platonism, a known and accurate expression for the world, and it should be accurate. It shall be the world passed through the mind of Plato, — nothing less. Every atom shall have the Platonic tinge; every atom, every relation or quality you knew before, you shall know again and find here, but now ordered; not nature, but art. And you shall feel that Alexander <sup>112</sup> indeed overran, with men and horses, some countries of the planet; but countries, and things of which countries are made, elements, planet itself, laws of planet and of men, have passed through this man as bread into his body, and become no longer bread, but body: so all this mammoth morsel has become Plato. He has clapped copyright on the world. This is the ambition of individualism. But the mouthful proves too large. *Boa constrictor* has good will to eat it, but he is foiled. He falls abroad in the attempt; and biting, gets strangled: the bitten world holds the biter fast by his own teeth. There he perishes: unconquered nature lives on and forgets him. So it fares with all: so must it fare with Plato. In view of eternal nature, Plato turns out to be philosophical exertations. He argues on this side and on that. The acutest German, the lovingest disciple, could

never tell what Platonism was; indeed, admirable texts can be quoted on both sides of every great question from him.

These things we are forced to say if we must consider the effort of Plato or of any philosopher to dispose of nature, — which will not be disposed of. No power of genius has ever yet had the smallest success in explaining existence. The perfect enigma remains. But there is an injustice in assuming this ambition for Plato. Let us not seem to treat with flippancy his venerable name. Men, in proportion to their intellect, have admitted his transcendent claims. The way to know him is to compare him, not with nature, but with other men. How many ages have gone by, and he remains unapproached! A chief structure of human wit, like Karnac,<sup>113</sup> or the mediæval cathedrals, or the Etrurian<sup>114</sup> remains, it requires all the breath of human faculty to know it. I think it is truest seen when seen with the utmost respect. His sense deepens, his merits multiply, with study. When we say, "Here is a fine collection of fables"; or when we praise the style, or the common sense, or arithmetic, we speak as boys, and much of our impatient criticism of the dialectic, I suspect, is no better.

The criticism is like our impatience of miles, when we are in a hurry; but it is still best that a mile should have seventeen hundred and sixty yards. The great-eyed Plato proportioned the lights and shades after the genius of our life.

### PLATO: NEW READINGS

The publication, in Mr. Bohn's "Serial Library," of the excellent translations of Plato, which we esteem one of the chief benefits the cheap press has yielded, gives us an occasion to take hastily a few more notes of the elevation and bearings of this fixed star; or to add a bulletin, like the journals, of *Plato at the latest dates*.

Modern science, by the extent of its generalization, has learned to indemnify the student of man for the defects of

individuals by tracing growth and ascent in races; and, by the simple expedient of lighting up the vast background, generates a feeling of complacency and hope. The human being has the saurian <sup>115</sup> and the plant in his rear. His arts and sciences, the easy issue of his brain, look glorious when prospectively beheld from the distant brain of ox, crocodile, and fish. It seems as if nature, in regarding the geologic night behind her, when, in five or six millenniums, she had turned out five or six men, as Homer, Phidias,<sup>116</sup> Menu,<sup>117</sup> and Columbus, was no wise discontented with the result. These samples attested the virtue of the tree. These were a clear amelioration of trilobite <sup>118</sup> and saurus,<sup>119</sup> and a good basis for further proceeding. With this artist, time and space are cheap, and she is insensible to what you say of tedious preparation. She waited tranquilly the flowing periods of paleontology, for the hour to be struck when man should arrive. Then periods must pass before the motion of the earth can be suspected; then before the map of the instincts and the cultivable powers can be drawn. But as of races, so the succession of individual men is fatal and beautiful; and Plato has the fortune in the history of mankind to mark an epoch.

Plato's fame does not stand on a syllogism, or on any masterpieces of the Socratic reasoning, or on any thesis, as for example the immortality of the soul. He is more than an expert, or a school-man, or a geometer, or the prophet of a peculiar message. [He represents the privilege of the intellect, the power, namely, of carrying up every fact to successive platforms and so disclosing in every fact a germ of expansion. These expansions are in the essence of thought. The naturalist would never help us to them by any discoveries of the extent of the universe, but is as poor when cataloguing the resolved nebula of Orion,<sup>120</sup> as when measuring the angles of an acre. But the Republic of Plato, by these expansions, may be said to require and so to anticipate the astronomy of Laplace.<sup>121</sup> The expansions are organic. The mind does not



create what it perceives, any more than the eye creates the rose. In ascribing to Plato the merit of announcing them, we only say, "Here was a more complete man, who could apply to nature the whole scale of the senses, the understanding and the reason." These expansions or extensions consist in continuing the spiritual sight where the horizon falls on our natural vision, and by this second sight discovering the long lines of law which shoot in every direction. Everywhere he stands on a path which has no end, but runs continuously round the universe. Therefore every word becomes an exponent of nature. Whatever he looks upon discloses a second sense, and ulterior senses. His perception of the generation of contraries, of death out of life and life out of death, — that law by which, in nature, decomposition is recomposition, and putrefaction and cholera are only signals of a new creation; his discernment of the little in the large and the large in the small; studying the state in the citizen and the citizen in the state; and leaving it doubtful whether he exhibited the Republic as an allegory on the education of the private soul; his beautiful definitions of ideas, of time, of form, of figure, of the line, sometimes hypothetically given, as his defining of virtue, courage, justice, temperance; his love of the apologue, and his apologues themselves; the cave of Trophonius;<sup>122</sup> the ring of Gyges;<sup>123</sup> the charioteer and two horses;<sup>124</sup> the golden, silver, brass, and iron temperaments;<sup>125</sup> Theuth and Thamus;<sup>126</sup> and the visions of Hades and the Fates, — fables which have imprinted themselves in the human memory like the signs of the zodiac; his soliform eye<sup>127</sup> and his boniform soul;<sup>128</sup> his doctrine of assimilation; his doctrine of reminiscence; his clear vision of the laws of return, or reaction, which secure instant justice throughout the universe, instanced everywhere, but specially in the doctrine, "what comes from God to us, returns from us to God," and in Socrates' belief that the laws below are sisters of the laws above.

More striking examples are his moral conclusions. Plato affirms the coincidence of science and virtue; for vice can never know itself and virtue, but virtue knows both itself and vice. The eye attested that justice was best, as long as it was profitable; Plato affirms that it is profitable throughout; that the profit is intrinsic, though the just conceal his justice from gods and men; that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it; that the sinner ought to covet punishment; that the lie was more hurtful than homicide; and that ignorance, or the involuntary lie, was more calamitous than involuntary homicide; that the soul is unwillingly deprived of true opinions, and that no man sins willingly; that the order or proceeding of nature was from the mind to the body, and, though a sound body cannot restore an unsound mind, yet a good soul can, by its virtue, render the body the best possible. The intelligent have a right over the ignorant, namely, the right of instructing them. The right punishment of one out of tune is to make him play in tune; the fine which the good, refusing to govern, ought to pay, is, to be governed by a worse man; that his guards shall not handle gold and silver, but shall be instructed that there is gold and silver in their souls, which will make men willing to give them every thing which they need.

This second sight explains the stress laid on geometry. He saw that the globe of earth was not more lawful and precise than was the super-sensible; that a celestial geometry was in place there, as a logic of lines and angles here below; that the world was throughout mathematical; the proportions are constant of oxygen, azote,<sup>129</sup> and lime; there is just so much water and slate and magnesia; not less are the proportions constant of the moral elements.

This eldest Gœthe,<sup>130</sup> hating varnish and falsehood, delighted in revealing the real at the base of the accidental; in discovering connection, continuity, and representation everywhere, hating insulation; and appears like the god of wealth

among the cabins of vagabonds, opening power and capability in everything he touches. Ethical science was new and vacant when Plato could write thus: — “Of all whose arguments are left to the men of the present time, no one has ever yet condemned injustice, or praised justice, otherwise than as respects the repute, honors, and emoluments arising therefrom; while, as respects either of them in itself, and subsisting by its own power in the soul of the possessor, and concealed both from gods and men, no one has yet sufficiently investigated, either in poetry or prose writings, — how, namely, that injustice is the greatest of all the evils that the soul has within it, and justice the greatest good.”

His definition of ideas, as what is simple, permanent, uniform, and self-existent, forever discriminating them from the notions of the understanding, marks an era in the world. He was born to behold the self-evolving power of spirit, endless, generator of new ends; a power which is the key at once to the centrality and the evanescence of things. Plato is so centred that he can well spare all his dogmas. Thus the fact of knowledge and ideas reveals to him the fact of eternity; and the doctrine of reminiscence he offers as the most probable particular explication. Call that fanciful, — it matters not: the connection between our knowledge and the abyss of being is still real, and the explication must be not less magnificent.

He has indicated every eminent point in speculation. He wrote on the scale of the mind itself, so that all things have symmetry in his tablet. He put in all the past, without weariness, and descended into detail with a courage like that he witnessed in nature. One would say that his forerunners had mapped out each a farm or a district or an island, in intellectual geography, but that Plato first drew the sphere. He domesticates the soul in nature: man is the microcosm. All the circles of the visible heaven represent as many circles in the rational soul. There is no lawless particle, and there is

nothing casual in the action of the human mind. The names of things, too, are fatal, following the nature of things. All the gods of the Pantheon<sup>131</sup> are, by their names, significant of a profound sense. The gods are the ideas. Pan<sup>132</sup> is speech, or manifestation; Saturn,<sup>133</sup> the contemplative; Jove,<sup>134</sup> the regal soul; and Mars,<sup>135</sup> passion. Venus<sup>136</sup> is proportion; Calliope,<sup>137</sup> the soul of the world; Aglaia,<sup>138</sup> intellectual illustration.

These thoughts, in sparkles of light, had appeared often to pious and to poetic souls; but this well-bred, all-knowing Greek geometer comes with command, gathers them all up into rank and gradation, the Euclid of holiness, and marries the two parts of nature. Before all men, he saw the intellectual values of the moral sentiment. He describes his own ideal, when he paints, in *Timæus*, a god leading things from disorder into order. He kindled a fire so truly in the centre that we see the sphere illuminated, and can distinguish poles, equator, and lines of latitude, every arc and node:<sup>139</sup> a theory so averaged, so modulated, that you would say the winds of ages had swept through this rhythmic structure, and not that it was the brief extempore blotting of one short-lived scribe. Hence it has happened that a very well-marked class of souls, namely those who delight in giving a spiritual, that is, an ethico-intellectual expression to every truth, by exhibiting an ulterior end which is yet legitimate to it, — are said to Platonize. Thus, Michael Angelo<sup>140</sup> is a Platonist in his sonnets: Shakespeare is a Platonist when he writes, —

“Nature is made better by no mean,<sup>141</sup>  
But nature makes that mean,”

or, —

“He, that can endure<sup>142</sup>  
To follow with allegiance a fallen lord,  
Does conquer him that did his master conquer,  
And earns a place in the story.”

Hamlet is a pure Platonist, and 't is the magnitude only of Shakspeare's proper genius that hinders him from being classed as the most eminent of this school. Swedenborg, throughout his prose poem of "Conjugal Love," is a Platonist.

His subtlety commended him to men of thought. The secret of his popular success is the moral aim which endeared him to mankind. "Intellect," he said, "is king of heaven and of earth;" but in Plato, intellect is always moral. His writings have also the sempiternal <sup>143</sup> youth of poetry. For their arguments, most of them, might have been couched in sonnets: and poetry has never soared higher than in the *Timæus* and the *Phædrus*. As the poet, too, he is only contemplative. He did not, like Pythagoras, break himself with an institution. All his painting in the *Republic* must be esteemed mythical, with intent to bring out, sometimes in violent colors, his thought. You cannot institute, without peril of charlatanism.

It was a high scheme, his absolute privilege for the best (which, to make emphatic, he expressed by community of women), as the premium which he would set on grandeur. There shall be exempts of two kinds: first, those who by demerit have put themselves below protection, — outlaws; and secondly, those who by eminence of nature and desert are out of the reach of your rewards. Let such be free of the city and above the law. We confide them to themselves; let them do with us as they will. Let none presume to measure the irregularities of Michael Angelo and Socrates by village scales.

In his eighth book of the *Republic*, he throws a little mathematical dust in our eyes. I am sorry to see him, after such noble superiorities, permitting the lie to governors. Plato plays Providence a little with the baser sort, as people allow themselves with their dogs and cats.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The second caliph or successor to Mohammed. He conquered Syria and Palestine and built the magnificent mosque which bears his name on the site of Solomon's temple.

<sup>2</sup> The sacred book of the Mohammedans, supposed to have been received as a message from Allah and transcribed on shells.

<sup>3</sup> "The science of being or reality; the branch of knowledge that investigates the nature, essential properties, and relations of being, as such." Webster's *New International Dictionary*.

<sup>4</sup> Roman philosopher and statesman (ca. 473-ca. 525).

<sup>5</sup> *Rabelais*, François, French doctor, philosopher, and writer of satiric and humorous narratives; e.g., *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (ca. 1490-1553).

<sup>6</sup> *Erasmus*, Desiderius, famous scholar; born in Holland, educated in Germany and Italy; teacher of Greek at Oxford; leader in so-called Humanistic Movement (ca. 1466-1536).

<sup>7</sup> *Bruno*, Filippo Giordano, Italian philosopher and scientist (1540-1600).

<sup>8</sup> *Locke*, John, English philosopher (1632-1704).

<sup>9</sup> *Rousseau*, Jean Jacques, French philosopher, novelist, essayist, forerunner of the Romantic Movement in literature (1712-1778).

<sup>10</sup> *Alfieri*, Count Vittorio Amadeo, Italian dramatist (1749-1803).

<sup>11</sup> *Coleridge*, Samuel Taylor, English essayist, philosopher, poet (1772-1834).

<sup>12</sup> Dialect.

<sup>13</sup> There were two St. Augustines, and they are often popularly confused. One was the early missionary to southern England, of the late sixth century; the other, the one no doubt mentioned by Emerson, was one of the saints of the early Christian Church and remembered for his *Confessions* (354-430).

<sup>14</sup> *Copernicus*, Nikolaus, Polish astronomer. Founder of the modern system of astronomy (1473-1543).

<sup>15</sup> *Newton*, Sir Isaac, English philosopher and mathematician, famous for his *Laws of Gravitation* (1642-1727).

<sup>16</sup> *Behmen*, Jakob (or Boëhme, or Böhme). German cobbler-philosopher, a mystic. His ideas were similar to those held by the Society of Friends or Quakers (1575-1624).

<sup>17</sup> *Swedenborg*. See "Uses of Great Men," Note II.

<sup>18</sup> *Gæthe*. See "Uses of Great Men," Note 48.

<sup>19</sup> Used here for all Germanic peoples of northern Europe.

<sup>20</sup> Used of the Mediterranean peoples in contrast to the Teutonic tribes of the north.

<sup>21</sup> Referring to a famous school of literature, science, and philosophy at Alexandria during the last three centuries B.C.

<sup>22</sup> Referring to the English people during the Renaissance.

<sup>23</sup> English philosopher, friend of Henry VIII, a leader in the Humanist Movement in the Renaissance, a martyr to his political convictions. Most noted work, the *Utopia* (1487-1535).

<sup>24</sup> English philosopher and divine (1614-1687).

<sup>25</sup> English clergyman and writer (1584-1656).

<sup>26</sup> Among the many distinguished men of this name probably the one in Emerson's mind at this point was the learned English divine, editor of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (1659-1715).

<sup>27</sup> *Lord Bacon*, Francis, Baron Verulam, Viscount of St. Albans, English philosopher, statesman, scientist. Credited with the introduction of the inductive method of research (1561-1626).

<sup>28</sup> English bishop and writer (1613-1667).

<sup>29</sup> *Ralph Cudworth*, English clergyman and philosopher (1617-1688).

<sup>30</sup> *Sydenham*, Thomas, English physician (1624-1689).

<sup>31</sup> *Thomas Taylor*, English scholar, noted for his classical translations (1758-1835).

<sup>32</sup> *Marcilius Ficinus* (Ficino, Marcilio), Italian philosopher of the Platonistic school (1433-1499).

<sup>33</sup> *Picus Mirandola*, Giovanni (usually known as Pico della Mirandola), Italian scholar, leader of the Humanist Movement (1463-1494).

<sup>34</sup> The religious principles of John Calvin, French reformer (1509-1564), the leading tenets of which include infant baptism, predestination, foreordination, election, etc. Calvin brought Protestantism to France and Switzerland.

<sup>35</sup> In this work Plato deals with the doctrines of immortality and preëxistence as from the mouth of the dying Socrates.

<sup>36</sup> (Akhlág-i-Jaláli) A Persian work on ethics, written in the second half of the fifteenth century.

<sup>37</sup> The belief in direct communion of the individual with God through inward perceptions of the mind or soul. Held by such men as Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Swedenborg, and practiced by such sects as the Waldensians, Catheri, Quakers.

<sup>38</sup> Daughter of Zeus and Leda, wife of Menelaos, king of Sparta, whose elopement with Paris, son of Priam, king of Troy, caused the Trojan War. Typical of beauty in women.

<sup>39</sup> Supposed author of the Greek epics, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, about the ninth century B.C.

<sup>40</sup> *Raffelle*, (Raphael Sanzio), eminent painter of the Italian Renaissance (1483-1520).

<sup>41</sup> Using other authors' words, thoughts, and ideas as one's own, without credit.

<sup>42</sup> The great lawgiver of Athens (ca. 638-ca. 558 B.C.).

<sup>43</sup> A comic poet of Syracuse whose works pleased Plato, fifth century B.C.

<sup>44</sup> Pythagorean philosopher of Crotona, fourth century B.C.;

a forerunner of Copernicus in the belief in the diurnal motion of the earth and its annual motion round the sun.

<sup>45</sup> The Timæus referred to here was probably the Pythagorean philosopher of Locris. He wrote a treatise on the nature and the soul of the world.

<sup>46</sup> *Heraclitus*. A Greek philosopher of Ephesus, about 500 B.C., of melancholy mind, whose ideas were later adopted by the group known as the Stoics.

<sup>47</sup> Greek philosopher of Elis, who flourished about 505 B.C.; first to discover that the earth was round.

<sup>48</sup> Athenian philosopher whose ideas were so radical as to cause his execution by drinking of a poison made of hemlock sap. (ca. 469-399).

<sup>49</sup> Greek philosopher and founder of a group known as the Pythagoreans, which constituted a practical training school for citizenship (582- after 507 B.C.).

<sup>50</sup> Plato's masterpiece, a political treatise setting forth the attributes of the perfect city.

<sup>51</sup> Abbreviation for *ante christum* (before Christ).

<sup>52</sup> Greek statesman and leader of life and culture at Athens during the golden age of Athenian supremacy (ca. 490-429 B.C.).

<sup>53</sup> An ancient city of Achaia, capital of a district called Megaris, situated between Corinth and Athens.

<sup>54</sup> Probably Dion of Syracuse, revolutionary leader and adviser of Plato (ca. 408-353).

<sup>55</sup> Dionysius II succeeded his father as tyrant of Sicily and, by advice of Dion, his brother-in-law, invited Plato to his court. Plato advised him to lay aside the supreme power and lead the simple life. The tyrant was displeased and had Plato seized and sold as a slave. He also banished Dion, who collected some forces in Greece, came back, and deposed Dionysius 357 B.C.

<sup>56</sup> A place near Athens surrounded by high trees and adorned with covered walks, belonging to Academus, from whom the name is probably derived. Here Plato opened his school of philosophy.

<sup>57</sup> *I.e.*, broad.

<sup>58</sup> A cycle, or series, of oriental stories, very ancient, which have been translated from the Arabic into almost all the languages of the civilized world. But very probably Emerson had in mind in this connection the Seven Sages of Greece: Solon of Athens, Chilo of Sparta, Thales of Miletus, Bias of Priene, Cleobulus of Lindos, Pittacos of Mitylene, Periander of Corinth.

<sup>59</sup> Those who take partial or one-sided views on any question.

<sup>60</sup> Used in the sense of ballyhoo or noisy advertising, a characteristic New England use.

<sup>61</sup> The four oldest sacred books of the Hindus, of unknown antiquity, the basis of Brahminism. They consist mainly of hymns and verses addressed to the gods.

<sup>62</sup> The tendency of matter to seek the center of a revolving body; the opposite of centrifugence.



<sup>63</sup> A sea god, son of Neptune or Oceanus, who had the gift of prophecy. He was very elusive, often assuming the form of some beast and gliding away to escape answering questions.

<sup>64</sup> A long philosophic discourse in the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, the two most important characters of the Hindu epic, the *Maha-bharata*, and interpolated in that work.

<sup>65</sup> The Puranos were a collection of eighteen books of the popular religious literature of India, written in Sanscrit. The Vishnu Purana is a discourse on the supreme deity of that name.

<sup>66</sup> One of the leading objects of worship in Hinduism, being that incarnation of Vishnu most popular throughout northern India.

<sup>67</sup> A name in Greek mythology for the lowest regions, where the sun never shone, the abode of the most impious and guilty of the dead.

<sup>68</sup> The traditional social system of India where an individual lives his life on the social plane to which his fathers belonged.

<sup>69</sup> *Malthus*, Thomas Robert, eminent English scholar and economist (1766–1834).

<sup>70</sup> By the displacement of hand workers through introduction of machinery.

<sup>71</sup> A very white marble, mined since earliest times from Mt. Pentelicus near Athens; similar to Parian marble, but finer grained.

<sup>72</sup> The once famous shipyards of Medford, Massachusetts.

<sup>73</sup> Lowell, Massachusetts, is still noted for its manufactures.

<sup>74</sup> The early name of Constantinople was Byzantium, noted for its art, architecture, and learning.

<sup>75</sup> The art galleries of the famous court which Louis XIV established in 1682; about twelve miles from Paris.

<sup>76</sup> The original method of local government practiced by the Puritan fathers in New England, still used in small towns.

<sup>77</sup> One of the Olympian gods who stood for manly youth and beauty; the patron of the fine arts, medicine, music, poetry, eloquence.

<sup>78</sup> Reference to story common to Plato, Pindar, St. Ambrose, and others whose future greatness was supposed to have been foretold by the settling of a swarm of bees on their lips as children.

<sup>79</sup> There were many coins or medals struck in honor of Jove, showing him in characteristic poses. Probably the significance here is in the fact that the upper side of the medal was ornamented and the under side gave its monetary value.

<sup>80</sup> Here, the act of putting things together.

<sup>81</sup> Bones of the wings.

<sup>82</sup> Refers to the passing of the soul at death into another body.

<sup>83</sup> The three Parcæ or Fates: Clotho, who held the distaff; Lachesis, the spinner of the thread; and Atrophos, who cut it off; thus signifying birth, life, and death.

<sup>84</sup> An enchanter spoken of in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book III, Canto XI.

<sup>85</sup> In this work Plato defines rhetoric as the tool of Justice and asserts that the art of persuasion is the secret of power. Socrates is justified against the world.

<sup>86</sup> One of the characters in Plato's dialogue, the *Gorgias*.

<sup>87</sup> A celebrated island mentioned by the ancients. Its situation is unknown and even its existence is doubted by some writers.

<sup>88</sup> One of the dialogues of Plato.

<sup>89</sup> A philosophical term used by Plato in the following senses: (1) Discussion by dialogue as a method of scientific investigation, (2) The method of investigating the truth by analysis, (3) The science of ideas or of the nature and laws of being, — the higher metaphysics.

<sup>90</sup> A spiritual being holding a place between man and deities; a guardian spirit of less rank than a god.

<sup>91</sup> The rival state of Athens in ancient Greece, noted for austere simplicity and physical training.

<sup>92</sup> A kinsman of Plato; a character in Plato's *Republic*.

<sup>93</sup> Athenian orator and teacher of rhetoric (436–338 B.C.).

<sup>94</sup> A Greek philosopher about 505 B.C.

<sup>95</sup> The name of one of Plato's dialogues.

<sup>96</sup> The name of a dialogue early ascribed to Plato but probably not his work.

<sup>97</sup> The name of one of Plato's dialogues.

<sup>98</sup> One of Plato's dialogues was named the *Symposium* or "Banquet."

<sup>99</sup> Socrates, as in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes.

<sup>100</sup> That is, in dress and language. The Quakers practiced plainness because they thought decoration belied their truthfulness.

<sup>101</sup> A country of Greece north of Attica.

<sup>102</sup> Hippias of Elis, a Greek sophist born *ca.* mid-fifth century B.C. Gorgias, a celebrated sophist and orator (*ca.* 507–400 B.C.).

<sup>103</sup> A character in Plato's dialogue of that name.

<sup>104</sup> The torpedo fish.

<sup>105</sup> Kindness, good nature, free and easy manners, cordial benevolence.

<sup>106</sup> An enthusiast is one who goes to emotional excesses in religion; sometimes called a "zealot."

<sup>107</sup> A friend and disciple of Socrates, author of some dialogues on philosophy now lost.

<sup>108</sup> Hemlock was the poison used in putting Socrates to death.

<sup>109</sup> A Phrygian philosopher, originally a slave, famed for his fables; died 561 B.C.

<sup>110</sup> That is, sovereignty, superiority.

<sup>111</sup> The confused condition of matter before the creation of the universe.

<sup>112</sup> *Alexander* (the Great), king of Macedon. Celebrated conqueror (356–323 B.C.).

<sup>113</sup> A village in upper Egypt. It includes part of the ruins of ancient Thebes, among them the remains of the Temple of Ammon, largest of known temples.

<sup>114</sup> Etruria was a celebrated country of Italy, west of the Tiber, conquered with great difficulty by the Romans.

<sup>115</sup> An inhabitant of the age of reptiles which flourished before the age of man.

<sup>116</sup> A celebrated sculptor of Athens; died 432 B.C.

<sup>117</sup> The son of Brahma, whose institutes form the basis of Indian civil and religious law.

<sup>118</sup> A fossil crustacean of the Palæozoic period.

<sup>119</sup> An extinct reptile.

<sup>120</sup> A nebula is one of the masses of gaseous matter found in different portions of the heavens. The largest known nebula is the nebula of the constellation Orion.

<sup>121</sup> *Laplace*, Pierre Simon de, French astronomer and mathematician (1749–1827).

<sup>122</sup> A shrine at which sacrifices were made. Trophonius was a celebrated architect of Bœotia who built Apollo's temple at Delphi. After his death, supposedly by earthquake, he was honored as a god at the cave where he was supposed to dwell.

<sup>123</sup> A ring supposed to render its wearer invisible. Gyges was a Lydian king of great wealth, seventh century B.C.

<sup>124</sup> Refers to a quotation from the *Phædrus*.

<sup>125</sup> Refers to a quotation from the *Republic*.

<sup>126</sup> Refers to a story in the *Phædrus* told by Socrates of the Egyptian god, Theuth, who invented letters and showed them to the Egyptian king, Thamus, also a god, who objected to them on the ground that they would be bad for the memory.

<sup>127</sup> Soliform, *i.e.*, like the sun.

<sup>128</sup> Boniform, *i.e.*, sensitive to moral excellence.

<sup>129</sup> The name given by Lavoisier to nitrogen, because the gas did not sustain life. Now rarely used.

<sup>130</sup> That is, Plato.

<sup>131</sup> An organized commonwealth of all the gods; name given to a temple in honor of all the gods.

<sup>132</sup> God of huntsmen, shepherds, country dwellers.

<sup>133</sup> King of the world and father of Jupiter, the chief of the gods. He was supposed to have been banished from Greece by his son and fled to Italy, where he ruled during the so-called golden age.

<sup>134</sup> Most powerful of all the gods of the ancients.

<sup>135</sup> God of war.

<sup>136</sup> Goddess of love and beauty.

<sup>137</sup> One of the Muses, who presided over eloquence and heroic poetry.

<sup>138</sup> One of the three Graces.

<sup>139</sup> Astronomical terms. Arc refers to the apparent arc described above or below the horizon by the sun or other celestial body. Node refers to either of the two points where the orbit of a planet intercepts the ecliptic.

<sup>140</sup> *Michael Angelo*, (Michelangelo), Buonarroti. Italian painter and sculptor, architect and poet. The most powerful figure of the Renaissance (1475-1564).

<sup>141</sup> *Winter's Tale*, IV, iv.

<sup>142</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, III, xiii.

<sup>143</sup> Of never-ending duration.

### III

## SWEDENBORG; OR THE MYSTIC

**A**MONG eminent persons, those who are most dear to men are not of the class which the economist calls producers: they have nothing in their hands; they have not cultivated corn, nor made bread; they have not led out a colony, nor invented a loom. A higher class, in the estimation and love of this city-building, market-going race of mankind, are the poets, who, from the intellectual kingdom, feed the thought and imagination with ideas and pictures which raise men out of the world of corn and money, and console them for the short-comings of the day and the meanness of labor and traffic. Then, also, the philosopher has his value, who flatters the intellect of this laborer by engaging him with subtleties which instruct him in new faculties. Others may build cities; he is to understand them and keep them in awe. But there is a class who lead us into another region, — the world of morals or of will. What is singular about this region of thought is its claim. Wherever the sentiment of right comes in, it takes precedence of every thing else. For other things, I make poetry of them; but the moral sentiment makes poetry of me.

I have sometimes thought that he would render the greatest service to modern criticism, who should draw the line of relation that subsists between Shakspeare and Swedenborg. The human mind stands ever in perplexity, demanding intellect, demanding sanctity, impatient equally of each without the other. The reconciler has not yet appeared. If we tire of the saints, Shakspeare is our city of refuge. Yet the instincts presently teach that the problem of essence must

take precedence of all others; — the questions of Whence? What? and Whither? and the solution of these must be in a life, and not in a book. A drama or poem is a proximate or oblique reply; but Moses, Menu,<sup>1</sup> Jesus, work directly on this problem. The atmosphere of moral sentiment is a region of grandeur which reduces all material magnificence to toys, yet opens to every wretch that has reason the doors of the universe. Almost with a fierce haste it lays its empire on the man. In the language of the Koran, "God said, the heaven and the earth and all that is between them, think ye that we created them in jest, and that ye shall not return to us?" It is the kingdom of the will, and by inspiring the will, which is the seat of personality, seems to convert the universe into a person; —

"The realms of being to no other bow,  
Not only all are thine, but all are Thou."

All men are commanded by the saint. The Koran makes a distinct class of those who are by nature good, and whose goodness has an influence on others, and pronounces this class to be the aim of creation: the other classes are admitted to the feast of being, only as following in the train of this. And the Persian poet<sup>2</sup> exclaims to a soul of this kind, —

"Go boldly forth, and feast on being's banquet;  
Thou art the called, — the rest admitted with thee."

The privilege of this caste is an access to the secrets and structure of nature by some higher method than by experience. In common parlance, what one man is said to learn by experience, a man of extraordinary sagacity is said, without experience, to divine. The Arabians say, that Abul Khain, the mystic, and Abu Ali Seena, the philosopher, conferred together; and, on parting, the philosopher said, "All that he sees, I know"; and the mystic said, "All that he knows, I see." If one should ask the reason of this intuition, the

solution would lead us into that property which Plato denoted as Reminiscence, and which is implied by the Bramins<sup>3</sup> of Transmigration.<sup>4</sup> The soul having been often born, or, as the Hindoos say, "travelling the path of existence through thousands of births," having beheld the things which are here, those which are in heaven and those which are beneath, there is nothing of which she has not gained the knowledge: no wonder that she is able to recollect, in regard to any one thing, what formerly she knew. "For, all things in nature being linked and related, and the soul having heretofore known all, nothing hinders but that any man who has recalled to mind, or according to the common phrase has learned, one thing only, should of himself recover all his ancient knowledge, and find out again all the rest, if he have but courage and faint not in the midst of his researches. For inquiry and learning is reminiscence all." How much more, if he that inquires be a holy and godlike soul! For by being assimilated to the original soul, by whom and after whom all things subsist, the soul of man does then easily flow into all things, and all things flow into it: they mix; and he is present and sympathetic with their structure and law.

This path is difficult, secret, and beset with terror. The ancients called it *ecstasy* or absence, — a getting out of their bodies to think. All religious history contains traces of the trance of saints, — a beatitude, but without any sign of joy; earnest, solitary, even sad; "the flight," Plotinus called it, "of the alone to the alone; "Μύησις, the closing of the eyes, — whence our word, *Mystic*. The trances of Socrates, Plotinus,<sup>5</sup> Porphyry,<sup>6</sup> Behmen, Bunyan,<sup>7</sup> Fox,<sup>8</sup> Pascal,<sup>9</sup> Guyon,<sup>10</sup> Swedenborg, will readily come to mind. But what as readily comes to mind is the accompaniment of disease. This beatitude comes in terror, and with shocks to the mind of the receiver.

"It o'erinforms the tenement of clay,"<sup>11</sup> and drives the

man mad; or gives a certain violent bias which taints his judgment. In the chief examples of religious illumination somewhat morbid has mingled, in spite of the unquestionable increase of mental power. Must the highest good drag after it a quality which neutralizes and discredits it? —

“Indeed, it takes<sup>12</sup>

From our achievements, when performed at height,  
The pith and marrow of our attribute.”

Shall we say, that the economical mother disburses so much earth and so much fire, by weight and meter, to make a man, and will not add a penny-weight though a nation is perishing for a leader? Therefore the men of God purchased their science by folly or pain. If you will have pure carbon, carbuncle, or diamond, to make the brain transparent, the trunk and organs shall be so much the grosser: instead of porcelain they are potter's earth, clay, or mud.

In modern times no such remarkable example of this introverted mind has occurred as in Emanuel Swedenborg, born in Stockholm, in 1688. This man, who appeared to his contemporaries a visionary and elixir of moonbeams, no doubt led the most real life of any man then in the world: and now, when the royal and ducal Frederics, Christians, and Brunswicks<sup>13</sup> of that day have slid into oblivion, he begins to spread himself into the minds of thousands. As happens in great men, he seemed, by the variety and amount of his powers, to be a composition of several persons, — like the giant fruits which are matured in gardens by the union of four or five single blossoms. His frame is on a larger scale and possesses the advantages of size. As it is easier to see the reflection of the great sphere in large globes, though defaced by some crack or blemish, than in drops of water, so men of large calibre, though with some eccentricity or madness, like Pascal or Newton, help us more than balanced mediocre minds.



His youth and training could not fail to be extraordinary. Such a body could not whistle or dance, but goes grubbing into mines and mountains, prying into chemistry and optics, physiology, mathematics, and astronomy, to find images fit for the measure of his versatile and capacious brain. He was a scholar from a child, and was educated at Upsala.<sup>14</sup> At the age of twenty-eight he was made Assessor of the Board of Mines by Charles XII. In 1716, he left home for four years and visited the universities of England, Holland, France, and Germany. He performed a notable feat of engineering in 1718, at the siege of Frederikshald,<sup>15</sup> by hauling two galleys, five boats, and a sloop, some fourteen English miles overland, for the royal service. In 1721 he journeyed over Europe to examine mines and smelting works. He published in 1716 his *Dædalus Hyperboreus*,<sup>16</sup> and from this time for the next thirty years was employed in the composition and publication of his scientific works. With the like force he threw himself into theology. In 1743, when he was fifty-four years old, what is called his illumination began. All his metallurgy and transportation of ships overland was absorbed into this ecstasy. He ceased to publish any more scientific books, withdrew from his practical labors, and devoted himself to the writing and publication of his voluminous theological works, which were printed at his own expense, or at that of the Duke of Brunswick, or other prince, at Dresden, Leipsic, London, or Amsterdam. Later, he resigned his office of Assessor: the salary attached to this office continued to be paid him during his life. His duties had brought him into intimate acquaintance with King Charles XII.,<sup>17</sup> by whom he was much consulted and honored. The like favor was continued to him by his successor. At the Diet of 1751,<sup>18</sup> Count Hopken<sup>19</sup> says, the most solid memorials on finance were from his pen. In Sweden he appears to have attracted a marked regard. His rare science and practical skill, and the added fame of second sight and extraordinary religious

knowledge and gifts, drew to him queens, nobles, clergy, shipmasters, and people about the ports through which he was wont to pass in his many voyages. The clergy interfered a little with the importation and publication of his religious works, but he seems to have kept the friendship of men in power. He was never married. He had great modesty and gentleness of bearing. His habits were simple; he lived on bread, milk, and vegetables; he lived in a house situated in a large garden; he went several times to England, where he does not seem to have attracted any attention whatever from the learned or the eminent; and died at London, March 29, 1772, of apoplexy, in his eighty-fifth year. He is described, when in London, as a man of a quiet, clerical habit, not averse to tea and coffee, and kind to children. He wore a sword when in full velvet dress, and, whenever he walked out, carried a gold-headed cane. There is a common portrait of him in antique coat and wig, but the face has a wandering or vacant air.

The genius which was to penetrate the science of the age with a far more subtle science; to pass the bounds of space and time, venture into the dim spirit-realm, and attempt to establish a new religion in the world, — began its lessons in quarries and forges, in the smelting-pot and crucible, in ship-yards and dissecting-rooms. No one man is perhaps able to judge of the merits of his works on so many subjects. One is glad to learn that his books on mines and metals are held in the highest esteem by those who understand these matters. It seems that he anticipated much science of the nineteenth century; anticipated, in astronomy, the discovery of the seventh planet,<sup>20</sup> — but, unhappily, not also of the eighth; anticipated the views of modern astronomy in regard to the generation of earths by the sun; in magnetism, some important experiments and conclusions of later students; in chemistry, the atomic theory;<sup>21</sup> in anatomy, the discoveries of Schlichting,<sup>22</sup> Monroe,<sup>23</sup> and Wilson;<sup>24</sup> and first demonstrated

the office of the lungs. His excellent English editor magnanimously lays no stress on his discoveries, since he was too great to care to be original; and we are to judge, by what he can spare, of what remains.

A colossal soul, he lies vast abroad on his times, uncomprehended by them, and requires a long focal distance to be seen; suggests, as Aristotle, Bacon, Selden,<sup>25</sup> Humboldt,<sup>26</sup> that a certain vastness of learning, or *quasi* omnipresence of the human soul in nature, is possible. His superb speculation, as from a tower, over nature and arts, without ever losing sight of the texture and sequence of things, almost realizes his own picture, in the "Principia," of the original integrity of man. Over and above the merit of his particular discoveries, is the capital merit of his self-equality. A drop of water has the properties of the sea, but cannot exhibit a storm. There is beauty of a concert, as well as of a flute; strength of a host, as well as of a hero; and, in Swedenborg, those who are best acquainted with modern books will most admire the merit of mass. One of the missouriums<sup>27</sup> and mastodons<sup>28</sup> of literature, he is not to be measured by whole colleges of ordinary scholars. His stalwart presence would flutter the gowns of an university. Our books are false by being fragmentary; their sentences are *bonmots*,<sup>29</sup> and not parts of natural discourse; childish expressions of surprise or pleasure in nature; or, worse, owing a brief notoriety to their petulance, or aversion from the order of nature; — being some curiosity or oddity, designedly not in harmony with nature and purposely framed to excite surprise, as jugglers do by concealing their means. But Swedenborg is systematic and respective of the world in every sentence; all the means are orderly given; his faculties work with astronomic punctuality, and this admirable writing is pure from all pertness or egotism.

Swedenborg was born into an atmosphere of great ideas. It is hard to say what was his own: yet his life was dignified by noblest pictures of the universe. The robust Aristotelian

method, with its breadth and adequateness, shaming our sterile and linear logic by its genial radiation, conversant with series and degree, with effects and ends, skilful to discriminate power from form, essence from accident, and opening, by its terminology and definition, high roads into nature, had trained a race of athletic philosophers. Harvey<sup>30</sup> had shown the circulation of the blood; Gilbert<sup>31</sup> had shown that the earth was a magnet; Descartes,<sup>32</sup> taught by Gilbert's magnet, with its vortex, spiral, and polarity, had filled Europe with the leading thought of vortical motion, as the secret of nature. Newton, in the year in which Swedenborg was born, published the "Principia," and established the universal gravity. Malpighi,<sup>33</sup> following the high doctrines of Hippocrates,<sup>34</sup> Leucippus,<sup>35</sup> and Lucretius,<sup>36</sup> had given emphasis to the dogma that nature works in leasts, — "tota in minimis existit natura." Unrivalled dissectors, Swammerdam,<sup>37</sup> Leuwenhoek,<sup>38</sup> Winslow,<sup>39</sup> Eustachius,<sup>40</sup> Heister,<sup>41</sup> Vesalius,<sup>42</sup> Boerhaave,<sup>43</sup> had left nothing for scalpel or microscope to reveal in human or comparative anatomy: Linnæus,<sup>44</sup> his contemporary, was affirming, in his beautiful science, that "Nature is always like herself:" and, lastly, the nobility of method, the largest application of principles, had been exhibited by Leibnitz<sup>45</sup> and Christian Wolff,<sup>46</sup> in cosmology; whilst Locke and Grotius<sup>47</sup> had drawn the moral argument. What was left for a genius of the largest calibre but to go over their ground and verify and unite? It is easy to see, in these minds, the origin of Swedenborg's studies, and the suggestion of his problems. He had a capacity to entertain and vivify these volumes of thought. Yet the proximity of these geniuses, one or other of whom had introduced all his leading ideas, makes Swedenborg another example of the difficulty, even in a highly fertile genius, of proving originality, the first birth and annunciation of one of the laws of nature.

He named his favorite views the doctrine of Forms, the doctrine of Series and Degrees, the doctrine of Influx, the

doctrine of Correspondence. His statement of these doctrines deserves to be studied in his books. Not every man can read them, but they will reward him who can. His theologic works are valuable to illustrate these. His writings would be a sufficient library to a lonely and athletic student; and the "Economy of the Animal Kingdom" is one of those books which, by the sustained dignity of thinking, is an honor to the human race. He had studied spars and metals to some purpose. His varied and solid knowledge makes his style lustrous with points and shooting spiculæ of thought, and resembling one of those winter mornings when the air sparkles with crystals. The grandeur of the topics makes the grandeur of the style. He was apt for cosmology, because of that native perception of identity which made mere size of no account to him. In the atom of magnetic iron he saw the quality which would generate the spiral motion of sun and planet.

The thoughts in which he lived were, the universality of each law in nature; the Platonic doctrine of the scale or degrees; the version or conversion of each into other, and so the correspondence of all the parts; the fine secret that little explains large, and large, little; the centrality of man in nature, and the connection that subsists throughout all things: he saw that the human body was strictly universal, or an instrument through which the soul feeds and is fed by the whole of matter; so that he held, in exact antagonism to the skeptics, that "the wiser a man is, the more will he be a worshipper of the Deity." In short, he was a believer in the Identity-philosophy, which he held not idly, as the dreamers of Berlin or Boston, but which he experimented with and established through years of labor, with the heart and strength of the rudest Viking <sup>48</sup> that his rough Sweden ever sent to battle.

This theory dates from the oldest philosophers, and derives perhaps its best illustration from the newest. It is this, that Nature iterates her means perpetually on successive planes.

In the old aphorism, *nature is always self-similar*. In the plant, the eye or germinative point opens to a leaf, then to another leaf, with a power of transforming the leaf into radicle, stamen, pistil, petal, bract, sepal, or seed. The whole art of the plant is still to repeat leaf on leaf without end, the more or less of heat, light, moisture, and food determining the form it shall assume. In the animal, nature makes a vertebra, or a spine of vertebræ, and helps herself still by a new spine, with a limited power of modifying its form, — spine on spine, to the end of the world. A poetic anatomist, in our own day, teaches that a snake, being a horizontal line, and man, being an erect line, constitute a right angle; and between the lines of this mystical quadrant all animated beings find their place: and he assumes the hair-worm, the span-worm, or the snake, as the type of prediction of the spine. Manifestly, at the end of the spine, Nature puts out smaller spines, as arms; at the end of the arms, new spines, as hands; at the other end, she repeats the process, as legs and feet. At the top of the column she puts out another spine, which doubles or loops itself over, as a span-worm, into a ball, and forms the skull, with extremities again: the hands being now the upper jaw, the feet the lower jaw, the fingers and toes being represented this time by upper and lower teeth. This new spine is destined to high uses. It is a new man on the shoulders of the last. It can almost shed its trunk and manage to live alone, according to the Platonic idea in the *Timæus*. Within it, on a higher plane, all that was done in the trunk repeats itself. Nature recites her lesson once more in a higher mood. The mind is a finer body, and resumes its functions of feeding, digesting, absorbing, excluding, and generating, in a new and ethereal element. Here in the brain is all the process of alimentation repeated, in the acquiring, comparing, digesting, and assimilating of experience. Here again is the mystery of generation repeated. In the brain are male and female faculties; here is marriage, here is fruit.

And there is no limit to this ascending scale, but series on series. Every thing, at the end of one use, is taken up into the next, each series punctually repeating every organ and process of the last. We are adapted to infinity. We are hard to please, and love nothing which ends; and in nature is no end, but every thing at the end of one use is lifted into a superior, and the ascent of these things climbs into dæmonic and celestial natures. Creative force, like a musical composer, goes on unweariedly repeating a simple air or theme, now high, now low, in solo, in chorus, ten thousand times reverberated, till it fills earth and heaven with the chant.

Gravitation, as explained by Newton, is good, but grander when we find chemistry only an extension of the law of masses into particles, and that the atomic theory shows the action of chemistry to be mechanical also. Metaphysics shows us a sort of gravitation operative also in the mental phenomena; and the terrible tabulation of the French statist<sup>s</sup> <sup>49</sup> brings every piece of whim and humor to be reducible also to exact numerical ratios. If one man in twenty thousand, or in thirty thousand, eats shoes or marries his grandmother, then in every twenty thousand or thirty thousand is found one man who eats shoes or marries his grandmother. What we call gravitation, and fancy ultimate, is one fork of a mightier stream for which we have yet no name. Astronomy is excellent; but it must come up into life to have its full value, and not remain there in globes and spaces. The globule of blood gyrates around its own axis in the human veins, as the planet in the sky; and the circles of intellect relate to those of the heavens. Each law of nature has the like universality; eating, sleep or hybernation, rotation, generation, metamorphosis, vortical motion, which is seen in eggs as in planets. These grand rhymes or returns in nature, — the dear, best-known face startling us at every turn, under a mask so unexpected that we think it the face of a stranger, and carrying up the semblance into divine forms, — delighted the pro-

phetic eye of Swedenborg; and he must be reckoned a leader in that revolution, which, by giving to science an idea, has given to an aimless accumulation of experiments, guidance and form and a beating heart.

I own with some regret that his printed works amount to about fifty stout octavos, his scientific works being about half of the whole number; and it appears that a mass of manuscript still unedited remains in the royal library at Stockholm. The scientific works have just now been translated into English, in an excellent edition.

Swedenborg printed these scientific books in the ten years from 1734 to 1744, and they remained from that time neglected; and now, after their century is complete, he has at last found a pupil in Mr. Wilkinson,<sup>50</sup> in London, a philosophic critic, with a co-equal vigor of understanding and imagination comparable only to Lord Bacon's, who has restored his master's buried books to the day, and transferred them, with every advantage, from their forgotten Latin into English, to go round the world in our commercial and conquering tongue. This startling reappearance of Swedenborg, after a hundred years, in his pupil, is not the least remarkable fact in his history. Aided it is said by the munificence of Mr. Clissold,<sup>51</sup> and also by his literary skill, this piece of poetic justice is done. The admirable preliminary discourses with which Mr. Wilkinson has enriched these volumes, throw all the contemporary philosophy of England into shade, and leave me nothing to say on their proper grounds.

The "Animal Kingdom" is a book of wonderful merits. It was written with the highest end, — to put science and the soul, long estranged from each other, at one again. It was an anatomist's account of the human body, in the highest style of poetry. Nothing can exceed the bold and brilliant treatment of a subject usually so dry and repulsive. He saw nature "wreathing through an everlasting spiral, with wheels that never dry, on axles that never creak," and sometimes



sought “to uncover those secret recesses where Nature is sitting at the fires in the depths of her laboratory;” whilst the picture comes recommended by the hard fidelity with which it is based on practical anatomy. It is remarkable that this sublime genius decided peremptorily for the analytic, against the synthetic method; and, in a book whose genius is a daring poetic synthesis, claims to confine himself to a rigid experience.

He knows, if he only, the flowing of nature, and how wise was that old answer of Amasis<sup>52</sup> to him who bade him drink up the sea, — “Yes, willingly, if you will stop the rivers that flow in.” Few knew as much about nature and her subtle manners, or expressed more subtly her goings. He thought as large a demand is made on our faith by nature, as by miracles. “He noted that in her proceeding from first principles through her several subordinations, there was no state through which she did not pass, as if her path lay through all things.” “For as often as she betakes herself upward from visible phenomena, or, in other words, withdraws herself inward, she instantly as it were disappears, while no one knows what has become of her, or whither she is gone: so that it is necessary to take science as a guide in pursuing her steps.”

The pursuing the inquiry under the light of an end or final cause gives wonderful animation, a sort of personality to the whole writing. This book announces his favorite dogmas. The ancient doctrine of Hippocrates, that the brain is a gland; and of Leucippus, that the atom may be known by the mass; or, in Plato, the macrocosm by the microcosm; and, in the verses of Lucretius, —<sup>53</sup>

Ossa videlicet e paucillis atque minutis  
 Ossibus sic et de paucillis atque minutis  
 Visceribus viscus gigni, sanguenque creari  
 Sanguinis inter se multis coeuntibus guttis;  
 Ex aurique putat micis consistere posse  
 Aurum, et de terris terram concrecere parvis;  
 Ignibus ex igneis, humorem humoribus esse.

Lib. I. 835.

“The principle of all things, entrails made  
 Of smallest entrails; bone, of smallest bone;  
 Blood, of small sanguine drops reduced to one;  
 Gold, of small grains; earth, of small sands compacted;  
 Small drops to water, sparks to fire contracted:”

and which Malpighi had summed in his maxim that “nature exists entire in leasts,” — is a favorite thought of Swedenborg. “It is a consant law of the organic body that large, compound, or visible forms exist and subsist from smaller, simpler, and ultimately from invisible forms, which act similarly to the larger ones, but more perfectly and more universally; and the least forms so perfectly and universally as to involve an idea representative of their entire universe.” The unities of each organ are so many little organs, homogeneous with their compound: the unities of the tongue are little tongues; those of the stomach, little stomachs; those of the heart are little hearts. This fruitful idea furnishes a key to every secret. What was too small for the eye to detect was read by the aggregates; what was too large, by the units. There is no end to his application of the thought. “Hunger is an aggregate of very many little hungers, or losses of blood by the little veins all over the body.” It is a key to his theology also. “Man is a kind of very minute heaven, corresponding to the world of spirits and to heaven. Every particular idea of man, and every affection, yea, every smallest part of his affection, is an image and effigy of him. A spirit may be known from only a single thought. God is the grand man.”

The hardihood and thoroughness of his study of nature required a theory of forms also. “Forms ascend in order from the lowest to the highest. The lowest form is angular, or the terrestrial and corporeal. The second and next higher form is the circular, which is also called the perpetual-angular, because the circumference of a circle is a perpetual angle. The form above this is the spiral, parent and measure of circular forms; its diameters are not rectilinear, but variously

circular, and have a spherical surface for centre; therefore it is called the perpetual-circular. The form above this is the vortical, or perpetual-spiral: next, the perpetual-vortical, or celestial: last, the perpetual-celestial, or spiritual."

Was it strange that a genius so bold should take the last step also, should conceive that he might attain the science of all sciences, to unlock the meaning of the world? In the first volume of the "Animal Kingdom," he broaches the subject in a remarkable note: — "In our doctrine of Representations and Correspondences we shall treat of both these symbolical and typical resemblances, and of the astonishing things which occur, I will not say in the living body only, but throughout nature, and which correspond so entirely to supreme and spiritual things that one would swear that the physical world was purely symbolical of the spiritual world; insomuch that if we choose to express any natural truth in physical and definite vocal terms, and to convert these terms only into the corresponding and spiritual terms, we shall by this means elicit a spiritual truth or theological dogma, in place of the physical truth or precept: although no mortal would have predicted that any thing of the kind could possibly arise by bare literal transposition; inasmuch as the one precept, considered separately from the other, appears to have absolutely no relation to it. I intend hereafter to communicate a number of examples of such correspondences, together with a vocabulary containing the terms of spiritual things, as well as of the physical things for which they are to be substituted. This symbolism pervades the living body."

The fact thus explicitly stated is implied in all poetry, in allegory, in fable, in the use of emblems, and in the structure of language. Plato knew it, as is evident from his twice bisected line in the sixth book of the Republic. Lord Bacon had found that truth and nature differed only as seal and print; and he instanced some physical propositions, with their translation into a moral or political sense. Behmen, and all mystics,

imply this law in their dark riddle-writing. The poets, in as far as they are poets, use it; but it is known to them only as the magnet was known for ages, as a toy. Swedenborg first put the fact into a detached and scientific statement, because it was habitually present to him, and never not seen. It was involved, as we explained already, in the doctrine of identity and iteration, because the mental series exactly tallies with the material series. It required an insight that could rank things in order and series; or rather it required such rightness of position that the poles of the eye should coincide with the axis of the world. The earth had fed its mankind through five or six millenniums, and they had sciences, religions, philosophies, and yet had failed to see the correspondence of meaning between every part and every other part. And, down to this hour, literature has no book in which the symbolism of things is scientifically opened. One would say that as soon as men had the first hint that every sensible object, — animal, rock, river, air, — nay, space and time, subsists not for itself, nor finally to a material end, but as a picture-language to tell another story of beings and duties, other science would be put by, and a science of such grand presage would absorb all faculties: that each man would ask of all objects what they mean: Why does the horizon hold me fast, with my joy and grief, in this centre? Why hear I the same sense from countless differing voices, and read one never quite expressed fact in endless picture-language? Yet whether it be that these things will not be intellectually learned, or that many centuries must elaborate and compose so rare and opulent a soul, — there is no comet, rock-stratum, fossil, fish, quadruped, spider, or fungus, that, for itself, does not interest more scholars and classifiers than the meaning and upshot of the frame of things.

But Swedenborg was not content with the culinary use of the world. In his fifty-fourth year these thoughts held him fast, and his profound mind admitted the perilous opinion, too frequent in religious history, that he was an abnormal

person, to whom was granted the privilege of conversing with angels and spirits; and this ecstasy connected itself with just this office of explaining the moral import of the sensible world. To a right perception, at once broad and minute, of the order of nature, he added the comprehension of the moral laws in their widest social aspects; but whatever he saw, through some excessive determination to form in his constitution, he saw not abstractly, but in pictures, heard it in dialogues, constructed it in events. When he attempted to announce the law most sanely, he was forced to couch it in parable.

Modern psychology offers no similar example of a deranged balance. The principal powers continued to maintain a healthy action, and to a reader who can make due allowance in the report for the reporter's peculiarities, the results are still instructive, and a more striking testimony to the sublime laws he announced than any that balanced dulness could afford. He attempts to give some account of the *modus* of the new state, affirming that "his presence in the spiritual world is attended with a certain separation, but only as to the intellectual part of his mind, not as to the will part"; and he affirms that "he sees, with the internal sight, the things that are in another life, more clearly than he sees the things which are here in the world."

Having adopted the belief that certain books of the Old and New Testaments were exact allegories, or written in the angelic and ecstatic mode, he employed his remaining years in extricating from the literal, the universal sense. He had borrowed from Plato the fine fable of "a most ancient people, men better than we and dwelling nigher to the gods"; and Swedenborg added that they used the earth symbolically; that these, when they saw terrestrial objects, did not think at all about them, but only about those which they signified. The correspondence between thoughts and things henceforward occupied him. "The very organic form resembles

the end inscribed on it." A man is in general and in particular an organized justice or injustice, selfishness or gratitude. And the cause of this harmony he assigned in the Arcana: "The reason why all and single things, in the heavens and on earth, are representative, is because they exist from an influx of the Lord, through heaven." This design of exhibiting such correspondences, which, if adequately executed, would be the poem of the world, in which all history and science would play an essential part, was narrowed and defeated by the exclusively theologic direction which his inquiries took. His perception of nature is not human and universal, but is mystical and Hebraic. He fastens each natural object to a theologic notion;—a horse signifies carnal understanding; a tree, perception; the moon, faith; a cat means this; an ostrich that; an artichoke this other;—and poorly tethers every symbol to a several ecclesiastic sense. The slippery Proteus<sup>55</sup> is not so easily caught. In nature, each individual symbol plays innumerable parts, as each particle of matter circulates in turn through every system. The central identity enables any one symbol to express successively all the qualities and shades of real being. In the transmission of the heavenly waters, every hose fits every hydrant. Nature avenges herself speedily on the hard pedantry that would chain her waves. She is no literalist. Every thing must be taken genially, and we must be at the top of our condition to understand any thing rightly.

His theological bias thus fatally narrowed his interpretation of nature, and the dictionary of symbols is yet to be written. But the interpreter whom mankind must still expect, will find no predecessor who has approached so near to the true problem.

Swedenborg styles himself in the title-page of his books, "Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ"; and by force of intellect, and in effect, he is the last Father in the Church, and is not likely to have a successor. No wonder

that his depth of ethical wisdom should give him influence as a teacher. To the withered traditional church, yielding dry catechisms, he let in nature again, and the worshipper, escaping from the vestry of verbs and texts, is surprised to find himself a party to the whole of his religion. His religion thinks for him and is of universal application. He turns it on every side; it fits every part of life, interprets and dignifies every circumstance. Instead of a religion which visited him diplomatically three or four times, — when he was born, when he married, when he fell sick, and when he died, and, for the rest, never interfered with him, — here was a teaching which accompanied him all day, accompanied him even into sleep and dreams; into his thinking, and showed him through what a long ancestry his thoughts descend; into society, and showed by what affinities he was girt to his equals and his counterparts; into natural objects, and showed their origin and meaning, what are friendly, and what are hurtful; and opened the future world by indicating the continuity of the same laws. His disciples allege that their intellect is invigorated by the study of his books.

There is no such problem for criticism as his theological writings, their merits are so commanding, yet such grave deductions must be made. Their immense and sandy diffuseness is like the prairie or the desert, and their incongruities are like the last delirium.<sup>56</sup> He is superfluously explanatory, and his feeling of the ignorance of men, strangely exaggerated. Men take truths of this nature very fast. Yet he abounds in assertions, he is a rich discoverer, and of things which most import us to know. His thought dwells in essential resemblances, like the resemblance of a house to the man who built it. He saw things in their law, in likeness of function, not of structure. There is an invariable method and order in his delivery of truth, the habitual proceeding of the mind from inmost to outmost. What earnestness and weightiness, — his eye never roving, without one swell of vanity, or one look

to self in any common form of literary pride! a theoretic or speculative man, but whom no practical man in the universe could affect to scorn. Plato is a gownsman; his garment, though of purple, and almost sky-woven, is an academic robe and hinders action with its voluminous folds. But this mystic is awful to Cæsar. Lycurgus<sup>57</sup> himself would bow.

The moral insight of Swedenborg, the correction of popular errors, the announcement of ethical laws, take him out of comparison with any other modern writer and entitle him to a place, vacant for some ages, among the lawgivers of mankind. That slow but commanding influence which he has acquired, like that of other religious geniuses, must be excessive also, and have its tides, before it subsides into a permanent amount. Of course what is real and universal cannot be confined to the circle of those who sympathize strictly with his genius, but will pass forth into the common stock of wise and just thinking. The world has a sure chemistry, by which it extracts what is excellent in its children and lets fall the infirmities and limitations of the grandest mind.

That metempsychosis which is familiar in the old mythology of the Greeks, collected in Ovid<sup>58</sup> and in the Indian Transmigration, and is there *objective*, or really takes place in bodies by alien will, — in Swedenborg's mind has a more philosophic character. It is *subjective*, or depends entirely upon the thought of the person. All things in the universe arrange themselves to each person anew, according to his ruling love. Man is such as his affection and thought are. Man is man by virtue of willing, not by virtue of knowing and understanding. As he is, so he sees. The marriages of the world are broken up. Interiors associate all in the spiritual world. Whatever the angels looked upon was to them celestial. Each Satan appears to himself a man; to those as bad as he, a comely man; to the purified, a heap of carrion. Nothing can resist states: every thing gravitates: like will to like: what we call poetic justice takes effect on the spot. We have come into a world which is



a living poem. Every thing is as I am. Bird and beast is not bird and beast, but emanation and effluvia of the minds and wills of men there present. Every one makes his own house and state. The ghosts are tormented with the fear of death and cannot remember that they have died. They who are in evil and falsehood are afraid of all others. Such as have deprived themselves of charity, wander and flee: the societies which they approach discover their quality and drive them away. The covetous seem to themselves to be abiding in cells where their money is deposited, and these to be infested with mice. They who place merit in good works seem to themselves to cut wood. "I asked such, if they were not wearied? They replied, that they have not yet done work enough to merit heaven."

He delivers golden sayings which express with singular beauty the ethical laws; as when he uttered that famed sentence, that "In heaven the angels are advancing continually to the springtime of their youth, so that the oldest angel appears the youngest": "The more angels, the more room": "The perfection of man is the love of use": "Man, in his perfect form, is heaven": "What is from Him, is Him": "Ends always ascend as nature descends." And the truly poetic account of the writing in the inmost heaven, which, as it consists of inflexions according to the form of heaven, can be read without instruction. He almost justifies his claim to preternatural vision, by strange insights of the structure of the human body and mind. "It is never permitted to any one, in heaven, to stand behind another and look at the back of his head; for then the influx which is from the Lord is disturbed." The angels, from the sound of the voice, know a man's love; from the articulation of the sound, his wisdom; and from the sense of the words, his science.

In the "Conjugal Love," he has unfolded the science of marriage. Of this book one would say that with the highest elements it has failed of success. It came near to be the

Hymn of Love, which Plato attempted in the "Banquet"; the love, which, Dante says, Casella<sup>59</sup> sang among the angels in Paradise; and which, as rightly celebrated, in its genesis, fruition, and effect, might well entrance the souls, as it would lay open the genesis of all institutions, customs, and manners. The book had been grand if the Hebraism had been omitted and the law stated without Gothicism,<sup>60</sup> as ethics, and with that scope for ascension of state which the nature of things requires. It is a fine Platonic development of the science of marriage; teaching that sex is universal, and not local; virility in the male qualifying every organ, act, and thought; and the feminine in woman. Therefore in the real or spiritual world the nuptial union is not momentary, but incessant and total; and chastity not a local, but a universal virtue; unchastity being discovered as much in the trading, or planting, or speaking, or philosophizing, as in generation; and that, though the virgins he saw in heaven were beautiful, the wives were incomparably more beautiful, and went on increasing in beauty evermore.

Yet Swedenborg, after his mode, pinned his theory to a temporary form. He exaggerates the circumstance of marriage; and though he finds false marriages on earth, fancies a wiser choice in heaven. But of progressive souls, all loves and friendships are momentary. *Do you love me?* means, Do you see the same truth? If you do, we are happy with the same happiness: but presently one of us passes into the perception of new truth; — we are divorced, and no tension in nature can hold us to each other. I know how delicious is this cup of love, — I existing for you, you existing for me; but it is a child's clinging to his toy; an attempt to eternize the fireside and nuptial chamber; to keep the picture-alphabet through which our first lessons are prettily conveyed. The Eden of God is bare and grand: like the outdoor landscape remembered from the evening fireside, it seems cold and desolate whilst you cower over the coals, but once abroad again, we

pity those who can forego the magnificence of nature for candle-light and cards. Perhaps the true subject of the "Conjugal Love" is *Conversation*, whose laws are profoundly set forth. It is false, if literally applied to marriage. For God is the bride or bridegroom of the soul. Heaven is not the pairing of two, but the communion of all souls. We meet, and dwell an instant under the temple of one thought, and part, as though we parted not, to join another thought in other fellowships of joy. So far from there being anything divine in the low and proprietary sense of *Do you love me?* it is only when you leave and lose me by casting yourself on a sentiment which is higher than both of us, that I draw near and find myself at your side; and I am repelled if you fix your eye on me and demand love. In fact, in the spiritual world we change sexes every moment. You love the worth in me; then I am your husband: but it is not me, but the worth, that fixes the love: and that worth is a drop of the ocean of worth that is beyond me. Meantime I adore the greater worth in another, and so become his wife. He aspires to a higher worth in another spirit, and is wife or receiver of that influence.

Whether from a self-inquisitorial habit that he grew into from jealousy of the sins to which men of thought are liable, he has acquired, in disentangling and demonstrating that particular form of moral disease, an acumen which no conscience can resist. I refer to his feeling of the profanation of thinking to what is good, "from scientifics." "To reason about faith, is to doubt and deny." He was painfully alive to the difference between knowing and doing, and this sensibility is incessantly expressed. Philosophers are, therefore, vipers, cockatrices, asps, hemorrhoids, presters, and flying serpents; literary men are conjurors and charlatans.

But this topic suggests a sad afterthought, that here we find the seat of his own pain. Possibly Swedenborg paid the penalty of introverted faculties. Success, or a fortunate genius, seems to depend on a happy adjustment of heart and

brain; on a due proportion, hard to hit, of moral and mental power, which perhaps obeys the law of those chemical ratios which make a proportion in volumes necessary to combination, as when gases will combine in certain fixed rates, but not at any rate. It is hard to carry a full cup; and this man, profusely endowed in heart and mind, early fell into dangerous discord with himself. In his *Animal Kingdom* he surprised us by declaring that he loved analysis, and not synthesis; and now, after his fiftieth year, he falls into jealousy of his intellect; and though aware that truth is not solitary nor is goodness solitary, but both must ever mix and marry, he makes war on his mind, takes the part of the conscience against it, and, on all occasions, traduces and blasphemes it. The violence is instantly avenged. Beauty is disgraced, love is unlovely, when truth, the half part of heaven, is denied, as much as when a bitterness in men of talent leads to satire and destroys the judgment. He is wise, but wise in his own despite. There is an air of infinite grief and the sound of wailing all over and through this lurid universe. A vampyre sits in the seat of the prophet and turns with gloomy appetite to images of pain. Indeed, a bird does not more readily weave its nest, or a mole bore into the ground, than this seer of the souls substructs a new hell and pit, each more abominable than the last, round every new crew of offenders. He was let down through a column that seemed of brass, but it was formed of angelic spirits, that he might descend safely amongst the unhappy, and witness the vastation of souls and hear there, for a long continuance, their lamentations: he saw their tormentors, who increase and strain pangs to infinity; he saw the hell of the jugglers, the hell of the assassins, the hell of the lascivious; the hell of robbers, who kill and boil men; the infernal tun of the deceitful; the excrementitious hells; the hell of the revengeful, whose faces resembled a round, broad cake, and their arms rotate like a wheel. Except Rabelais<sup>61</sup> and Dean Swift<sup>62</sup> nobody ever had such science of filth and corruption.

These books should be used with caution. It is dangerous to sculpture these evanescent images of thought. True in transition, they become false if fixed. It requires, for his just apprehension, almost a genius equal to his own. But when his visions become the stereotyped language of multitudes of persons of all degrees of age and capacity, they are perverted. The wise people of the Greek race were accustomed to lead the most intelligent and virtuous young men, as part of their education, through the Eleusinian mysteries,<sup>63</sup> wherein, with much pomp and graduation, the highest truths known to ancient wisdom were taught. An ardent and contemplative young man, at eighteen or twenty years, might read once these books of Swedenborg, these mysteries of love and conscience, and then throw them aside for ever. Genius is ever haunted by similar dreams, when the hells and the heavens are opened to it. But these pictures are to be held as mystical, that is, as a quite arbitrary and accidental picture of the truth, — not as the truth. Any other symbol would be as good; then this is safely seen.

Swedenborg's system of the world wants central spontaneity; it is dynamic, not vital, and lacks power to generate life. There is no individual in it. The universe is a gigantic crystal, all of whose atoms and laminae lie in uninterrupted order and with unbroken unity, but cold and still. What seems an individual and a will, is none. There is an immense chain of intermediation, extending from centre to extremes, which bereaves every agency of all freedom and character. The universe, in his poem, suffers under a magnetic sleep, and only reflects the mind of the magnetizer. Every thought comes into each mind by influence from a society of spirits that surround it, and into these from a higher society, and so on. All his types mean the same few things. All his figures speak one speech. All his interlocutors Swedenborgize. Be they who they may, to this complexion must they come at last. This Charon<sup>64</sup> ferries them all over in his boat; kings, counsellors, cavaliers, doctors, Sir Isaac Newton, Sir Hans

Sloane,<sup>65</sup> King George II., Mahomet,<sup>66</sup> or whomsoever, and all gather one grimness of hue and style. Only when Cicero<sup>67</sup> comes by, our gentle seer sticks a little at saying he talked with Cicero, and with a touch of human relenting remarks, "one whom it was given me to believe was Cicero"; and when the *soi disant*<sup>68</sup> Roman opens his mouth, Rome and eloquence have ebbed away, — it is plain theologic Swedenborg like the rest. His heavens and hells are dull; fault of want of individualism. The thousandfold relation of men is not there. The interest that attaches in nature to each man, because he is right by his wrong, and wrong by his right; because he defies all dogmatizing and classification, so many allowances and contingences and futurities are to be taken into account; strong by his vices, often paralyzed by his virtues; — sinks into entire sympathy with his society. This want reacts to the centre of the system. Though the 'agency of "the Lord" is in every line referred to by name, it never becomes alive. There is no lustre in that eye which gazes from the centre and which should vivify the immense dependency of beings.

The vice of Swedenborg's mind is its theologic determination. Nothing with him has the liberality of universal wisdom, but we are always in a church. That Hebrew muse, which taught the lore of right and wrong to men, had the same excess of influence for him it has had for the nations. The mode, as well as the essence, was sacred. Palestine is ever the more valuable as a chapter in universal history, and ever the less an available element in education. The genius of Swedenborg, largest of all modern souls in this department of thought, wasted itself in the endeavor to reanimate and conserve what had already arrived at its natural term, and, in the great secular Providence, was retiring from its prominence, before Western modes of thought and expression. Swedenborg and Behmen both failed by attaching themselves to the Christian symbol, instead of to the moral senti-

ment, which carries innumerable christianities, humanities, divinities, in its bosom.

The excess of influence shows itself in the incongruous importation of a foreign rhetoric. "What have I to do," asks the impatient reader, "with jasper and sardonyx, beryl, and chalcedony; what with arks and passovers, ephahs and ephods; what with lepers and emerods; what with heave-offerings and unleavened bread, chariots of fire, dragons crowned and horned, behemoth and unicorn? Good for Orientals, these are nothing to me. The more learning you bring to explain them, the more glaring the impertinence. The more coherent and elaborate the system, the less I like it. I say, with the Spartan, 'Why do you speak so much to the purpose, of that which is nothing to the purpose?' My learning is such as God gave me in my birth and habit, in the delight and study of my eyes and not of another man's. Of all absurdities, this of some foreigner proposing to take away my rhetoric and substitute his own, and amuse me with pelican and stork, instead of thrush and robin; palm-trees and shittim-wood, instead of sassafras and hickory, — seems the most needless."

Locke said, "God, when he makes the prophet, does not unmake the man." Swedenborg's history points the remark. The parish disputes in the Swedish church between the friends and foes of Luther<sup>69</sup> and Melancthon,<sup>70</sup> concerning "faith alone" and "works alone," intrude themselves into his speculations upon the economy of the universe, and of the celestial societies. The Lutheran bishop's son, for whom the heavens are opened, so that he sees with eyes and in the richest symbolic forms the awful truth of things, and utters again in his books, as under a heavenly mandate, the indisputable secrets of moral nature, — with all these grandeurs resting upon him, remains the Lutheran bishop's son; his judgments are those of a Swedish polemic, and his vast enlargements purchased by adamant limitations. He carries

his controversial memory with him in his visits to the souls. He is like Michael Angelo,<sup>71</sup> who, in his frescoes, put the cardinal who had offended him to roast under a mountain of devils; or like Dante,<sup>72</sup> who avenged, in vindicative melodies, all his private wrongs; or perhaps still more like Montaigne's <sup>73</sup> parish priest, who, if a hail-storm passes over the village, thinks the day of doom is come, and the cannibals already have got the pip. Swedenborg confounds us not less with the pains of Melancthon and Wolfius<sup>74</sup> and his own books, which he advertises among the angels.

Under the same theologic cramp, many of his dogmas are bound. His cardinal position in morals is that evils should be shunned as sins. But he does not know what evil is, or what good is, who thinks any ground remains to be occupied, after saying that evil is to be shunned as evil. I doubt not he was led by the desire to insert the element of personality of Deity. But nothing is added. One man, you say, dreads erysipelas, — show him that this dread is evil: or, one dreads hell, — show him that *dread* is evil. He who loves goodness, harbors angels, reveres reverence, and lives with God. The less we have to do with our sins the better. No man can afford to waste his moments in compunctions. "That is active duty," say the Hindoos, "which is not for our bondage; that is knowledge, which is for our liberation: all other duty is good only unto weariness."

Another dogma, growing out of this pernicious theologic limitation, is his Inferno.<sup>75</sup> Swedenborg has devils. Evil, according to old philosophers, is good in the making. That pure malignity can exist is the extreme proposition of unbelief. It is not to be entertained by a rational agent; it is atheism; it is the last profanation. Euripides <sup>76</sup> rightly said, —

"Goodness and being in the gods are one;  
He who imputes ill to them makes them none."



To what a painful perversion had Gothic<sup>77</sup> theology arrived, that Swedenborg admitted no conversion for evil spirits! But the divine effort is never relaxed; the carrion in the sun will convert itself to grass and flowers; and man, though in brothels, or jails, or on gibbets, is on his way to all that is good and true. Burns,<sup>78</sup> with the wild humor of his apostrophe to poor "auld Nickie Ben,"

"O wad ye tak a thought, and mend!"

has the advantage of the vindictive theologian. Every thing is superficial and perishes but love and truth only. The largest is always the truest sentiment, and we feel the more generous spirit of the Indian Vishnu,<sup>79</sup> — "I am the same to all mankind. There is not one who is worthy of my love or hatred. They who serve me with adoration, — I am in them, and they in me. If one whose ways are altogether evil serve me alone, he is as respectable as the just man; he is altogether well employed; he soon becometh of a virtuous spirit and obtaineth eternal happiness."

For the anomalous pretension of Revelations of the other world, — only his probity and genius can entitle it to any serious regard. His revelations destroy their credit by running into detail. If a man say that the Holy Ghost has informed him that the Last Judgment (or the last of the judgments), took place in 1757; or that the Dutch, in the other world, live in a heaven by themselves, and the English in a heaven by themselves; I reply that the Spirit which is holy is reserved, taciturn, and deals in laws. The rumors of ghosts and hobgoblins gossip and tell fortunes. The teachings of high Spirit are abstemious, and, in regard to particulars, negative. Socrates's Genius did not advise him to act or to find, but if he purposed to do somewhat not advantageous, it dissuaded him. "What God is," he said, "I know not; what he is not, I know." The Hindoos have denominated the Supreme Being, the "Internal Check." The illuminated

Quakers explained their Light, not as somewhat which leads to any action, but it appears as an obstruction to any thing unfit. But the right examples are private experiences, which are absolutely at one on this point. Strictly speaking, Swedenborg's revelation is a confounding of planes, — a capital offence in so learned a categorist. This is to carry the law of surface into the plane of substance, to carry individualism and its fopperies into the realm of essences and generals, — which is dislocation and chaos.

The secret of heaven is kept from age to age. No imprudent, no sociable angel ever dropt an early syllable to answer the longings of saints, the fears of mortals. We should have listened on our knees to any favorite, who, by stricter obedience, had brought his thoughts into parallelism with the celestial currents and could hint to human ears the scenery and circumstance of the newly parted soul. But it is certain that it must tally with what is best in nature. It must not be inferior in tone to the already known works of the artist who sculptures the globes of the firmament and writes the moral law. It must be fresher than rainbows, stabler than mountains, agreeing with flowers, with tides, and the rising and setting of autumnal stars. Melodious poets shall be hoarse as street ballads when once the penetrating key-note of nature and spirit is sounded, — the earth-beat, sea-beat, heart-beat, which makes the tune to which the sun rolls, and the globule of blood, and the sap of trees.

In this mood we hear the rumor that the seer has arrived, and his tale is told. But there is no beauty, no heaven: for angels, goblins. The sad muse loves night and death and the pit. His Inferno is mesmeric. His spiritual world bears the same relation to the generousities and joys of truth of which human souls have already made us cognizant, as a man's bad dreams bear to his ideal life. It is indeed very like, in its endless power of lurid pictures, to the phenomena of dreaming, which nightly turns many an honest gentleman, benevolent

but dyspeptic, into a wretch, skulking like a dog about the outer yards and kennels of creation. When he mounts into the heaven, I do not hear its language. A man should not tell me that he has walked among the angels; his proof is that his eloquence makes me one. Shall the archangels be less majestic and sweet than the figures that have actually walked the earth? These angels that Swedenborg paints give us no very high idea of their discipline and culture: they are all country parsons: their heaven is a *fête champêtre*,<sup>80</sup> an evangelical picnic, or French distribution of prizes to virtuous peasants. Strange, scholastic, didactic, passionless, bloodless man, who denotes classes of souls as a botanist disposes of a *carex*,<sup>81</sup> and visits doleful hells as a stratum of chalk or hornblende!<sup>82</sup> He has no sympathy. He goes up and down the world of men, a modern Rhadamanthus<sup>83</sup> in gold-headed cane and peruke<sup>84</sup> and with nonchalance and the air of a referee, distributes souls. The warm, many-weathered, passionate-peopled world is to him a grammar of hieroglyphs, or an emblematic free-mason's procession. How different is Jacob Behmen! *he* is tremulous with emotion and listens awe-struck, with the gentlest humanity, to the Teacher whose lessons he conveys; and when he asserts that, "in some sort, love is greater than God," his heart beats so high that the thumping against his leathern coat is audible across the centuries. 'T is a great difference. Behmen is healthily and beautifully wise, notwithstanding the mystical narrowness and incommunicableness. Swedenborg is disagreeably wise, and with all his accumulated gifts, paralyzes and repels.

It is the best sign of a great nature that it opens a foreground, and, like the breath of morning landscapes, invites us onward. Swedenborg is retrospective, nor can we divest him of his mattock and shroud. Some minds are for ever restrained from descending into nature; others are for ever prevented from ascending out of it. With a force of many men, he could never break the umbilical cord which held

him to nature, and he did not rise to the platform of pure genius.

It is remarkable that this man, who, by his perception of symbols, saw the poetic construction of things and the primary relation of mind to matter, remained entirely devoid of the whole apparatus of poetic expression, which that perception creates. He knew the grammar and rudiments of the Mother-Tongue, — how could he not read off one strain into music? Was he like Saadi,<sup>85</sup> who, in his vision, designed to fill his lap with the celestial flowers, as presents for his friends; but the fragrance of the roses so intoxicated him that the skirt dropped from his hands? or is reporting a breach of the manners of that heavenly society? or was it that he saw the vision intellectually, and hence that chiding of the intellectual that pervades his books? Be it as it may, his books have no melody, no emotion, no humor, no relief to the dead prosaic level. In his profuse and accurate imagery is no pleasure, for there is no beauty. We wander forlorn in a lack-lustre landscape. No bird ever sang in all these gardens of the dead. The entire want of poetry in so transcendent a mind betokens the disease, and like a hoarse voice in a beautiful person, is a kind of warning. I think, sometimes, he will not be read longer. His great name will turn a sentence. His books have become a monument. His laurel so largely mixed with cypress, a charnel-breath so mingles with the temple incense, that boys and maids will shun the spot.

Yet in this immolation of genius and fame at the shrine of conscience is a merit sublime beyond praise. He lived to purpose: he gave a verdict. He elected goodness as the clue to which the soul must cling in all this labyrinth of nature. Many opinions conflict as to the true centre. In the shipwreck, some cling to running rigging, some to cask and barrel, some to spars, some to mast; the pilot chooses with science, — I plant myself here; all will sink before this; "he comes to land who sails with me."<sup>86</sup> Do not rely on heavenly favor, or

on compassion to folly, or on prudence, on common sense, the old usage and main chance of men: nothing can keep you, — not fate, nor health, nor admirable intellect; none can keep you, but rectitude only, rectitude for ever and ever! And with a tenacity that never swerved in all his studies, inventions, dreams, he adheres to this brave choice. I think of him as of some transmigrating votary of Indian legend, who says “Though I be dog, or jackal, or pismire, in the last rudiments of nature, under what integument or ferocity, I cleave to right, as the sure ladder that leads up to man and to God.”

Swedenborg has rendered a double service to mankind, which is now only beginning to be known. By the science of experiment and use, he made his first steps: he observed and published the laws of nature; and ascending by just degrees from events to their summits and causes, he was fired with piety at the harmonies he felt, and abandoned himself to his joy and worship. This was his first service. If the glory was too bright for his eyes to bear, if he staggered under the trance of delight, the more excellent is the spectacle he saw, the realities of being which beam and blaze through him, and which no infirmities of the prophet are suffered to obscure; and he renders a second passive service to men, not less than the first, perhaps, in the great circle of being, — and, in the retributions of spiritual nature, not less glorious or less beautiful to himself.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See page 61, note 117.

<sup>2</sup> Probably from the *Akhlak-i-Jalaly*. See page 57, note 36.

<sup>3</sup> Persons of the highest or sacerdotal class among the Hindoos.

<sup>4</sup> The belief, as of the Buddhist sect, that souls after death pass into other earthly existence in the bodies of other persons or animals.

<sup>5</sup> A Platonic philosopher of Lycopolis in Egypt (*ca.* 205–270 A.D.).

<sup>6</sup> A Platonic philosopher from Tyre who taught in Alexandria; one of the greatest enemies of the Christian religion (233–*ca.* 304 A.D.):

<sup>7</sup> *Bunyan*, John, English Baptist preacher, author of *Pilgrim's Progress* (1628-1688).

<sup>8</sup> *Fox*, George, English Quaker, founder of the Society of Friends (1624-1691).

<sup>9</sup> *Pascal*, Blaise, French divine, philosopher, and mathematician (1623-1662).

<sup>10</sup> *Guyon*, Madame Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Motte, French religious writer; expounder of the doctrine of Quietism (1648-1717).

<sup>11</sup> From Dryden's *Absolom and Achitophel*. Compare Cambridge edition, "And o'er informed the tenement of clay."

<sup>12</sup> *Hamlet*, I, iv.

<sup>13</sup> Names of Swedish royalty and nobility.

<sup>14</sup> A city not far from Stockholm, Sweden, with a university and a cathedral.

<sup>15</sup> Frederikshald is a town of Norway close to the frontier of Sweden, where on December 11, 1718, Charles XII of Sweden was killed in battle.

<sup>16</sup> A scientific periodical recording mechanical and mathematical inventions and discoveries, published from 1716 to 1718.

<sup>17</sup> King of Sweden and patron of Swedenborg during his early career (1682-1718).

<sup>18</sup> The Diet, or Riksdag, in Sweden was a political assembly consisting of four distinct orders, nobles, clergy, burgesses, and peasants.

<sup>19</sup> *Count Hopken*, Anders John, Swedish statesman and writer, influential in reforming the Swedish language on classical lines (1712-1789).

<sup>20</sup> *seventh*, Uranus; *eighth*, Neptune.

<sup>21</sup> The theory that all material substances are composed of minute particles, or atoms, of a comparatively small number of kinds, all the atoms of the same kind being uniform in size, weight, and other properties.

<sup>22</sup> *Schlichting*, Jonas de Bukowic, Polish philosopher, banished for his work, *Confession of Faith*, which was burned as heretical (1596-1664).

<sup>23</sup> *Monro*, Alexander, physician, first of a line of distinguished doctors and writers by the same name. Probably the eldest is referred to here. He founded the medical school at Edinburgh (1697-1767).

<sup>24</sup> *Wilson*, Sir William James Erasmus, English surgeon and author of a system of anatomy (1809-1834).

<sup>25</sup> *Selden*, John, Jurist, antiquarian, orientalist, author (1584-1654).

<sup>26</sup> *Humboldt*, Frederic Henry Alexander, Baron von, noted traveler and scientist (1769-1859).

<sup>27</sup> Probably refers to a certain extinct monster of the Carboniferous Age known as the Mesosaurus.

<sup>28</sup> Extinct species of elephants, recognized and named for the formation of their molar teeth.

<sup>29</sup> *bon mots*, "witty remarks."

<sup>30</sup> *Harvey*, William, English physician, discoverer of the circulation of the blood (1578-1687).

<sup>31</sup> *Gilbert*, William, English physician and scientist, discoverer of some of the properties of the magnet (1540-1603).

<sup>32</sup> *Descartes*, French philosopher and mathematician (1596-1650).

<sup>33</sup> *Malpighi*, Marcello, of Bologna, Italian physician and scientist, founder of microscopic anatomy (1628-1694).

<sup>34</sup> The most eminent ancient doctor, often called the "Father of Medicine" (460-359 or 377? B.C.).

<sup>35</sup> A Greek philosopher who held the atomic theory, teacher of Democritus, who apparently carried on his views (fifth century B.C.).

<sup>36</sup> *Lucretius*, Latin philosophic poet. His greatest work was the *De Rerum Natura* (ca. 96-55 B.C.).

<sup>37</sup> *Swammerdam*, Jan, Dutch scientist, naturalist and experimenter, noted for the minute study of the internal organs (1637-1680).

<sup>38</sup> *Leuwenhoek*, Anthony de, Dutch physician, noted for his discoveries with the microscope, especially with regard to the circulatory system (1632-1723).

<sup>39</sup> *Winslow*, James Benignus, Danish anatomist, specialist in descriptive anatomy (1669-1760).

<sup>40</sup> *Eustachius*, Bartolommeo, eminent Italian anatomist and writer. Died 1574.

<sup>41</sup> *Heister*, Lorenz, author of various books on surgery (1683-1758).

<sup>42</sup> Belgian anatomist of great distinction, whose work did much to establish the science of modern surgery (1514-1564).

<sup>43</sup> *Boerhaave*, Herman, Dutch physician and philosopher (1668-1738).

<sup>44</sup> *Linnaeus*, Carl von, Swedish botanist, said to be the originator of the modern botanical science (1707-1778).

<sup>45</sup> *Leibnitz*, Gottfried Wilhelm, Baron von, German philosopher and mathematician of great distinction; author of numerous philosophical works (1646-1716).

<sup>46</sup> German philosopher and mathematician (1679-1754).

<sup>47</sup> *Grotius*, Hugo, distinguished Dutch jurist and theologian (1583-1645).

<sup>48</sup> One from the Scandinavian pirate crews that plundered the coasts of Europe in the middle ages. The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *wicing*, "camper" or "villager," and has no connection with the modern word "king," as is popularly believed.

<sup>49</sup> Statisticians; a rare use of the word.

<sup>50</sup> *Mr. Wilkinson* (James John Garth), English jurist and mystic, editor of Swedenborg, member of the Swedenborg Society for promoting the publication of Swedenborg's writings (1812-1899).

<sup>51</sup> *Mr. Clissold*, (Augustus Clissold), English clergyman, member of the Swedenborg Society, forwarded the publication of Swedenborg's writings, translated and printed some at his own expense (ca. 1797-1882).

<sup>52</sup> King of Egypt, a character mentioned by Plutarch (sixth century, B.C.).

<sup>53</sup> From the *De Rerum Natura*, Book I, l. 835 f.

<sup>54</sup> One of Swedenborg's theological works.

<sup>55</sup> Son of Oceanus and Tethys; so-named because of his ability to transform himself into various animals in order to escape answering questions; supposed to be a prophet.

<sup>56</sup> Aberration of the mind.

<sup>57</sup> A great lawgiver of Sparta (about ninth century B.C.).

<sup>58</sup> Roman poet (43 B.C.-17 A.D.).

<sup>59</sup> A beautiful singer; a friend of the poet Dante.

<sup>60</sup> Rudeness, barbarousness, inelegance.

<sup>61</sup> *Rabelais*, François, French author, noted for his humor and satire; famous for his giant mock-heroes, Gargantua and Pantagruel (ca. 1490-1553).

<sup>62</sup> *Dean Swift*, Jonathan, the dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, English satirist, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, etc. (1667-1745).

<sup>63</sup> Most sacred and solemn of all the festivals celebrated by the Greeks.

<sup>64</sup> Aged ferryman who carried dead souls across the Styx River in Hades.

<sup>65</sup> Irish physician and naturalist of Scottish extraction, president of the Royal Society and physician to George I. He bequeathed his collection of curiosities to the public, and it formed the basis of the British Museum (1660-1752).

<sup>66</sup> Founder of the Mohammedan religion, (571-632).

<sup>67</sup> *Cicero*, Marcus Tullius, Roman orator, philosopher, and statesman (106-43 B.C.).

<sup>68</sup> French *soi*, meaning "oneself," and *disant*, from the verb, "to say"; self-styled. Hence, "pretended," "would-be."

<sup>69</sup> *Luther*, Martin, leader of the German Reformation (1483-1546).

<sup>70</sup> *Melancthon*, Philip, reformer and co-worker with Luther in the German Reformation (1497-1560).

<sup>71</sup> *Michael Angelo*. See page 62, note 140.

<sup>72</sup> *Dante*, Alighieri, the foremost Italian poet. His most important work is the *Comœdia*, popularly known as the *Divine Comedy* (1265-1321).

<sup>73</sup> *Montaigne*, Michel Eyquem de, French author (1533-1592).

<sup>74</sup> *Wolffius*. See note on Christian Wolff, note 46.



<sup>75</sup> Hell. The word usually refers to the Inferno of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

<sup>76</sup> Greek tragic poet; modernized drama to deal with human suffering (480-406 B.C.).

<sup>77</sup> Mediæval, pertaining to the dark ages.

<sup>78</sup> *Burns*, Robert, Scottish poet (1759-1796).

<sup>79</sup> Second deity of the Hindoo trinity; the preserver who several times has taken human form to save mankind from some great evil.

<sup>80</sup> Open-air festival.

<sup>81</sup> A botanical term designating plants of the sedge family.

<sup>82</sup> A variety of mineral.

<sup>83</sup> A mythical character, the son of Jupiter and Europa, who reigned over some of the Cyclades and Greek cities in Asia with such justice that the ancients have said that he became one of the judges in Hades.

<sup>84</sup> A kind of wig introduced into England in the time of Charles II.

<sup>85</sup> Persian poet (ca. 1184-1291).

<sup>86</sup> From N. P. Willis's poem *Lines on Leaving Europe*. It should read, "He comes to shore who sails with me." See Emerson's *Parnassus*.

#### IV

### MONTAIGNE;<sup>1</sup> OR, THE SKEPTIC<sup>2</sup>

EVERY fact is related on one side to sensation, and on the other to morals. The game of thought is, on the appearance of one of these two sides, to find the other: given the upper, to find the under side. Nothing so thin but has these two faces, and when the observer has seen the obverse, he turns it over to see the reverse. Life is a pitching of this penny, — heads or tails. We never tire of this game, because there is still a slight shudder of astonishment at the exhibition of the other face, at the contrast of the two faces. A man is flushed with success, and bethinks himself what this good luck signifies. He drives his bargain in the street; but it occurs that he also is bought and sold. He sees the beauty of a human face, and searches the cause of that beauty, which must be more beautiful. He builds his fortunes, maintains the laws, cherishes his children; but he asks himself, “Why? and whereto?” This head and this tail are called, in the language of philosophy, Infinite and Finite; Relative and Absolute; Apparent and Real; and many fine names beside.

Each man is born with a predisposition to one or the other of these sides of nature; and it will easily happen that men will be found devoted to one or the other. One class has the perception of difference, and is conversant with facts and surfaces, cities and persons, and the bringing certain things to pass; — the men of talent and action. Another class have the perception of identity, and are men of faith and philosophy, men of genius.

Each of these riders drives too fast. Plotinus<sup>3</sup> believes only in philosophers; Fenelon,<sup>4</sup> in saints; Pindar<sup>5</sup> and Byron,<sup>6</sup> in poets. Read the haughty language in which Plato and the Platonists speak of all men who are not devoted to their own shining abstractions: other men are rats and mice. The literary class is usually proud and exclusive. The correspondence of Pope<sup>7</sup> and Swift<sup>8</sup> describes mankind around them as monsters; and that of Gœthe<sup>9</sup> and Schiller,<sup>10</sup> in our own time, is scarcely more kind.

It is easy to see how this arrogance comes. The genius is a genius by the first look he casts on any object. Is his eye creative? Does he not rest in angles and colors, but beholds the design? — he will presently undervalue the actual object. In powerful moments, his thought has dissolved the works of art and nature into their causes, so that the works appear heavy and faulty. He has a conception of beauty which the sculptor cannot embody. Picture, statue, temple, railroad, steam-engine, existed first in an artist's mind, without flaw, mistake, or friction, which impair the executed models. So did the Church, the State, college, court, social circles, and all the institutions. It is not strange that these men, remembering what they have seen and hoped of ideas, should affirm disdainfully the superiority of ideas. Having at some time seen that the happy soul will carry all the arts in power, they say, "Why cumber ourselves with superfluous realizations?" and like dreaming beggars they assume to speak and act as if these values were already substantiated.

On the other part, the men of toil and trade and luxury, — the animal world, including the animal in the philosopher and poet also, and the practical world, including the painful drudgeries which are never excused to philosopher or poet any more than to the rest, — weigh heavily on the other side. The trade in our streets believes in no metaphysical causes, thinks nothing of the force which necessitated traders and a trading planet to exist: no, but sticks to cotton, sugar, wool,

and salt. The ward meetings, on election days, are not softened by any misgiving of the value of these ballotings. Hot life is streaming in a single direction. To the men of practical power, whilst immersed in it, the man of ideas appears out of his reason. They alone have reason.

Things always bring their own philosophy with them, that is prudence. No man acquires property without acquiring with it a little arithmetic also. In England, the richest country <sup>11</sup> that ever existed, property stands for more, compared with personal ability, than in any other. After dinner, a man believes less, denies more: verities have lost some charm. After dinner, arithmetic is the only science: ideas are disturbing, incendiary, follies of young men, repudiated by the solid portion of society: and a man comes to be valued by his athletic and animal qualities. Spence <sup>12</sup> relates that Mr. Pope was with Sir Godfrey Kneller <sup>13</sup> one day, when his nephew, a Guinea trader, came in. "Nephew," said Sir Godfrey, "you have the honor of seeing the two greatest men in the world." "I don't know how great men you may be," said the Guinea man, "but I don't like your looks. I have often bought a man much better than both of you, all muscles and bones, for ten guineas." Thus the men of the senses revenge themselves on the professors and repay scorn for scorn. The first had leaped to conclusions not yet ripe, and say more than is true; others make themselves merry with the philosopher, and weigh man by the pound. They believe that mustard bites the tongue, that pepper is hot, friction-matches incendiary, revolvers are to be avoided, and suspenders hold up pantaloons; that there is much sentiment in a chest of tea; and a man will be eloquent, if you give him good wine. Are you tender and scrupulous, — you must eat more mince-pie. They hold that Luther had milk in him when he said, —

"Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weiber, Gesang,<sup>14</sup>  
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Leben lang;" —

and when he advised a young scholar, perplexed with fore-ordination and free-will, to get well drunk. "The nerves," says Cabanis,<sup>15</sup> "they are the man." My neighbor, a jolly farmer, in the tavern bar-room, thinks that the use of money is sure and speedy spending. For his part, he says, he puts his down his neck and gets the good of it.

The inconvenience of this way of thinking is that it runs into indifferentism and then into disgust. Life is eating us up. We shall be fables presently. Keep cool: it will be all one a hundred years hence. Life's well enough, but we shall be glad to get out of it, and they will all be glad to have us. Why should we fret and drudge? Our meat will taste tomorrow as it did yesterday, and we may at last have had enough of it. "Ah," said my languid gentleman at Oxford, "there's nothing new or true, — and no matter."

With a little more bitterness, the cynic moans; our life is like an ass led to market by a bundle of hay being carried before him; he sees nothing but the bundle of hay. "There is so much trouble in coming into the world," said Lord Bolingbroke,<sup>16</sup> "and so much more, as well as meanness, in going out of it, that 't is hardly worth while to be here at all." I knew a philosopher of this kidney who was accustomed briefly to sum up his experience of human nature in saying, "Mankind is a damned rascal": and the natural corollary is pretty sure to follow, — "The world lives by humbug, and so will I."

The abstractionist and the materialist thus mutually exasperating each other, and the scoffer expressing the worst of materialism, there arises a third party to occupy the middle ground between these two, the skeptic, namely. He finds both wrong by being in extremes. He labors to plant his feet, to be the beam of the balance. He will not go beyond his card. He sees the one-sidedness of these men of the street; he will not be a Gibeonite;<sup>17</sup> he stands for the intellectual faculties, a cool head and whatever serves to keep it cool; no unadvised

industry, no unrewarded self-devotion, no loss of the brains in toil. Am I an ox, or a dray? — “You are both in extremes,” he says. “You that will have all solid, and a world of pig-lead, deceive yourselves grossly. You believe yourselves rooted and grounded on adamant; and yet, if we uncover the last facts of our knowledge, you are spinning like bubbles in a river, you know not whither or whence, and you are bot-tomed and capped and wrapped in delusions.” Neither will he be betrayed to a book and wrapped in a gown. The studious class are their own victims; they are thin and pale, their feet are cold, their heads are hot, the night is without sleep, the day a fear of interruption, — pallor, squalor, hunger, and egotism. If you come near them and see what conceits they entertain, — they are abstractionists, and spend their days and nights in dreaming some dream; in expecting the homage of society to some precious scheme, built on a truth, but destitute of proportion in its presentment, of justness in its application, and of all energy of will in the schemer to embody and vitalize it.

“But I see plainly,” he says, “that I cannot see. I know that human strength is not in extremes, but in avoiding extremes. I, at least, will shun the weakness of philosophizing beyond my depth. What is the use of pretending to powers we have not? What is the use of pretending to assurances we have not, respecting the other life? Why exaggerate the power of virtue? Why be an angel before your time? These strings, wound up too high, will snap. If there is a wish for immortality, and no evidence, why not say just that? If there are conflicting evidences, why not state them? If there is not ground for a candid thinker to make up his mind, yea or nay, — why not suspend the judgment? I weary of these dogmatizers. I tire of these hacks of routine, who deny the dogmas. I neither affirm nor deny. I stand here to try the case. I am here to consider, σκοπεῖν,<sup>18</sup> to consider how it is. I will try to keep the balance true. Of what use to take the

chair and glibly rattle off theories of society, religion, and nature, when I know that practical objections lie in the way, insurmountable by me and by my mates? Why so talkative in public, when each of my neighbors can pin me to my seat by arguments I cannot refute? Why pretend that life is so simple a game, when we know how subtle and elusive the Proteus<sup>19</sup> is? Why think to shut up all things in your narrow coop, when we know there are not one or two only, but ten, twenty, a thousand things, and unlike? Why fancy that you have all the truth in your keeping? There is much to say on all sides."

Who shall forbid a wise skepticism, seeing that there is no practical question on which any thing more than an approximate solution can be had? Is not marriage an open question, when it is alleged, from the beginning of the world, that such as are in the institution wish to get out, and such as are out wish to get in? And the reply of Socrates, to him who asked whether he should choose a wife, still remains reasonable, that "whether he should choose one or not, he would repent it." Is not the State a question? All society is divided in opinion on the subject of the State. Nobody loves it; great numbers dislike it and suffer conscientious scruples to allegiance; and the only defence set up, is the fear of doing worse in disorganizing. Is it otherwise with the Church? Or, to put any of the questions which touch mankind nearest, — shall the young man aim at a leading part in law, in politics, in trade? It will not be pretended that a success in either of these kinds is quite coincident with what is best and inmost in his mind. Shall he then, cutting the stays that hold him fast to the social state, put out to sea with no guidance but his genius? There is much to say on both sides. Remember the open question between the present order of "competition" and the friends of "attractive and associated labor." The generous minds embrace the proposition of labor shared by all; it is the only honesty; nothing else is safe. It is from

the poor man's hut alone that strength and virtue come: and yet, on the other side, it is alleged that labor impairs the form and breaks the spirit of man, and the laborers cry unanimously, "We have no thoughts." Culture, how indispensable! I cannot forgive you the want of accomplishments; and yet culture will instantly impair that chiefest beauty of spontaneousness. Excellent is culture for a savage; but once let him read in the book, and he is no longer able not to think of Plutarch's heroes.<sup>20</sup> In short, since true fortitude of understanding consists "in not letting what we know be embarrassed by what we do not know," we ought to secure those advantages which we can command, and not risk them by clutching after the airy and unattainable. Come, no chimeras! Let us go abroad; let us mix in affairs; let us learn and get and have and climb. "Men are a sort of moving plants, and, like trees, receive a great part of their nourishment from the air. If they keep too much at home, they pine." Let us have a robust, manly life; let us know what we know, for certain; what we have, let it be solid and seasonable and our own. A world in the hand is worth two in the bush. Let us have to do with real men and women, and not with skipping ghosts.

This then is the right ground of the skeptic, — this of consideration, of self-containing; not at all of unbelief; not at all of universal denying, nor of universal doubting, — doubting even that he doubts; least of all of scoffing and profligate jeering at all that is stable and good. These are no more his moods than are those of religion and philosophy. He is the considerer, the prudent, taking in sail, counting stock, husbanding his means, believing that a man has too many enemies than that he can afford to be his own foe; that we cannot give ourselves too many advantages in this unequal conflict, with powers so vast and unwearable ranged on one side, and this little conceited vulnerable popinjay that a man is, bobbing up and down into every danger, on the other. It is



a position taken up for better defence, as of more safety, and one that can be maintained; and it is one of more opportunity and range: as, when we build a house, the rule is to set it not too high nor too low, under the wind, but out of the dirt.

The philosophy we want is one of fluxions and mobility. The Spartan and Stoic schemes<sup>21</sup> are too stark and stiff for our occasion. A theory of Saint John, and of nonresistance,<sup>22</sup> seems, on the other hand, too thin and aerial. We want some coat woven of elastic steel, stout as the first and limber as the second. We want a ship in these billows we inhabit. An angular, dogmatic house would be rent to chips and splinters in this storm of many elements. No, it must be tight, and fit to the form of man, to live at all; as a shell must dictate the architecture of a house founded on the sea. The soul of man must be the type of our scheme, just as the body of man is the type after which a dwelling-house is built. Adaptive-ness is the peculiarity of human nature. We are golden averages, volitant stabilities, compensated or periodic errors, houses founded on the sea. The wise skeptic wishes to have a near view of the best game and the chief players; what is best in the planet; art and nature, places and events; but mainly men. Every thing that is excellent in mankind, — a form of grace, an arm of iron, lips of persuasion, a brain of resources, every one skilful to play and win, — he will see and judge.

The terms of admission to this spectacle are, that he have a certain solid and intelligible way of living of his own; some method of answering the inevitable needs of human life; proof that he has played with skill and success; that he has evinced the temper, stoutness, and the range of qualities which, among his contemporaries and countrymen, entitle him to fellowship and trust. For the secrets of life are not shown except to sympathy and likeness. Men do not confide themselves to boys, or coxcombs, or pedants, but to their peers. Some wise limitation, as the modern phrase is; some condition between the extremes, and having, itself, a positive

quality; some stark and sufficient man, who is not salt or sugar, but sufficiently related to the world to do justice to Paris or London, and, at the same time, a vigorous and original thinker, whom cities can not overawe, but who uses them, — is the fit person to occupy this ground of speculation.

These qualities meet in the character of Montaigne. And yet, since the personal regard which I entertain for Montaigne may be unduly great, I will, under the shield of this prince of egotists, offer, as an apology for electing him as the representative of skepticism, a word or two to explain how my love began and grew for this admirable gossip.

A single odd volume of Cotton's translation<sup>23</sup> of the Essays remained to me from my father's library, when a boy. It lay long neglected, until, after many years, when I was newly escaped from college, I read the book, and procured the remaining volumes. I remember the delight and wonder in which I lived with it. It seemed to me as if I had myself written the book, in some former life, so sincerely it spoke of my thought and experience. It happened, when in Paris, in 1833, that, in the cemetery of Pere Lachaise,<sup>24</sup> I came to a tomb of Auguste Collignon, who died in 1830, aged sixty-eight years, and who, said the monument, "lived to do right, and had formed himself to virtue on the Essays of Montaigne." Some years later, I became acquainted with an accomplished English poet, John Sterling;<sup>25</sup> and, in prosecuting my correspondence, I found that, from a love of Montaigne, he had made a pilgrimage to his château, still standing near Castellan, in Perigord,<sup>26</sup> and, after two hundred and fifty years, had copied from the walls of his library the inscriptions which Montaigne had written there. That Journal of Mr. Sterling's, published in the Westminster Review, Mr. Hazlitt<sup>27</sup> has reprinted in the *Prolegomena* to his edition of the Essays. I heard with pleasure that one of the newly-discovered autographs of William Shakspeare was in a copy of Florio's translation<sup>28</sup> of Montaigne. It is the only book which we

certainly know to have been in the poet's library. And, oddly enough, the duplicate copy of Florio, which the British Museum purchased with a view of protecting the Shakspeare autograph, (as I was informed in the Museum,) turned out to have the autograph of Ben Jonson <sup>29</sup> in the fly-leaf. Leigh Hunt <sup>30</sup> relates of Lord Byron, that Montaigne was the only great writer of past times whom he read with avowed satisfaction. Other coincidences, not needful to be mentioned here, concurred to make this old Gascon <sup>31</sup> still new and immortal for me.

In 1571, on the death of his father, Montaigne, then thirty-eight years old, retired from the practice of law at Bordeaux, and settled himself on his estate. Though he had been a man of pleasure and sometimes a courtier, his studious habits now grew on him, and he loved the compass, staidness, and independence of the country gentleman's life. He took up his economy in good earnest, and made his farms yield the most. Downright and plain-dealing, and abhorring to be deceived or to deceive, he was esteemed in the country for his sense and probity. In the civil wars of the League,<sup>32</sup> which converted every house into a fort, Montaigne kept his gates open and his house without defence. All parties freely came and went, his courage and honor being universally esteemed. The neighboring lords and gentry brought jewels and papers to him for safe-keeping. Gibbon <sup>33</sup> reckons, in these bigoted times, but two men of liberality in France, — Henry IV.<sup>34</sup> and Montaigne.

Montaigne is the frankest and honestest of all writers. His French freedom runs into grossness; but he has anticipated all censure by the bounty of his own confessions. In his times, books were written to one sex only, and almost all were written in Latin; so that in a humorist a certain nakedness of statement was permitted, which our manners, of a literature addressed equally to both sexes, do not allow. But though a biblical plainness coupled with a most uncanonical levity

may shut his pages to many sensitive readers, yet the offence is superficial. He parades it: he makes the most of it: nobody can think or say worse of him than he does. He pretends to most of the vices; and, if there be any virtue in him, he says, it got in by stealth. There is no man, in his opinion, who has not deserved hanging five or six times; and he pretends no exception in his own behalf. "Five or six as ridiculous stories," too, he says, "can be told of me, as of any man living." But, with all this really superfluous frankness, the opinion of an invincible probity grows into every reader's mind. "When I the most strictly and religiously confess myself, I find that the best virtue I have has in it some tincture of vice; and I, who am as sincere and perfect a lover of virtue of that stamp as any other whatever, am afraid that Plato, in his purest virtue, if he had listened and laid his ear close to himself, would have heard some jarring sound of human mixture; but faint and remote and only to be perceived by himself."

Here is an impatience and fastidiousness at color or pretence of any kind. He has been in courts so long as to have conceived a furious disgust at appearances; he will indulge himself with a little cursing and swearing; he will talk with sailors and gipsies, use flash and street ballads; he has stayed in-doors till he is deadly sick; he will to the open air, though it rain bullets. He has seen too much of gentlemen of the long robe,<sup>35</sup> until he wishes for cannibals; and is so nervous, by factitious life, that he thinks the more barbarous man is, the better he is. He likes his saddle. You may read theology, and grammar, and metaphysics elsewhere. Whatever you get here shall smack of the earth and of real life, sweet, or smart, or stinging. He makes no hesitation to entertain you with the records of his disease, and his journey to Italy is quite full of that matter. He took and kept this position of equilibrium. Over his name he drew an emblematic pair of scales, and wrote *Que sçais je?*<sup>36</sup> under it. As I look at his

effigy opposite the title-page, I seem to hear him say, "You may play old Poz,<sup>37</sup> if you will; you may rail and exaggerate, — I stand here for truth, and will not, for all the states and churches and revenues and personal reputations of Europe, overstate the dry fact, as I see it; I will rather mumble and prose about what I certainly know, — my house and barns; my father, my wife, and my tenants; my old lean bald pate; my knives and forks; what meats I eat and what drinks I prefer, and a hundred straws just as ridiculous, — than I will write, with a fine crow-quill, a fine romance. I like gray days, and autumn and winter weather. I am gray and autumnal myself, and think an undress and old shoes that do not pinch my feet, and old friends who do not constrain me, and plain topics where I do not need to strain myself and pump my brains, the most suitable. Our condition as men is risky and ticklish enough. One cannot be sure of himself and his fortune an hour, but he may be whisked off into some pitiable or ridiculous plight. Why should I vapor and play the philosopher, instead of ballasting, the best I can, this dancing balloon? So, at least, I live within compass, keep myself ready for action, and can shoot the gulf at last with decency. If there be any thing farcical in such a life, the blame is not mine: let it lie at fate's and nature's door."

The Essays, therefore, are an entertaining soliloquy on every random topic that comes into his head; treating every thing without ceremony, yet with masculine sense. There have been men with deeper insight; but, one would say, never a man with such abundance of thoughts: he is never dull, never insincere, and has the genius to make the reader care for all that he cares for.

The sincerity and marrow of the man reaches to his sentences. I know not anywhere the book that seems less written. It is the language of conversation transferred to a book. Cut these words, and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive. One has the same pleasure in it that he

feels in listening to the necessary speech of men about their work, when any unusual circumstance gives momentary importance to the dialogue. For blacksmiths and teamsters do not trip in their speech; it is a shower of bullets. It is Cambridge men who correct themselves and begin again at every half sentence, and, moreover, will pun, and refine too much, and swerve from the matter to the expression. Montaigne talks with shrewdness, knows the world and books and himself, and used the positive degree; never shrieks, or protests, or prays: no weakness, no convulsion, no superlative: does not wish to jump out of his skin, or play any antics, or annihilate space or time, but is stout and solid; tastes every moment of the day; likes pain because it makes him feel himself and realize things; as we pinch ourselves to know that we are awake. He keeps the plain; he rarely mounts or sinks; likes to feel solid ground and the stones underneath. His writing has no enthusiasms, no aspiration; contented, self-respecting, and keeping the middle of the road. There is but one exception, — in his love for Socrates. In speaking of him, for once his cheek flushes and his style rises to passion.

Montaigne died of a quinsy, at the age of sixty, in 1592. When he came to die he caused the mass to be celebrated in his chamber. At the age of thirty-three, he had been married. "But," he says, "might I have had my own will, I would not have married Wisdom herself, if she would have had me: but 't is to much purpose to evade it, the common custom and use of life will have it so. Most of my actions are guided by example, not choice." In the hour of death, he gave the same weight to custom. *Que sçais je?* What do I know?

This book of Montaigne the world has endorsed by translating it into all tongues and printing seventy-five editions of it in Europe; and that, too, a circulation somewhat chosen, namely among courtiers, soldiers, princes, men of the world, and men of wit and generosity.

Shall we say that Montaigne has spoken wisely, and given

the right and permanent expression of the human mind, on the conduct of life?

We are natural believers. Truth, or the connection between cause and effect, alone interests us. We are persuaded that a thread runs through all things: all worlds are strung on it, as beads; and men, and events, and life, come to us only because of that thread: they pass and repass only that we may know the direction and continuity of that line. A book or statement which goes to show that there is no line, but random and chaos, a calamity out of nothing, a prosperity and no account of it, a hero born from a fool, a fool from a hero, — dispirits us. Seen or unseen, we believe the tie exists. Talent makes counterfeit ties; genius finds the real ones. We hearken to the man of science, because we anticipate the sequence in natural phenomena which he uncovers. We love whatever affirms, connects, preserves; and dislike what scatters or pulls down. One man appears whose nature is to all men's eyes conserving and constructive: his presence supposes a well-ordered society, agriculture, trade, large institutions, and empire. If these did not exist, they would begin to exist through his endeavors. Therefore he cheers and comforts men, who feel all this in him very readily. The nonconformist and the rebel say all manner of unanswerable things against the existing republic, but discover to our sense no plan of house or state of their own. Therefore, though the town and state and way of living, which our counsellor contemplated, might be a very modest or musty prosperity, yet men rightly go for him, and reject the reformer so long as he comes only with axe and crowbar.

But though we are natural conservers and causationists and reject a sour, dumpish unbelief, the skeptical class, which Montaigne represents, have reason, and every man, at some time, belongs to it. Every superior mind will pass through this domain of equilibration, — I should rather say, will know how to avail himself of the checks and balances in

nature, as a natural weapon against the exaggeration and formalism of bigots and blockheads.

Skepticism is the attitude assumed by the student in relation to the particulars which society adores, but which he sees to be reverend only in their tendency and spirit. The ground occupied by the skeptic is the vestibule of the temple. Society does not like to have any breath of question blown on the existing order. But the interrogation of custom at all points is an inevitable stage in the growth of every superior mind, and is the evidence of its perception of the flowing power which remains itself in all changes.

The superior mind will find itself equally at odds with the evils of society and with the projects that are offered to relieve them. The wise skeptic is a bad citizen; no conservative, he sees the selfishness of property and the drowsiness of institutions. But neither is he fit to work with any democratic party that ever was constituted; for parties wish every one committed, and he penetrates the popular patriotism. His politics are those of the "Soul's Errand" of Sir Walter Raleigh;<sup>38</sup> or of Krishna, in the Bhagavat,<sup>39</sup> "There is none who is worthy of my love or hatred"; whilst he sentences law, physic, divinity, commerce, and custom. He is a reformer; yet he is no better member of the philanthropic association. It turns out that he is not the champion of the operative, the pauper, the prisoner, the slave. It stands in his mind that our life in this world is not of quite so easy interpretation as churches and school-books say. He does not wish to take ground against these benevolences, to play the part of devil's attorney, and blazon every doubt and sneer that darkens the sun for him. But he says, "There are doubts."

I mean to use the occasion, and celebrate the calendar-day of our Saint Michel de Montaigne, by counting and describing these doubts or negations. I wish to ferret them out of their holes and sun them a little. We must do with them as the



police do with old rogues, who are shown up to the public at the marshal's office. They will never be so formidable when once they have been identified and registered. But I mean honestly by them, — that justice shall be done to their terrors. I shall not take Sunday objections, made up on purpose to be put down. I shall take the worst I can find, whether I can dispose of them or they of me.

I do not press the skepticism of the materialist. I know the quadruped opinion will not prevail. 'T is of no importance what bats and oxen think. The first dangerous symptom I report is, the levity of intellect; as if it were fatal to earnestness to know much. Knowledge is the knowing that we can not know. The dull pray; the geniuses are light mockers. How respectable is earnestness on every platform! but intellect kills it. Nay, San Carlo,<sup>40</sup> my subtle and admirable friend, one of the most penetrating of men, finds that all direct ascension, even of lofty piety, leads to this ghastly insight and sends back the votary orphaned. My astonishing San Carlo thought the lawgivers and saints infected. They found the ark empty; saw, and would not tell; and tried to choke off their approaching followers, by saying, "Action, action, my dear fellows, is for you!" Bad as was to me this detection by San Carlo, this frost in July, this blow from a bride, there was still a worse, namely the cloy or satiety of the saints. In the mount of vision, ere they have yet risen from their knees, they say, "We discover that this our homage and beatitude is partial and deformed: we must fly for relief to the suspected and reviled Intellect, to the Understanding, the Mephistopheles,<sup>41</sup> to the gymnastics of talent."

This is hobgoblin <sup>42</sup> the first; and, though it has been the subject of much elegy in our nineteenth century, from Byron, Gœthe, and other poets of less fame, not to mention many distinguished private observers, — I confess it is not very affecting to my imagination; for it seems to concern the shattering of baby-houses and crockery-shops. What flutters

the Church of Rome, or of England, or of Geneva,<sup>43</sup> or of Boston, may yet be very far from touching any principle of faith. I think that the intellect and moral sentiment are unanimous; and that though philosophy extirpates bugbears, yet it supplies the natural checks of vice, and polarity to the soul. I think that the wiser a man is, the more stupendous he finds the natural and moral economy, and lifts himself to a more absolute reliance.

There is the power of moods, each setting at nought all but its own tissue of facts and beliefs. There is the power of complexions, obviously modifying the dispositions and sentiments. The beliefs and unbeliefs appear to be structural; and as soon as each man attains the pose and vivacity which allow the whole machinery to play, he will not need extreme examples, but will rapidly alternate all opinions in his own life. Our life is March weather, savage and serene in one hour. We go forth austere, dedicated, believing in the iron links of Destiny, and will not turn on our heel to save our life: but a book, or a bust, or only the sound of a name, shoots a spark through the nerves, and we suddenly believe in will: my finger-ring shall be the seal of Solomon; fate is for imbeciles; all is possible to the resolved mind. Presently a new experience gives a new turn to our thoughts: common sense resumes its tyranny; we say, "Well, the army, after all, is the gate to fame, manners and poetry: and, look you, — on the whole, selfishness plants best, prunes best, makes the best commerce and the best citizen." Are the opinions of a man on right and wrong, on fate and causation, at the mercy of a broken sleep or an indigestion? Is his belief in God and Duty no deeper than a stomach evidence? And what guaranty for the permanence of his opinions? I like not the French celerity, — a new Church and State once a week. This is the second negation; and I shall let it pass for what it will. As far as it asserts rotation of states of mind, I suppose it suggests its own remedy, namely in the record of larger periods. What

is the mean of many states; of all the states? Does the general voice of ages affirm any principle, or is no community of sentiment discoverable in distant times and places? And when it shows the power of self-interest, I accept that as part of the divine law and must reconcile it with aspiration the best I can.

The word Fate, or Destiny, expresses the sense of mankind, in all ages, that the laws of the world do not always befriend, but often hurt and crush us. Fate, in the shape of *Kinde* or nature, grows over us like grass. We paint Time with a scythe; Love and Fortune, blind; and Destiny, deaf. We have too little power of resistance against this ferocity which champs us up. What front can we make against these unavoidable, victorious, maleficent forces? What can I do against the influence of Race, in my history? What can I do against hereditary and constitutional habits; against scrofula, lymph, impotence? against climate, against barbarism, in my country? I can reason down or deny every thing, except this perpetual Belly: feed he must and will, and I cannot make him respectable.

But the main resistance which the affirmative impulse finds, and one including all others, is in the doctrine of the Illusionists.<sup>44</sup> There is a painful rumor in circulation that we have been practised upon in all the principal performances of life, and free agency is the emptiest name. We have been sopped and drugged with the air, with food, with woman, with children, with sciences, with events, which leave us exactly where they found us. The mathematics, 't is complained, leave the mind where they find it: so do all sciences; and so do all events and actions. I find a man who has passed through all the sciences, the churl he was; and, through all the offices, learned, civil, and social, can detect the child. We are not the less necessitated to dedicate life to them. In fact we may come to accept it as the fixed rule and theory of our state of education, that God is a substance, and his

method is illusion. The eastern sages owned the goddess Yoganidra,<sup>45</sup> the great illusory energy of Vishnu,<sup>46</sup> by whom, as utter ignorance, the whole world is beguiled.

Or shall I state it thus? — The astonishment of life is the absence of any appearance of reconciliation between the theory and practice of life. Reason, the prized reality, the Law, is apprehended, now and then, for a serene and profound moment amidst the hubbub of cares and works which have no direct bearing on it; — is then lost for months or years, and again found for an interval, to be lost again. If we compute it in time, we may, in fifty years, have half a dozen reasonable hours. But what are these cares and works the better? A method in the world we do not see, but this parallelism of great and little, which never react on each other, nor discover the smallest tendency to converge. Experiences, fortunes, governings, readings, writings, are nothing to the purpose; as when a man comes into the room it does not appear whether he has been fed on yams or buffalo, — he has contrived to get so much bone and fibre as he wants, out of rice or out of snow. So vast is the disproportion between the sky of law and the pismire of performance under it, that whether he is a man of worth or a sot is not so great a matter as we say. Shall I add, as one juggle of this enchantment, the stunning non-intercourse law which makes co-operation impossible? The young spirit pants to enter society. But all the ways of culture and greatness lead to solitary imprisonment. He has been often baulked. He did not expect a sympathy with his thought from the village, but he went with it to the chosen and intelligent, and found no entertainment for it, but mere misapprehension, distaste, and scoffing. Men are strangely mistimed and misapplied; and the excellence of each is an inflamed individualism which separates him more.

There are these, and more than these diseases of thought, which our ordinary teachers do not attempt to remove. Now shall we, because a good nature inclines us to virtue's side,

say, "There are no doubts," — and lie for the right? Is life to be led in a brave or in a cowardly manner? and is not the satisfaction of the doubts essential to all manliness? Is the name of virtue to be a barrier to that which is virtue? Can you not believe that a man of earnest and burly habit may find small good in tea, essays, and catechism, and want a rougher instruction, want men, labor, trade, farming, war, hunger, plenty, love, hatred, doubt, and terror to make things plain to him; and has he not a right to insist on being convinced in his own way? When he is convinced, he will be worth the pains.

Belief consists in accepting the affirmations of the soul; unbelief, in denying them. Some minds are incapable of skepticism. The doubts they profess to entertain are rather a civility or accommodation to the common discourse of their company. They may well give themselves leave to speculate, for they are secure of a return. Once admitted to the heaven of thought, they see no relapse into night, but infinite invitation on the other side. Heaven is within heaven, and sky over sky, and they are encompassed with divinities. Others there are to whom the heaven is brass, and it shuts down to the surface of the earth. It is a question of temperament, or of more or less immersion in nature. The last class must needs have a reflex or parasite faith; not a sight of realities, but an instinctive reliance on the seers and believers of realities. The manners and thoughts of believers astonish them and convince them that these have seen something which is hid from themselves. But their sensual habit would fix the believer to his last position, whilst he as inevitably advances; and presently the unbeliever, for love of belief, burns the believer.

Great believers are always reckoned infidels, impracticable, fantastic, atheistic, and really men of no account. The spiritualist finds himself driven to express his faith by a series of skepticisms. Charitable souls come with their projects

and ask his co-operation. How can he hesitate? It is the rule of mere comity and courtesy to agree where you can, and to turn your sentence with something auspicious, and not freezing and sinister. But he is forced to say, "O, these things will be as they must be: what can you do? These particular griefs and crimes are the foliage and fruit of such trees as we see growing. It is vain to complain of the leaf or the berry; cut it off, it will bear another just as bad. You must begin your cure lower down." The generousities of the day prove an intractable element for him. The people's questions are not his; their methods are not his; and against all the dictates of good nature he is driven to say he has no pleasure in them.

Even the doctrines dear to the hope of man, of the divine Providence and of the immortality of the soul, his neighbors can not put the statement so that he shall affirm it. But he denies out of more faith, and not less. He denies out of honesty. He had rather stand charged with the imbecility of skepticism, than with untruth. "I believe," he says, "in the moral design of the universe; it exists hospitably for the weal of souls; but your dogmas seem to me caricatures: why should I make believe them?" Will any say, "This is cold and infidel?" The wise and magnanimous will not say so. They will exult in his far-sighted good-will that can abandon to the adversary all the ground of tradition and common belief, without losing a jot of strength. It sees to the end of all transgression. George Fox<sup>47</sup> saw that there was "an ocean of darkness and death; but withal an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over that of darkness."

The final solution in which skepticism is lost, is in the moral sentiment, which never forfeits its supremacy. All moods may be safely tried, and their weight allowed to all objections: the moral sentiment as easily outweighs them all, as any one. This is the drop which balances the sea. I play with the miscellany of facts, and take those superficial views which we call

skepticism; but I know that they will presently appear to me in that order which makes skepticism impossible. A man of thought must feel the thought that is parent of the universe; that the masses of nature do undulate and flow.

This faith avails to the whole emergency of life and objects. The world is saturated with deity and with law. He is content with just and unjust, with sots and fools, with the triumph of folly and fraud. He can behold with serenity the yawning gulf between the ambition of man and his power of performance, between the demand and supply of power, which makes the tragedy of all souls.

Charles Fourier<sup>48</sup> announced that "the attractions of man are proportioned to his destinies"; in other words, that every desire predicts its own satisfaction. Yet all experience exhibits the reverse of this; the incompetency of power is the universal grief of young and ardent minds. They accuse the divine providence of a certain parsimony. It has shown the heaven and earth to every child and filled him with a desire for the whole; a desire raging, infinite; a hunger, as of space to be filled with planets; a cry of famine, as of devils for souls. Then for the satisfaction, — to each man is administered a single drop, a bead of dew of vital power, *per day*, — a cup as large as space, and one drop of the water of life in it. Each man woke in the morning with an appetite that could eat the solar system like a cake; a spirit for action and passion without bounds; he could lay his hand on the morning star; he could try conclusions with gravitation or chemistry; but, on the first motion to prove his strength, — hands, feet, senses, gave way and would not serve him. He was an emperor deserted by his states, and left to whistle by himself, or thrust into a mob of emperors, all whistling: and still the sirens<sup>49</sup> sang, "The attractions are proportioned to the destinies." In every house, in the heart of each maiden and of each boy, in the soul of the soaring saint, this chasm is found, — between the largest promise of ideal power, and the shabby experience.

The expansive nature of truth comes to our succor, elastic, not to be surrounded. Man helps himself by larger generalizations. The lesson of life is practically to generalize; to believe what the years and the centuries say, against the hours; to resist the usurpation of particulars; to penetrate to their catholic sense. Things seem to say one thing, and say the reverse. The appearance is immoral; the result is moral. Things seem to tend downward, to justify despondency, to promote rogues, to defeat the just; and by knaves as by martyrs the just cause is carried forward. Although knaves win in every political struggle, although society seems to be delivered over from the hands of one set of criminals into the hands of another set of criminals, as fast as the government is changed, and the march of civilization is a train of felonies, — yet, general ends are somehow answered. We see, now, events forced on which seem to retard or retrograde the civility of ages. But the world-spirit is a good swimmer; and storms and waves cannot drown him. He snaps his finger at laws: and so, throughout history, heaven seems to affect low and poor means. Through the years and the centuries, through evil agents, through toys and atoms, a great and beneficent tendency irresistibly streams.

Let a man learn to look for the permanent in the mutable and fleeting; let him learn to bear the disappearance of things he was wont to reverence without losing his reverence; let him learn that he is here, not to work but to be worked upon; and that, though abyss open under abyss, and opinion displace opinion, all are at last contained in the Eternal Cause: —

“If my bark sink, 't is to another sea.”<sup>50</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> French essayist and moralist. He was born in the Château Montaigne, near Dordogne in Perigord. His parents were people of means, and he was reared gently with many advantages of learning and culture. He attended the College de Guyenne, then the best school in France, and studied law in Bordeaux and Tou-



louse. His later life was spent largely on his estate. His chief work was the *Essays*.

<sup>2</sup> This word has fallen into disrepute since Emerson's day as applied to infidels and unbelievers in Christianity. Here it means merely one who investigates every problem for himself, the opposite of the dogmatic, unthinking person.

<sup>3</sup> Egyptian philosopher of the so-called Neoplatonic school (ca. 205-270? A.D.).

<sup>4</sup> *Fenelon*, François de Salignac de la Mothe, French prelate and author (1651-1715).

<sup>5</sup> Greek lyric poet, originator of the formal ode (522-c. 448 B.C.).

<sup>6</sup> *Byron*, George Gordon, English romantic poet (1788-1824).

<sup>7</sup> *Pope*, Alexander, English classical poet (1688-1744).

<sup>8</sup> *Swift*. See page 98, note 62.

<sup>9</sup> *Gæthe*. See page 23, note 48.

<sup>10</sup> *Schiller*, Johann Christoph Friedrich von, German romantic poet and dramatist (1759-1805).

<sup>11</sup> In the middle of the nineteenth century this statement was undoubtedly true. Now, of course, the United States has that honor.

<sup>12</sup> *Spence*, Joseph, English divine and critic. His *Essay on Pope's Translation of the Odyssey* and his *Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters of Books and Men* connect his name with Pope's (1699-1768).

<sup>13</sup> English portrait painter of German birth (1646-1723).

<sup>14</sup> He who loves not wine, women, and song,  
Remains a fool his whole life long.

Attributed to Luther by Uhland in *Die Geisterkeller*.

<sup>15</sup> *Cabanis*, Pierre Jean George, French physician, philosopher, and statesman (1757-1808).

<sup>16</sup> *Lord Bolingbroke*, Henry Saint John, Viscount, English statesman, essayist, and political writer (1678-1751).

<sup>17</sup> An inhabitant of Gibeon, a Biblical town in the time of Joshua. One who pretends. See *Joshua*, IX.

<sup>18</sup> Greek verb meaning to look at, behold, contemplate. Hence, consider.

<sup>19</sup> See page 59, note 63.

<sup>20</sup> See page 22, note 34.

<sup>21</sup> The natives of Sparta in Greece were noted for their exceptionally austere way of life and rigorously severe discipline. The Stoics, members of one of the chief schools of Greek philosophy founded by Zeno, 308 B.C., believed that the highest good was virtue, to attain which all lesser goods should be sacrificed.

<sup>22</sup> Emerson may have been thinking of the Quakers here, for he has much to say about them from time to time and expresses sympathy for their spiritual views. He does not entirely accept their attitude toward war, however.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Cotton was poet, translator of Montaigne's *Essays*.

This translation was an acknowledged masterpiece, frequently reprinted (1630-1687).

<sup>24</sup> A cemetery of Paris, the largest in the world.

<sup>25</sup> British poet and essayist (1806-1844).

<sup>26</sup> Perigord was a former division of Guienne province in central France.

<sup>27</sup> *Mr. Hazlitt* (William Hazlitt), English journalist, essayist, and critic (1778-1830).

<sup>28</sup> John Florio's translation of Montaigne is still considered the standard (*ca.* 1553-1625).

<sup>29</sup> English dramatist, friend and contemporary of Shakspeare (1573-1637).

<sup>30</sup> English poet, critic and essayist (1784-1859).

<sup>31</sup> A native or inhabitant of Gascony, a former province of south-western France.

<sup>32</sup> During the sixteenth century there was going on in France a struggle for supremacy between Catholics and Protestants. The Catholics formed a famous Catholic League, or Holy Union, a confederacy to defend the faith against heresy and uphold the king.

<sup>33</sup> *Gibbon*, Edward, English historian (1737-1794).

<sup>34</sup> The Great; first of the Bourbon kings of France (1553-1610)

<sup>35</sup> Scholars perhaps.

<sup>36</sup> French for "What do I know?"

<sup>37</sup> Maria Edgeworth wrote a book called *Parents' Assistant or, Stories for Children*. *Old Poz*, a study of a country magistrate in dramatic form, was one of the sketches included. The name suggested the very positive nature of the hero's attitude of mind.

<sup>38</sup> The reference here is probably to a poem of Raleigh's called *The Lie*, which begins "Go soul, the body's guest," etc. (1552-1618).

<sup>39</sup> See page 58, note 61.

<sup>40</sup> One of Emerson's friends was a very sentimental mystic by the name of Charles Newcomb (1820-1894), who loved the Roman Catholic symbolism, but joined the Transcendental group because of its nonsectarian interest in mysticism. Emerson calls him San Carlo, (or St. Charles), because of his abnormal sensitiveness.

<sup>41</sup> One of the seven chief devils in the old demonology, the second of the fallen archangels, and the most powerful spirit in hell after Satan.

<sup>42</sup> A species of sprite or goblin, an object of superstitious fear; hence, any imaginary cause of terror or dread.

<sup>43</sup> A city in Switzerland which was the stronghold of Calvinism.

<sup>44</sup> A believer in illusionism, a doctrine of the material world that treats it as an illusion of the senses.

<sup>45</sup> One of the names of one of the most important goddesses in the religion of India.

<sup>46</sup> The second god of the Hindoo trinity.

<sup>47</sup> The founder of the Society of Friends (1624-1691).

<sup>48</sup> *Charles Fourier* (François Charles Marie Fourier), French socialist (1772-1837).

<sup>49</sup> A group of sea nymphs located on an island in the Mediterranean Sea, the same which Ulysses escaped by having himself tied to the mast and his sailors' ears stopped with wax.

<sup>50</sup> From a poem by William Ellery Channing entitled *A Poet's Hope*.

## SHAKSPEARE; OR, THE POET

**G**REAT men are more distinguished by range and extent than by originality. If we require the originality which consists in weaving, like a spider, their web from their own bowels; in finding clay and making bricks and building the house; no great men are original. Nor does valuable originality consist in unlikeness to other men. The hero is in the press of knights and the thick of events; and seeing what men want and sharing their desire, he adds the needful length of sight and of arm, to come at the desired point. The greatest genius is the most indebted man. A poet is no rattle-brain, saying what comes uppermost, and, because he says every thing, saying at last something good; but a heart in unison with his time and country. There is nothing whimsical and fantastic in his production, but sweet and sad earnest, freighted with the weightiest convictions and pointed with the most determined aim which any man or class knows of in his times.

The Genius of our life is jealous of individuals, and will not have any individual great, except through the general. There is no choice to genius. A great man does not wake up on some fine morning and say, "I am full of life, I will go to sea and find an Antarctic continent: to-day I will square the circle: I will ransack botany and find a new food for man: I have a new architecture in my mind: I foresee a new mechanic power": no, but he finds himself in the river of the thoughts and events, forced onward by the idea and necessities of his contemporaries. He stands where all the eyes of men look one way, and their hands all point in the direction

in which he should go. The Church has reared him amidst rites and pomps, and he carries out the advice which her music gave him, and builds a cathedral needed by her chants and processions. He finds a war raging: it educates him, by trumpet, in barracks, and he betters the instruction. He finds two counties groping to bring coal, or flour, or fish, from the place of production to the place of consumption, and he hits on a railroad. Every master has found his materials collected, and his power lay in his sympathy with his people and in his love of the materials he wrought in. What an economy of power! and what a compensation for the shortness of life! All is done to his hand. The world has brought him thus far on his way. The human race has gone out before him, sunk the hills, filled the hollows, and bridged the rivers. Men, nations, poets, artisans, women, all have worked for him, and he enters into their labors. Choose any other thing, out of the line of tendency, out of the national feeling and history, and he would have all to do for himself: his powers would be expended in the first preparations. Great genial power, one would almost say, consists in not being original at all; in being altogether receptive; in letting the world do all, and suffering the spirit of the hour to pass unobstructed through the mind.

Shakspeare's youth fell in a time when the English people were importunate for dramatic entertainments. The court took offence easily at political allusions and attempted to suppress them. The Puritans, a growing and energetic party, and the religious among the Anglican church, would suppress them. But the people wanted them. Inn-yards, houses without roofs, and extemporaneous enclosures at country fairs were the ready theatres of strolling players. The people had tasted this new joy; and, as we could not hope to suppress newspapers now, — no, not by the strongest party, — neither then could king, prelate, or puritan, alone or united, suppress an organ which was ballad, epic, newspaper, caucus, lecture,

Punch,<sup>1</sup> and library, at the same time. Probably king, prelate, and puritan, all found their own account in it. It had become, by all causes, a national interest, — by no means conspicuous, so that some great scholar would have thought of treating it in an English history, — but not a whit less considerable because it was cheap and of no account, like a baker's-shop. The best proof of its vitality is the crowd of writers which suddenly broke into this field; Kyd, Marlow, Greene, Jonson, Chapman, Dekker, Webster, Heywood, Middleton, Peele, Ford, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher.<sup>2</sup>

The secure possession, by the stage, of the public mind, is of the first importance to the poet who works for it. He loses no time in idle experiments. Here is an audience and expectation prepared. In the case of Shakspeare there is much more. At the time when he left Stratford and went up to London, a great body of stage-plays of all dates and writers existed in manuscript and were in turn produced on the boards. Here is the Tale of Troy, which the audience will bear hearing some part of, every week; the Death of Julius Cæsar, and other stories out of Plutarch, which they never tire of; a shelf full of English history, from the chronicles of Brut and Arthur,<sup>3</sup> down to the royal Henries, which men hear eagerly; and a string of doleful tragedies, merry Italian tales and Spanish voyages, which all the London 'prentices know. All the mass has been treated, with more or less skill, by every playwright, and the prompter has the soiled and tattered manuscripts. It is now no longer possible to say who wrote them first. They have been the property of the Theatre so long, and so many rising geniuses have enlarged or altered them, inserting a speech or a whole scene, or adding a song, that no man can any longer claim copyright in this work of numbers. Happily, no man wishes to. They are not yet desired in that way. We have few readers, many spectators and hearers. They had best lie where they are.

Shakspeare, in common with his comrades, esteemed the

mass of old plays waste stock, in which any experiment could be freely tried. Had the *prestige* which hedges about a modern tragedy existed, nothing could have been done. The rude warm blood of the living England circulated in the play, as in street-ballads, and gave body which he wanted to his airy and majestic fancy. The poet needs a ground in popular tradition on which he may work, and which, again, may restrain his art within the due temperance. It holds him to the people, supplies a foundation for his edifice, and in furnishing so much work done to his hand, leaves him at leisure and in full strength for the audacities of his imagination. In short, the poet owes to his legend what sculpture owed to the temple. Sculpture in Egypt and in Greece grew up in subordination to architecture. It was the ornament of the temple wall: at first a rude relief carved on pediments, then the relief became bolder and a head or arm was projected from the wall; the groups being still arranged with reference to the building, which serves also as a frame to hold the figures; and when at last the greatest freedom of style and treatment was reached, the prevailing genius of architecture still enforced a certain calmness and continence in the statue. As soon as the statue was begun for itself, and with no reference to the temple or palace, the art began to decline: freak, extravagance, and exhibition took the place of the old temperance. This balance-wheel, which the sculptor found in architecture, the perilous irritability of poetic talent found in the accumulated dramatic materials to which the people were already wonted, and which had a certain excellence which no single genius, however extraordinary, could hope to create.

In point of fact it appears that Shakspeare did owe debts in all directions, and was able to use whatever he found; and the amount of indebtedness may be inferred from Malone's laborious computations<sup>4</sup> in regard to the First, Second, and Third parts of Henry VI., in which, "out of 6,043 lines, 1,771 were written by some author preceding Shakspeare, 2,373

by him, on the foundation laid by his predecessors, and 1,899 were entirely his own." And the proceeding investigation hardly leaves a single drama of his absolute invention. Malone's sentence is an important piece of external history. In Henry VIII. I think I see plainly the cropping out of the original rock on which his own finer stratum was laid. The first play was written by a superior, thoughtful man, with a vicious ear. I can mark his lines, and know well their cadence. See Wolsey's soliloquy, <sup>5</sup> and the following scene with Cromwell, where instead of the metre of Shakspeare, whose secret is that the thought constructs the tune, so that reading for the sense will best bring out the rhythm, — here the lines are constructed on a given tune, and the verse has even a trace of pulpit eloquence. But the play contains through all its length unmistakable traits of Shakspeare's hand, and some passages, as the account of the coronation, are like autographs. What is odd, the compliment to Queen Elizabeth <sup>6</sup> is in the bad rhythm.

Shakspeare knew that tradition supplies a better fable than any invention can. If he lost any credit of design, he augmented his resources; and, at that day, our petulant demand for originality was not so much pressed. There was no literature for the million. The universal reading, the cheap press, were unknown. A great poet who appears in illiterate times, absorbs into his sphere all the light which is any where radiating. Every intellectual jewel, every flower of sentiment it is his fine office to bring to his people; and he comes to value his memory equally with his invention. He is therefore little solicitous whence his thoughts have been derived; whether through translation, whether through tradition, whether by travel in distant countries, whether by inspiration; from whatever source, they are equally welcome to his uncritical audience. Nay, he borrows very near home. Other men say wise things as well as he; only they say a good many foolish things, and do not know when they have spoken wisely.



He knows the sparkle of the true stone, and puts it in high place, wherever he finds it. Such is the happy position of Homer perhaps; of Chaucer,<sup>7</sup> of Saadi. They felt that all wit was their wit. And they are librarians and historiographers, as well as poets. Each romancer was heir and dispenser of all the hundred tales of the world, —

“Presenting Thebes’ and Pelops’ line<sup>8</sup>  
And the tale of Troy divine.”

The influence of Chaucer is conspicuous in all our early literature; and more recently not only Pope<sup>9</sup> and Dryden<sup>10</sup> have been beholden to him, but, in the whole society of English writers, a large unacknowledged debt is easily traced. One is charmed with the opulence which needs so many pensioners. But Chaucer is a huge borrower. Chaucer, it seems, drew continually, through Lydgate and Caxton,<sup>11</sup> from Guido di Colonna, whose Latin romance of the Trojan war was in turn a compilation from Dares Phrygius,<sup>12</sup> Ovid,<sup>13</sup> and Statius.<sup>14</sup> Then Petrarch,<sup>15</sup> Boccaccio,<sup>16</sup> and the Provençal poets<sup>17</sup> are his benefactors: the *Romaunt of the Rose*<sup>18</sup> is only judicious translation from William of Lorris and John of Meung: *Troilus and Creseide*, from Lollius of Urbino:<sup>19</sup> *The Cock and the Fox*,<sup>20</sup> from the *Lais of Marie*:<sup>21</sup> *The House of Fame*,<sup>22</sup> from the French or Italian: and poor Gower<sup>23</sup> he uses as if he were only a brick-kiln or stone-quarry out of which to build his house. He steals by this apology, — that what he takes has no worth where he finds it and the greatest where he leaves it. It has come to be practically a sort of rule in literature, that a man having once shown himself capable of original writing, is entitled thenceforth to steal from the writings of others at discretion. Thought is the property of him who can entertain it and of him who can adequately place it. A certain awkwardness marks the use of borrowed thoughts; but as soon as we have learned what to do with them they become our own.

Thus all originality is relative. Every thinker is retrospective. The learned member of the legislature, at Westminster <sup>24</sup> or at Washington, speaks and votes for thousands. Show us the constituency, and the now invisible channels by which the senator is made aware of their wishes; the crowd of practical and knowing men, who, by correspondence or conversation, are feeding him with evidence, anecdotes, and estimates, and it will bereave his fine attitude and resistance of something of their impressiveness. As Sir Robert Peel <sup>25</sup> and Mr. Webster vote, so Locke and Rousseau <sup>26</sup> think, for thousands; and so there were fountains all around Homer, Menu, Saadi, or Milton, <sup>27</sup> from which they drew; friends, lovers, books, traditions, proverbs, — all perished — which, if seen, would go to reduce the wonder. Did the bard speak with authority? Did he feel himself overmatched by any companion? The appeal is to the consciousness of the writer. Is there at last in his breast a Delphi <sup>28</sup> whereof to ask concerning any thought or thing, whether it be verily so, yea or nay? and to have answer, and to rely on that? All the debts which such a man could contract to other wit would never disturb his consciousness of originality; for the ministrations of books and of other minds are a whiff of smoke to that most private reality with which he has conversed.

It is easy to see that what is best written or done by genius in the world, was no man's work, but came by wide social labor, when a thousand wrought like one, sharing the same impulse. Our English Bible is a wonderful specimen of the strength and music of the English language. But it was not made by one man, or at one time; but centuries and churches brought it to perfection. There never was a time when there was not some translation existing. The Liturgy, admired for its energy and pathos, is an anthology of the piety of ages and nations, a translation of the prayers and forms of the Catholic church, — these collected, too, in long periods, from the prayers and meditations of every saint and sacred writer all

over the world. Grotius<sup>29</sup> makes the like remark in respect to the Lord's prayer, that the single clauses of which it is composed were already in use in the time of Christ, in the Rabbinical forms. He picked out the grains of gold. The nervous language of the Common Law, the impressive forms of our courts, and the precision and substantial truth of the legal distinctions, are the contribution of all the sharp-sighted, strong-minded men who have lived in the countries where these laws govern. The translation of Plutarch<sup>30</sup> gets its excellence by being translation on translation. There never was a time when there was none. All the truly idiomatic and national phrases are kept, and all others successively picked out and thrown away. Something like the same process had gone on, long before, with the originals of these books. The world takes liberties with world-books. Vedas,<sup>31</sup> Æsop's Fables, Pilpay,<sup>32</sup> Arabian Nights, Cid,<sup>33</sup> Iliad,<sup>34</sup> Robin Hood,<sup>35</sup> Scottish Minstrelsy,<sup>36</sup> are not the work of single men. In the composition of such works the time thinks, the market thinks, the mason, the carpenter, the merchant, the farmer, the fop, all think for us. Every book supplies its time with one good word; every municipal law, every trade, every folly of the day; and the generic catholic genius who is not afraid or ashamed to owe his originality to the originality of all, stands with the next age as the recorder and embodiment of his own.

We have to thank the researches of antiquaries, and the Shakspeare Society,<sup>37</sup> for ascertaining the steps of the English drama, from the Mysteries<sup>38</sup> celebrated in churches and by churchmen, and the final detachment from the church, and the completion of secular plays, from Ferrex and Porrex,<sup>39</sup> and Gammer Gurton's Needle,<sup>40</sup> down to the possession of the stage by the very pieces which Shakspeare altered, remodelled, and finally made his own. Elated with success and piqued by the growing interest of the problem, they have left no book-stall unsearched, no chest in a garret unopened, no file of yellow accounts to decompose in damp and worms, so keen

was the hope to discover whether the boy Shakspeare poached <sup>41</sup> or not, whether he held horses at the theatre door, whether he kept school, and why he left in his will only his second-best bed to Ann Hathaway, his wife.

There is somewhat touching in the madness with which the passing age mischooses the object on which all candles shine and all eyes are turned; the care with which it registers every trifle touching Queen Elizabeth and King James, and the Essexes, Leicesters, Burleighs, and Buckingham; <sup>42</sup> and lets pass without a single valuable note the founder of another dynasty, which alone will cause the Tudor dynasty <sup>43</sup> to be remembered, — the man who carries the Saxon race in him by the inspiration which feeds him, and on whose thoughts the foremost people of the world are now for some ages to be nourished, and minds to receive this and not another bias. A popular player; — nobody suspected he was the poet of the human race; and the secret was kept as faithfully from poets and intellectual men as from courtiers and frivolous people. Bacon, who took the inventory of the human understanding for his times, never mentioned his name. Ben Jonson, <sup>44</sup> though we have strained his few words of regard and panegyric, had no suspicion of the elastic fame whose first vibrations he was attempting. He no doubt thought the praise he has conceded to him generous, and esteemed himself, out of all question, the better poet of the two.

If it need wit to know wit, according to the proverb, Shakspeare's time should be capable of recognizing it. Sir Henry Wotton <sup>45</sup> was born four years after Shakspeare, and died twenty-three years after him; and I find, among his correspondents and acquaintances, the following persons: Theodore Beza, <sup>46</sup> Isaac Casaubon, <sup>47</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, <sup>48</sup> the Earl of Essex, <sup>49</sup> Lord Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, John Milton, Sir Henry Vane, <sup>50</sup> Isaac Walton, <sup>51</sup> Dr. Donne, <sup>52</sup> Abraham Cowley, <sup>53</sup> Bellarmine, <sup>54</sup> Charles Cotton, <sup>55</sup> John Pym, <sup>56</sup> John Hales, <sup>57</sup> Kepler, <sup>58</sup> Vieta, <sup>59</sup> Albericus Gentilis, <sup>60</sup> Paul Sarpi, <sup>61</sup> Armin-

ius; <sup>62</sup> with all of whom exists some token of his having communicated, without enumerating many others whom doubtless he saw, — Shakspeare, Spenser, <sup>63</sup> Jonson, Beaumont, <sup>64</sup> Massinger, <sup>65</sup> the two Herberts, <sup>66</sup> Marlow, <sup>67</sup> Chapman, <sup>68</sup> and the rest. Since the constellation of great men who appeared in Greece in the time of Pericles, there was never any such society; — yet their genius failed them to find out the best head in the universe. Our poet's mask was impenetrable. You cannot see the mountain near. It took a century to make it suspected; and not until two centuries had passed, after his death, did any criticism which we think adequate begin to appear. It was not possible to write the history of Shakspeare till now; for he is the father of German literature: it was with the introduction of Shakspeare into German, by Lessing, <sup>69</sup> and the translation of his works by Wieland <sup>70</sup> and Schlegel, <sup>71</sup> that the rapid burst of German literature was most intimately connected. It was not until the nineteenth century, whose speculative genius is a sort of living Hamlet, that the tragedy of Hamlet could find such wondering readers. Now, literature, philosophy, and thought, are Shakspearized. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see. Our ears are educated to music by his rhythm. Coleridge <sup>72</sup> and Gœthe are the only critics who have expressed our convictions with any adequate fidelity: but there is in all cultivated minds a silent appreciation of his superlative power and beauty, which, like Christianity, qualifies the period.

The Shakspeare Society have inquired in all directions, advertised the missing facts, offered money for any information that will lead to proof, — and with what result? Beside some important illustration of the history of the English stage, to which I have adverted, they have gleaned a few facts touching the property, and dealings in regard to property, of the poet. It appears that from year to year he owned a larger share in the Blackfriars' Theatre: <sup>73</sup> its wardrobe and other appurtenances were his: that he bought an estate in his

native village with his earnings as writer and shareholder; that he lived in the best house in Stratford; was intrusted by his neighbors with their commissions in London, as of borrowing money, and the like; that he was a veritable farmer. About the time when he was writing *Macbeth*, he sues Philip Rogers,<sup>74</sup> in the borough-court of Stratford, for thirty-five shillings, ten pence, for corn delivered to him at different times; and in all respects appears as a good husband, with no reputation for eccentricity or excess. He was a good-natured sort of man, an actor, and shareholder in the theatre, not in any striking manner distinguished from other actors and managers. I admit the importance of this information. It was well worth the pains that have been taken to procure it.

But whatever scraps of information concerning his condition these researches may have rescued, they can shed no light upon that infinite invention which is the concealed magnet of his attraction for us. We are very clumsy writers of history. We tell the chronicle of parentage, birth, birth-place, schooling, school-mates, earning of money, marriage, publication of books, celebrity, death; and when we have come to an end of this gossip, no ray of relation appears between it and the goddess-born; and it seems as if, had we dipped at random into the "Modern Plutarch,"<sup>75</sup> and read any other life there, it would have fitted the poems as well. It is the essence of poetry to spring, like the rainbow daughter of Wonder, from the invisible, to abolish the past and refuse all history. Malone,<sup>76</sup> Warburton, Dyce, and Collier, have wasted their oil. The famed theatres, Covent Garden,<sup>77</sup> Drury Lane, the Park, and Tremont<sup>78</sup> have vainly assisted. Betterton, Garrick, Kemble, Kean, and Macready<sup>79</sup> dedicate their lives to this genius; him they crown, elucidate, obey, and express. The genius knows them not. The recitation begins; one golden word leaps out immortal from all this painted pedantry and sweetly torments us with invitations to its own inaccessible homes. I remember I went once to see the

Hamlet of a famed performer, the pride of the English stage; and all I then heard and all I now remember of the tragedian was that in which the tragedian had no part; simply Hamlet's question to the ghost: —

“What may this mean,<sup>80</sup>  
That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel  
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon?”

That imagination which dilates the closet he writes in to the world's dimension, crowds it with agents in rank and order, as quickly reduces the big reality to be the glimpses of the moon. These tricks of his magic spoil for us the illusions of the green-room. Can any biography shed light on the localities into which the *Midsummer Night's Dream* admits me? Did Shakspeare confide to any notary or parish recorder, sacristan, or surrogate in Stratford, the genesis of that delicate creation? The forest of Arden,<sup>81</sup> the nimble air of Scone Castle, the moonlight of Portia's villa, “the antres vast and deserts idle” of Othello's captivity, — where is the third cousin, or grand-nephew, the chancellor's file of accounts, or private letter, that has kept one word of those transcendent secrets? In fine, in this drama, as in all great works of art, — in the Cyclopæan architecture of Egypt and India,<sup>82</sup> in the Phidian sculpture,<sup>83</sup> the Gothic minsters,<sup>84</sup> the Italian painting, the Ballads of Spain and Scotland, — the Genius draws up the ladder after him, when the creative age goes up to heaven, and gives way to a new age, which sees the works and asks in vain for a history.

Shakspeare is the only biographer of Shakspeare; and even he can tell nothing, except to the Shakspeare in us, that is, to our most apprehensive and sympathetic hour. He cannot step from off his tripod and give us anecdotes of his inspirations. Read the antique documents extricated, analyzed, and compared by the assiduous Dyce and Collier, and now read one of these skyey sentences, — aerolites, — which

seem to have fallen out of heaven, and which not your experience but the man within the breast has accepted as words of fate, and tell me if they match; if the former account in any manner for the latter; or which gives the most historical insight into the man.

Hence, though our external history is so meagre, yet, with Shakspeare for biographer, instead of Aubrey and Rowe,<sup>85</sup> we have really the information which is material; that which describes character and fortune, that which, if we were about to meet the man and deal with him, would most import us to know. We have his recorded convictions on those questions which knock for answer at every heart, — on life and death, on love, on wealth and poverty, on the prizes of life and the ways whereby we come at them; on the characters of men, and the influences, occult and open, which affect their fortunes; and on those mysterious and demoniacal powers which defy our science and which yet interweave their malice and their gift in our brightest hours. Who ever read the volume of the Sonnets without finding that the poet had there revealed, under the masks that are no masks to the intelligent, the lore of friendship and of love; the confusion of sentiments in the most susceptible, and, at the same time, the most intellectual of men? What trait of his private mind has he hidden in his dramas? One can discern, in his ample picture of the gentleman and the king, what forms and humanities pleased him; his delight in troops of friends, in large hospitality, in cheerful giving. Let Timon,<sup>86</sup> let Warwick, let Antonio the merchant answer for his great heart. So far from Shakspeare's being the least known, he is the one person, in all modern history, known to us. What point of morals, of manners, of economy, of philosophy, of religion, of taste, of the conduct of life, has he not settled? What mystery has he not signified his knowledge of? What office, or function, or district of man's work, has he not remembered? What king has he not taught state, as Talma taught Napoleon? <sup>87</sup> What



maiden has not found him finer than her delicacy? What lover has he not outloved? What sage has he not outseen? What gentleman has he not instructed in the rudeness of his behavior?

Some able and appreciating critics think no criticism on Shakspeare valuable that does not rest purely on the dramatic merit; that he is falsely judged as poet and philosopher. I think as highly as these critics of his dramatic merit, but still think it secondary. He was a full man,<sup>88</sup> who liked to talk; a brain exhaling thoughts and images, which, seeking vent, found the drama next at hand. Had he been less, we should have had to consider how well he filled his place, how good a dramatist he was, — and he is the best in the world. But it turns out that what he has to say is of that weight as to withdraw some attention from the vehicle; and he is like some saint whose history is to be rendered into all languages, into verse and prose, into songs and pictures, and cut up into proverbs; so that the occasion which gave the saint's meaning the form of a conversation, or of a prayer, or of a code of laws, is immaterial compared with the universality of its application. So it fares with the wise Shakspeare and his book of life. He wrote the airs for all our modern music: he wrote the text of modern life; the text of manners: he drew the man of England and Europe; the father of the man in America; he drew the man, and described the day, and what is done in it: he read the hearts of men and women, their probity, and their second thought and wiles; the wiles of innocence, and the transitions by which virtues and vices slide into their contraries: he could divide the mother's part from the father's part in the face of the child, or draw the fine demarcation of freedom and of fate: he knew the laws of repression which make the police of nature: and all the sweets and all the terrors of human lot lay in his mind as truly but as softly as the landscape lies on the eye. And the importance of this wisdom of life sinks the form, as of Drama or Epic, out of

notice. 'T is like making a question concerning the paper on which a king's message is written.

Shakspeare is as much out of the category of eminent authors, as he is out of the crowd. He is inconceivably wise; the others, conceivably. A good reader can, in a sort, nestle into Plato's brain and think, from thence; but not into Shakspeare's. We are still out of doors. For executive faculty, for creation, Shakspeare is unique. No man can imagine it better. He was the farthest reach of subtlety compatible with an individual self, — the subtlest of authors, and only just within the possibility of authorship. With this wisdom of life is the equal endowment of imaginative and of lyric power. He clothed the creatures of his legend with form and sentiments as if they were people who had lived under his roof; and few real men have left such distinct characters as these fictions. And they spoke in a language as sweet as it was fit. Yet his talents never seduced him into an ostentation, nor did he harp on one string. An omnipresent humanity coordinates all his faculties. Give a man of talents a story to tell, and his partiality will presently appear. He has certain observations, opinions, topics which have some accidental prominence, and which he disposes all to exhibit. He crams this part and starves that other part, consulting not the fitness of the thing, but his fitness and strength. But Shakspeare has no peculiarity, no importunate topic; but all is duly given; no veins, no curiosities; no cow-painter, no bird-fancier, no mannerist is he: he has no discoverable egotism: the great he tells greatly; the small subordinately. He is wise without emphasis or assertion; he is strong, as nature is strong, who lifts the land into mountain slopes without effort and by the same rule as she floats a bubble in the air, and likes as well to do the one as the other. This makes that equality of power in farce, tragedy, narrative, and love-songs; and merit so incessant that each reader is incredulous of the perception of other readers.

This power of expression, or of transferring the inmost truth of things into music and verse, makes him the type of the poet and has added a new problem to metaphysics. This is that which throws him into natural history, as a main production of the globe, and as announcing new eras and ameliorations. Things were mirrored in his poetry without loss or blur: he could paint the fine with precision, the great with compass, the tragic and the comic indifferently and without any distortion or favor. He carried his powerful execution into minute details, to a hair point; finishes an eyelash or a dimple as firmly as he draws a mountain; and yet these, like nature's, will bear the scrutiny of the solar microscope.

In short, he is the chief example to prove that more or less of production, more or fewer pictures, is a thing indifferent. He had the power to make one picture. Daguerre<sup>89</sup> learned how to let one flower etch its image on his plate of iodine, and then proceeds at leisure to etch a million. There are always objects; but there was never representation. Here is perfect representation, at last; and now let the world of figures sit for their portraits. No recipe can be given for the making of a Shakspeare; but the possibility of the translation of things into song is demonstrated.

His lyric power lies in the genius of the piece. The sonnets, though their excellence is lost in the splendor of the dramas, are as inimitable as they; and it is not a merit of lines, but a total merit of the piece; like the tone of voice of some incomparable person, so is this a speech of poetic beings, and any clause as unproducibile now as a whole poem.

Though the speeches in the plays, and single lines, have a beauty which tempts the ear to pause on them for their euphuism, yet the sentence is so loaded with meaning and so linked with its foregoers and followers, that the logician is satisfied. His means are as admirable as his ends; every subordinate invention, by which he helps himself to connect some irreconcilable opposites, is a poem too. He is not re-

duced to dismount and walk because his horses are running off with him in some distant direction: he always rides.

The finest poetry was first experience; but the thought has suffered a transformation since it was an experience. Cultivated men often attain a good degree of skill in writing verses; but it is easy to read, through their poems, their personal history: any one acquainted with the parties can name every figure; this is Andrew and that is Rachel. The sense thus remains prosaic. It is a caterpillar with wings, and not yet a butterfly. In the poet's mind the fact has gone quite over into the new element of thought, and has lost all that is exuvial. This generosity abides with Shakspeare. We say, from the truth and closeness of his pictures, that he knows the lesson by heart. Yet there is not a trace of egotism.

One more royal trait properly belongs to the poet. I mean his cheerfulness, without which no man can be a poet, — for beauty is his aim. He loves virtue, not for its obligation but for its grace: he delights in the world, in man, in woman, for the lovely light that sparkles from them. Beauty, the spirit of joy and hilarity, he sheds over the universe. Epicurus<sup>90</sup> relates that poetry hath such charms that a lover might forsake his mistress to partake of them. And the true bards have been noted for their firm and cheerful temper. Homer lies in sunshine; Chaucer is glad and erect; and Saadi says, "It was rumored abroad that I was penitent; but what had I to do with repentance?" Not less sovereign and cheerful, — much more sovereign and cheerful, is the tone of Shakspeare. His name suggests joy and emancipation to the heart of men. If he should appear in any company of human souls, who would not march in his troop? He touches nothing that does not borrow health and longevity from his festal style.

And now, how stands the account of man with this bard and benefactor, when, in solitude, shutting our ears to the reverberations of his fame, we seek to strike the balance? Solitude has austere lessons; it can teach us to spare both

heroes and poets; and it weighs Shakspeare also, and finds him to share the halfness and imperfection of humanity.

Shakspeare, Homer, Dante, Chaucer, saw the splendor of meaning that plays over the visible world; knew that a tree had another use than for apples, and corn another than for meal, and the ball of the earth, than for tillage and roads: that these things bore a second and finer harvest to the mind, being emblems of its thoughts, and conveying in all their natural history a certain mute commentary on human life. Shakspeare employed them as colors to compose his picture. He rested in their beauty; and never took the step which seemed inevitable to such genius, namely to explore the virtue which resides in these symbols and imparts this power: — what is that which they themselves say? He converted the elements which waited on his commands, into entertainments. He was master of the revels to mankind. Is it not as if one should have, through majestic powers of science, the comets given into his hand, or the planets and their moons, and should draw them from their orbits to glare with the municipal fireworks on a holiday night, and advertise in all towns, “Very superior pyrotechny this evening?” Are the agents of nature, and the power to understand them, worth no more than a street serenade, or the breath of a cigar? One remembers again the trumpet-text in the Koran, — “The heavens and the earth and all that is between them, think ye we have created them in jest?” As long as the question is of talent and mental power, the world of men has not his equal to show. But when the question is, to life and its materials and its auxiliaries, how does he profit me? What does it signify? It is but a *Twelfth Night*, or *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, or *Winter Evening’s Tale*: what signifies another picture more or less? The Egyptian verdict of the Shakspeare Societies comes to mind; that he was a jovial actor and manager. I can not marry this fact to his verse. Other admirable men have led lives in some sort of keeping with their

thought; but this man, in wide contrast. Had he been less, had he reached only the common measure of great authors, of Bacon, Milton, Tasso,<sup>91</sup> Cervantes,<sup>92</sup> we might leave the fact in the twilight of human fate: but that this man of men, he who gave to the science of mind a new and larger subject than had ever existed, and planted the standard of humanity some furlongs forward into Chaos,<sup>93</sup> — that he should not be wise for himself; — it must even go into the world's history that the best poet led an obscure and profane life, using his genius for the public amusement.

Well, other men, priest and prophet, Israelite, German, and Swede, beheld the same objects: they also saw through them that which was contained. And to what purpose? The beauty straightway vanished; they read commandments, all-excluding mountainous duty; an obligation, a sadness, as of piled mountains, fell on them, and life became ghastly, joyless, a pilgrim's progress, a probation, beleaguered round with doleful histories of Adam's fall and curse behind us; with doomsdays and purgatorial and penal fires before us; and the heart of the seer and the heart of the listener sank in them.

It must be conceded that these are half-views of half-men. The world still wants its poet-priest, a reconciler, who shall not trifle, with Shakspeare the player, nor shall grope in graves, with Swedenborg the mourner; but who shall see, speak, and act, with equal inspiration. For knowledge will brighten the sunshine; right is more beautiful than private affection; and **love** is compatible with universal wisdom.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The comic magazine by that name is here referred to.

<sup>2</sup> The playwrights contemporary with Shakspeare, some of whom influenced him. See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, for an extended treatment, or Allardyce Nicoll, *British Drama*, for a briefer one.

<sup>3</sup> Brut, or Brutus, was a descendant of Æneas, who was credited in popular legend with the founding of Britain. Arthur was the legendary Celtic hero celebrated in the romances of the Round

Table, later confused with Brut. Brut stories are the *Brut o' Angelterre*, *Roman de Brut* by Wace, and Layamon's *Brut*.

<sup>4</sup> *Malone*, Edward, a somewhat distinguished scholar, the friend of Johnson and Boswell, turned to Shakspeare criticism in later life. Emerson probably has reference to Malone's *Attempt to ascertain the Order in which the Plays of Shakspeare were written*, published in 1778. He is known chiefly, however, for his critical edition of the plays (1741-1812).

<sup>5</sup> *Henry VIII*, III, iv.

<sup>6</sup> *Henry VIII*, V, iv. The whole scene: the christening of Queen Elizabeth. The compliment lies in Cranmer's long speech predicting her greatness and England's prosperity under her reign.

<sup>7</sup> *Chaucer*, Geoffrey, looked upon as the "Father of English Literature." The first important poet to use the English language as his medium (ca. 1340-1400).

<sup>8</sup> See Milton's *Il Penseroso*, couplet 81.

<sup>9</sup> *Pope*, Alexander, English poet (1688-1744).

<sup>10</sup> *Dryden*, John, English poet, dramatist, and critic who re-discovered Chaucer, but failed to understand the rhythm of his language (1631-1700.)

<sup>11</sup> Had Emerson stopped to think, he should have seen the chronological absurdity of his remark, for both Lydgate and Caxton are later in date than Chaucer. The truth is that Chaucer got the story directly from Guido, who in turn got it from Benoit de Sainte-More. See T. R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, I, p. 303. Lydgate, John. English poet (ca. 1370-1451). Caxton, William, earliest English printer (ca. 1422-1491). Guido di Colonna, a Sicilian poet and historian. He lived about 1250.

<sup>12</sup> A Trojan priest absurdly pretended by some ancient writers to have been the author of an Iliad or history of the Trojan War in prose. Probably such a work was written by some later writer. This no longer exists except in what purports to be its Latin translation.

<sup>13</sup> *Ovid*. See page 98, note 58.

<sup>14</sup> *Statius*, Publius Papinius, Roman poet (ca. 61-96 A.D.).

<sup>15</sup> Italian poet (1304-1374).

<sup>16</sup> *Boccaccio*, Giovanni, Italian author (1313-1375).

<sup>17</sup> Provence was a former province of France. The ancient Provençal dialect was the first modern language, except Anglo-Saxon, to have a literature of its own. This dialect, known as the *langue d'oc*, was noted as the language of the troubadours.

<sup>18</sup> An allegorical romance in verse, begun by Guillaume de Lorris in the thirteenth century and finished by Jean de Meung in the fourteenth century. It is called the "French Iliad" and part of it was done into English by Chaucer.

<sup>19</sup> Again Emerson tells more than he knows. Chaucer indeed gives credit to one named Lollius, but he is certainly not Lollius

of Urbino. Who he was no one knows. The immediate source of the poem is the *Teseide* of Boccaccio, from which the central theme is derived. The poem, however, is highly original in essential respects. See T. R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, II, pp. 405-410.

<sup>20</sup> A poem of Chaucer.

<sup>21</sup> Marie de France, French poet and fabulist who flourished (ca. 1175-1190).

<sup>22</sup> A poem by Chaucer.

<sup>23</sup> Another unwarranted statement. Because Chaucer and Gower both use material from the same stories, which were common property, they should not be charged with "stealing" from each other. Gower, an English poet (ca. 1325-1408).

<sup>24</sup> The English seat of Parliament.

<sup>25</sup> There were three Sir Robert Peels of note. The one probably meant here was an English statesman who flourished during the first half of the nineteenth century (1788-1850).

<sup>26</sup> These names are coupled here because both were philosophers who made popular appeal, though quite unlike in many respects. See page 23, note 53; page 56, note 9.

<sup>27</sup> See page 57, notes 39; page 99, note 85. Milton, John, the great English Puritan poet, author of *Paradise Lost* (1608-1647).

<sup>28</sup> The abode of oracles or prophets in ancient Greece, later the name of a city.

<sup>29</sup> See page 97, note 47.

<sup>30</sup> See page 22, note 34.

<sup>31</sup> Four holy books or collections of hymns of the Hindus. Veda means originally "knowledge."

<sup>32</sup> An ancient Sanscrit fable writer, about which very little is known; the source of Lafontaine's fables.

<sup>33</sup> The Cid was originally the life history of a Spanish hero named Ruy Diaz de Bivar, a Christian champion of the eleventh century in the wars with the Moors, nicknamed the Cid by Moorish admirers. Emerson may be referring to either the Spanish version or Corneille's tragedy of that name.

<sup>34</sup> A Greek epic poem, the oldest and most celebrated extant, in twenty-four books, describing the siege of Troy. It was traditionally ascribed to Homer, but probably was the work of several hands.

<sup>35</sup> A popular robber-hero of English folklore, whose deeds of heroism, chivalry, and roguery are celebrated in some of the English popular ballads.

<sup>36</sup> Refers to the popular songs and ballads of the Scotch Highlands. Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* may have been in Emerson's mind here.

<sup>37</sup> Founded in 1841 and dissolved in 1853. It published forty-eight volumes of Shakspeare material.



<sup>38</sup> Mediæval dramatic performances, treating sacred subjects, represented originally in churches and at solemn festivals.

<sup>39</sup> Or *Gorboduc*. Probably the first tragedy in the English tongue, by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, 1561. It is in blank verse and is based on a story in Holinshed's *Chronicles of England*. It can be read in Manly's *Specimens of Pre-Shakspearean Drama*.

<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the earliest comedy in English. By "Mr. S., Master of Arts." Probably this refers to William Stevenson. Produced in 1566. Also to be found in Manly's *Specimens of Pre-Shakspearean Drama*.

<sup>41</sup> Modern research has done much for these old problems. See Sidney Lee, *Life of Shakspeare*, new ed.; Neilson and Thorn-dike, *Facts About Shakspeare*.

<sup>42</sup> Courtiers in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

<sup>43</sup> An English royal line (1485-1603) descended from Sir Owen Tudor of Wales, who married the widow of Henry V of England.

<sup>44</sup> An English dramatist, a contemporary and friend of Shakspeare (ca. 1573-1637).

<sup>45</sup> English statesman and poet (1568-1639).

<sup>46</sup> French reformer of the Calvinistic school (1519-1605).

<sup>47</sup> French critic and scholar (1559-1614).

<sup>48</sup> English statesman, and author of the *Arcadia*, a friend of Edmund Spenser (1554-1586).

<sup>49</sup> Robert Devereaux, the second earl to bear the title, at one time a favorite of Queen Elizabeth (1567-1601).

<sup>50</sup> English statesman (1613-1662).

<sup>51</sup> English writer, famous for his *Compleat Angler* (1593-1683).

<sup>52</sup> *Dr. Donne*, John, eminent divine and mystical poet (1573-1631).

<sup>53</sup> English poet and dramatist (1618-1667).

<sup>54</sup> *Bellarmino*, Robert, Italian cardinal and writer (1542-1621).

<sup>55</sup> See page 123, note 23.

<sup>56</sup> English statesman and noted orator (1584-1643).

<sup>57</sup> English divine and critic (1584-1656).

<sup>58</sup> *Kepler*, Johannes, German astronomer (1571-1630).

<sup>59</sup> *Vieta*, François, French mathematician (1540-1603).

<sup>60</sup> Italian jurist, founded international law (1661-1603).

<sup>61</sup> Italian philosopher and historian (1552-1623).

<sup>62</sup> *Arminius*, Jacobus, Dutch theologian (1560-1609).

<sup>63</sup> *Spenser*, Edmund, author of the *Faerie Queene* (1584-1616).

<sup>64</sup> *Beaumont*, Francis, English dramatic poet (1584-1616).

<sup>65</sup> *Massinger*, Philip, English dramatist (1583-1640).

<sup>66</sup> Baron Edward of Cherbury, diplomat and philosopher (1583-1648); George, the poet (1593-1648).

<sup>67</sup> *Marlow[e]*, Christopher, (Kit), English dramatist (1564-1593).

<sup>68</sup> *Chapman*, George, English dramatic poet and translator of Homer (ca. 1559-1634).

<sup>69</sup> *Lessing*, Gotthold Ephraim, German naturalist (1729-1781).

<sup>70</sup> *Wieland*, Christoph Martin, German poet and novelist (1733-1813).

<sup>71</sup> *Schlegel*, August Wilhelm, German poet and scholar (1767-1845).

<sup>72</sup> *Coleridge*, Samuel Taylor, English metaphysician and poet (1772-1834).

<sup>73</sup> The first regular playhouse in the district of Blackfriars, London. Erected 1596 by James Burbage, torn down in 1655; called a private theater, but used by Shakspeare's company for public performances during the winter.

<sup>74</sup> Probably an unknown neighbor of Shakspeare.

<sup>75</sup> Francis Vayer de la Mothe (1586-1672).

<sup>76</sup> All these men are famous for their work in connection with the Elizabethan dramatists, and familiar to every student of Shakspeare and his contemporaries. See *Dictionary of National Biography* for a full account of their lives.

<sup>77</sup> The two leading theaters of London up to recent times. In the eighteenth century the only ones licensed by the court.

<sup>78</sup> Two famous old Boston theaters.

<sup>79</sup> All famous Shakspearean actors who contributed something to the present traditions of the acting of the great plays. See *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>80</sup> *Hamlet*, I, iv.

<sup>81</sup> Localities in Shakspeare's plays.

<sup>82</sup> A style characterized by massive, uneven blocks of stone and absence of mortar. The adjective, Cyclopean, means gigantic, very large.

<sup>83</sup> Phidias was the foremost sculptor of Greece. His sculptures adorn the Parthenon.

<sup>84</sup> Monastery churches or cathedrals in the pointed style of mediæval architecture prevalent in Europe from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.

<sup>85</sup> John Aubrey, an English antiquary (1626-1697); Nicholas Rowe, dramatist (1674-1718).

<sup>86</sup> Characters in Shakspeare's plays.

<sup>87</sup> François Joseph Talma was a distinguished French actor, a personal friend of Napoleon (1763-1826).

<sup>88</sup> Compare Bacon's essay on *Books*, "Reading maketh a full man."

<sup>89</sup> *Daguerre*, Louis Jacques Maude, French painter, inventor of the early form of photography known as the daguerreotype (1789-1851).

<sup>90</sup> Greek philosopher, founder of the Epicurean school of philosophy (third century B.C.).

<sup>91</sup> *Tasso*, Torquato, Italian poet (1544-1595).

<sup>92</sup> *Cervantes*, Miguel de, author of *Don Quixote* (1547-1616).

<sup>93</sup> The first state of the universe from which it is held that the cosmic order and harmony were evolved.

## VI

### NAPOLEON; OR, THE MAN OF THE WORLD

**A**MONG the eminent persons of the nineteenth century, Bonaparte is far the best known and the most powerful; and owes his predominance to the fidelity with which he expresses the tone of thought and belief, the aims of the masses of active and cultivated men. It is Swedenborg's theory that every organ is made up of homogeneous particles; or as it is sometimes expressed, every whole is made of similars; that is, the lungs are composed of infinitely small lungs; the liver, of infinitely small livers; the kidney, of little kidneys, etc. Following this analogy, if any man is found to carry with him the power and affections of vast numbers, if Napoleon is France, if Napoleon is Europe, it is because the people whom he sways are little Napoleons.

In our society there is a standing antagonism between the conservative and the democratic classes; between those who have made their fortunes, and the young and the poor who have fortunes to make; between the interests of dead labor, — that is, the labor of hands long ago still in the grave, which labor is now entombed in money stocks, or in land and buildings owned by idle capitalists, — and the interests of living labor, which seeks to possess itself of land and buildings and money stocks. The first class is timid, selfish, illiberal, hating innovation, and continually losing numbers by death. The second class is selfish also, encroaching, bold, self-relying, always outnumbering the other and recruiting its numbers every hour by births. It desires to keep open every avenue to the competition of all, and to multiply avenues: the class of business men in America, in England, in France, and through-

out Europe; the class of industry and skill. Napoleon is its representative. The instinct of active, brave, able men, throughout the middle class every where, has pointed out Napoleon as the incarnate Democrat. He had their virtues and their vices; above all, he had their spirit or aim. That tendency is material, pointing at a sensual success and employing the richest and most various means to that end; conversant with mechanical powers, highly intellectual, widely and accurately learned and skillful, but subordinating all intellectual and spiritual forces into means to a material success. To be the rich man, is the end. "God has granted," says the Koran, "to every people a prophet in its own tongue." Paris and London and New York, the spirit of commerce, of money and material power, were also to have their prophet; and Bonaparte was qualified and sent.

Every one of the million readers of anecdotes or memoirs or lives of Napoleon, delights in the page, because he studies in it his own history. Napoleon is thoroughly modern, and, at the highest point of his fortunes, has the very spirit of the newspapers. He is no saint, — to use his own word, "no capuchin,"<sup>1</sup> and he is no hero, in the high sense. The man in the street finds in him the qualities and powers of other men in the street. He finds him, like himself, by birth a citizen, who, by very intelligible merits, arrived at such a commanding position that he could indulge all those tastes which the common man possesses but is obliged to conceal and deny: good society, good books, fast traveling, dress, dinners, servants without number, personal weight, the execution of his ideas, the standing in the attitude of a benefactor to all persons about him, the refined enjoyments of pictures, statues, music, palaces, and conventional honors, — precisely what is agreeable to the heart of every man in the nineteenth century, this powerful man possessed. It is true that a man of Napoleon's truth of adaption to the mind of the masses around him, becomes not merely representative but actually a monopolizer

and usurper of other minds. Thus Mirabeau<sup>2</sup> plagiarized every good thought, every good word that was spoken in France. Dumont<sup>3</sup> relates that he sat in the gallery of the Convention<sup>4</sup> and heard Mirabeau make a speech. It struck Dumont that he could fit it with a peroration, which he wrote in pencil immediately, and showed it to Lord Elgin,<sup>5</sup> who sat by him. Lord Elgin approved it, and Dumont, in the evening, showed it to Mirabeau. Mirabeau read it, pronounced it admirable, and declared he would incorporate it into his harangue to-morrow, to the Assembly. "It is impossible," said Dumont, "as, unfortunately, I have shown it to Lord Elgin." "If you have shown it to Lord Elgin and to fifty persons beside, I shall still speak it tomorrow:" and he did speak it, with much effect, at the next day's session. For Mirabeau, with his overpowering personality, felt that these things which his presence inspired were as much his own as if he had said them, and that his adoption of them gave them their weight. Much more absolute and centralizing was the successor to Mirabeau's popularity and to much more than his predominance in France. Indeed, a man of Napoleon's stamp almost ceases to have a private speech and opinion. He is so largely receptive, and is so placed, that he comes to be a bureau for all the intelligence, wit, and power of the age and country. He gains the battle; he makes the code; he makes the system of weights and measures; he levels the Alps; he builds the road. All distinguished engineers, savans,<sup>6</sup> statistes, report to him: so likewise do all good heads in every kind: he adopts the best measures, sets his stamp on them, and not these alone, but on every happy and memorable expression. Every sentence spoken by Napoleon and every line of his writing, deserves reading, as it is the sense of France.

Bonaparte was the idol of common men because he had in transcendent degree the qualities and powers of common men. There is a certain satisfaction in coming down to the lowest

ground of politics, for we get rid of cant and hypocrisy. Bonaparte wrought, in common with that great class he represented, for power and wealth, — but Bonaparte, specially, without any scruple as to means. All the sentiments which embarrass men's pursuit of these objects, he set aside. The sentiments were for women and children. Fontanes,<sup>7</sup> in 1804, expressed Napoleon's own sense, when in behalf of the Senate he addressed him. — "Sire, the desire of perfection is the worst disease that ever afflicted the human mind." The advocates of liberty and progress are "ideologists"; — a word of contempt often in his mouth; — "Necker <sup>8</sup> is an ideologist": "Lafayette is an ideologist."

An Italian proverb, too well known, declares that "if you would succeed, you must not be too good." It is an advantage, within certain limits, to have renounced the dominion of the sentiments of pity, gratitude, and generosity; since what was an impassable bar to us, and still is to others, becomes a convenient weapon for our purposes; just as the river which is a formidable barrier, winter transforms into the smoothest of roads.

Napoleon renounced, once for all, sentiments and affections, and would help himself with his hands and his head. With him is no miracle and no magic. He is a worker in brass, in iron, in wood, in earth, in roads, in buildings, in money, and in troops, and a very consistent and wise master-workman. He is never weak and literary, but acts with the solidity and the precision of natural agents. He has not lost his native sense and sympathy with things. Men give way before such a man, as before natural events. To be sure, there are men enough who are immersed in things, as farmers, smiths, sailors, and mechanics generally; and we know how real and solid such men appear in the presence of scholars and grammarians: but these men ordinarily lack the power of arrangement, and are like hands without a head. But Bonaparte superadded to this mineral and animal force, insight and

generalization, so that men saw in him combined the natural and the intellectual power, as if the sea and land had taken flesh and begun to cipher. Therefore the land and sea seem to presuppose him. He came unto his own and they received him. This ciphering operative knows what he is working with and what is the product. He knows the properties of gold and iron, of wheels and ships, of troops and diplomatists, and required that each should do after its kind.

The art of war was the game in which he exerted his arithmetic. It consisted, according to him, in having always more forces than the enemy, on the point where the enemy is attacked, or where he attacks: and his whole talent is strained by endless manœuvre and evolution, to march always on the enemy at an angle, and destroy his forces in detail. It is obvious that a very small force, skillfully and rapidly manœuvring so as always to bring two men against one at the point of engagement, will be an overmatch for a much larger body of men.

The times, his constitution and his early circumstances combined to develop this pattern democrat. He had the virtues of his class and the conditions for their activity. That common sense which no sooner respects any end than it finds the means to effect it; the delight in the use of means; in the choice, simplification, and combining of means; the directness and thoroughness of his work; the prudence with which all was seen and the energy with which all was done, make him the natural organ and head of what I may almost call, from its extent, the *modern* party.

Nature must have far the greatest share in every success, and so in his. Such a man was wanted, and such a man was born; a man of stone and iron, capable of sitting on horseback sixteen or seventeen hours, of going many days together without rest or food except by snatches, and with the speed and spring of a tiger in action; a man not embarrassed by any scruples; compact, instant, selfish, prudent, and of a per-

ception which did not suffer itself to be baulked or misled by any pretences of others, or any superstition or any heat or haste of his own. "My hand of iron," he said, "was not at the extremity of my arm, it was immediately connected with my head." He respected the power of nature and fortune, and ascribed to it his superiority, instead of valuing himself, like inferior men, on his opinionativeness, and waging war with nature. His favorite rhetoric lay in allusion to his star; and he pleased himself, as well as the people, when he styled himself the "Child of Destiny." "They charge me," he said, "with the commission of great crimes: Men of my stamp do not commit crimes. Nothing has been more simple than my elevation, 't is in vain to ascribe it to intrigue or crime; it is owing to the peculiarity of the times and to my reputation of having fought well against the enemies of my country. I have always marched with the opinion of great masses and with events. Of what use then would crimes be to me?" Again he said, speaking of his son, "My son cannot replace me; I could not replace myself. I am the creature of circumstances."

He had a directness of action never before combined with so much comprehension. He is a realist, terrific to all talkers and confused truth-obscuring persons. He sees where the matter hinges, throws himself on the precise point of resistance, and slights all other considerations. He is strong in the right manner, namely by insight. He never blundered into victory, but won his battles in his head before he won them on the field. His principal means are in himself. He asks counsel of no other. In 1796 he writes to the Directory: "I have conducted the campaign without consulting any one. I should have done no good if I had been under the necessity of conforming to the notions of another person. I have gained some advantages over superior forces and when totally destitute of every thing, because, in the persuasion that your confidence was reposed in me, my actions were as prompt as my thoughts."



History is full, down to this day, of the imbecility of kings and governors. They are a class of persons much to be pitied, for they know not what they should do. The weavers strike for bread, and the king and his ministers, knowing not what to do, meet them with bayonets. But Napoleon understood his business. Here was a man who in each moment and emergency knew what to do next. It is an immense comfort and refreshment to the spirits, not only of kings, but of citizens. Few men have any next; they live from hand to mouth without plan, and are ever at the end of their line, and after each action wait for an impulse from abroad. Napoleon had been the first man of the world, if his ends had been purely public. As he is, he inspires confidence and vigor by the extraordinary unity of his action. He is firm, sure, self-denying, self-postponing, sacrificing everything, — money, troops, generals, and his own safety also, to his aim; not misled, like common adventurers, by the splendor of his own means. "Incidents ought not to govern policy," he said, "but policy, incidents." "To be hurried away by every event is to have no political system at all." His victories are only so many doors, and he never for a moment lost sight of his way onward, in the dazzle and uproar of the present circumstance. He knew what to do and he flew to his mark. He would shorten a straight line to come at his object. Horrible anecdotes may no doubt be collected from his history, of the price at which he bought his successes; but he must not therefore be set down as cruel, but only as one who knew no impediment to his will; not bloodthirsty, not cruel, — but woe to what thing or person stood in his way! Not bloodthirsty, but not sparing of blood, — and pitiless. He saw only the object: the obstacle must give way. "Sire, General Clarke<sup>10</sup> can not combine with General Junot,<sup>11</sup> for the dreadful fire of the Austrian battery." — "Let him carry the battery." — "Sire, every regiment that approaches the heavy artillery is sacrificed: Sire, what orders?" — "Forward,

forward!" Seruzier, a colonel of artillery, gives, in his "Military Memoirs," the following sketch of a scene after the battle of Austerlitz.<sup>12</sup> — "At the moment in which the Russian army was making its retreat, painfully, but in good order, on the ice of the lake, the Emperor Napoleon came riding at full speed toward the artillery. 'You are losing time,' he cried; 'fire upon those masses; they must be engulfed: fire upon the ice!' The order remained unexecuted for ten minutes. In vain several officers and myself were placed on the slope of a hill to produce the effect: their balls and mine rolled upon the ice without breaking it up. Seeing that, I tried a simple method of elevating light howitzers. The almost perpendicular fall of the heavy projectiles produced the desired effect. My method was immediately followed by the adjoining batteries, and in less than no time we 'buried' some 'thousands of Russians and Austrians under the waters of the lake.' " \*

In the plenitude of his resources, every obstacle seemed to vanish. "There shall be no Alps," he said; and he built his perfect roads, climbing by graded galleries their steepest precipices, until Italy was as open to Paris as any town in France. He laid his bones to, and wrought for his crown. Having decided what was to be done, he did that with might and main. He put out all his strength. He risked everything and spared nothing, neither ammunition, nor money, nor troops, nor generals, nor himself.

We like to see every thing do its office after its kind, whether it be a milch-cow or a rattle-snake; and if fighting be the best mode of adjusting national differences (as large majorities of men seem to agree), certainly Bonaparte was right in making it thorough. The grand principle of war, he said, was that an army ought always to be ready, by day and by night and at all hours, to make all the resistance it is capable

\* (*Note by Emerson:* Some — As I quote at second hand, and cannot procure Seruzier, I dare not adopt the high figure I find.)

of making. He never economized his ammunition, but, on a hostile position, rained a torrent of iron, — shells, balls, grape-shot, — to annihilate all defence. On any point of resistance he concentrated squadron on squadron in overwhelming numbers until it was swept out of existence. To a regiment of horse-chasseurs at Lobenstein,<sup>13</sup> two days before the battle of Jena,<sup>14</sup> Napoleon said, “My lads, you must not fear death; when soldiers brave death, they drive him into the enemy’s ranks.” In the fury of assault, he no more spared himself. He went to the edge of his possibility. It is plain that in Italy he did what he could and all that he could. He came, several times, within an inch of ruin; and his own person was all but lost. He was flung into the marsh at Arcola.<sup>15</sup> The Austrians were between him and his troops, in the *melée*,<sup>16</sup> and he was brought off with desperate efforts. At Lonato,<sup>17</sup> and at other places, he was on the point of being taken prisoner. He fought sixty battles. He had never enough. Each victory was a new weapon. “My power would fall, were I not to support it by new achievements. Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me.” He felt, with every wise man, that as much life is needed for conservation as for creation. We are always in peril, always in a bad plight, just on the edge of destruction and only to be saved by invention and courage.

This vigor was guarded and tempered by the coldest prudence and punctuality. A thunderbolt in the attack, he was found invulnerable in his intrenchments. His very attack was never the inspiration of courage, but the result of calculation. His idea of the best defence consists in being still the attacking party. “My ambition,” he says, “was great, but was of a cold nature.” In one of his conversations with Las Casas,<sup>18</sup> he remarked, “As to moral courage, I have rarely met with the two-o’clock-in-the-morning kind: I mean unprepared courage; that which is necessary on an unexpected occasion, and which, in spite of the most unforeseen events,

leaves full freedom of judgment and decision": and he did not hesitate to declare that he was himself eminently endowed with this two-o'clock-in-the-morning courage, and that he had met with few persons equal to himself in this respect.

Everything depended on the nicety of his combinations, and the stars were not more punctual than his arithmetic. His personal attention descended to the smallest particulars. "At Montebello,<sup>19</sup> I ordered Kellermann<sup>20</sup> to attack with eight hundred horse, and with these he separated the six thousand Hungarian grenadiers, before the very eyes of the Austrian cavalry. This cavalry was half a league off and required a quarter of an hour to arrive on the field of action, and I have observed that it is always these quarters of an hour that decide the fate of a battle." "Before he fought a battle, Bonaparte thought little about what he should do in case of success, but a great deal about what he should do in case of a reverse of fortune." The same prudence and good sense mark all his behavior. His instructions to his secretary at the Tuileries<sup>21</sup> are worth remembering. "During the night, enter my chamber as seldom as possible. Do not awaken me when you have any good news to communicate; with that there is no hurry. But when you bring bad news, rouse me instantly, for then there is not a moment to be lost." It was a whimsical economy of the same kind which dictated his practice, when general in Italy, in regard to his burdensome correspondence. He directed Bourrienne<sup>22</sup> to leave all letters unopened for three weeks, and then observed with satisfaction how large a part of the correspondence had thus disposed of itself and no longer required an answer. His achievement of business was immense, and enlarges the known powers of man. There have been many working kings, from Ulysses<sup>23</sup> to William of Orange,<sup>24</sup> but none who accomplished a tithe of this man's performance.

To these gifts of nature, Napoleon added the advantage of having been born to a private and humble fortune. In his

later days he had the weakness of wishing to add to his crowns and badges the prescription of aristocracy: but he knew his debt to his austere education, and made no secret of his contempt for the born kings, and for "the hereditary asses," as he coarsely styled the Bourbons.<sup>25</sup> He said that "in their exile they had learned nothing, and forgot nothing." Bonaparte had passed through all the degrees of military service, but also was citizen before he was emperor, and so has the key to citizenship. His remarks and estimates discover the information and justness of measurement of the middle class. Those who had to deal with him found that he was not to be imposed upon, but could cipher as well as another man. This appears in all parts of his Memoirs, dictated at St. Helena.<sup>26</sup> When the expenses of the empress, of his household, of his palaces, had accumulated great debts, Napoleon examined the bills of the creditors himself, detected overcharges and errors, and reduced the claims by considerable sums.

His grand weapon, namely the millions whom he directed, he owed to the representative character which clothed him. He interests us as he stands for France and for Europe; and he exists as captain and king only as far as the Revolution, or the interest of the industrious masses, found an organ and a leader in him. In the social interests, he knew the meaning and the value of labor, and threw himself naturally on that side. I like the incident by one of his biographers at St. Helena. "When walking with Mrs. Balcombe,<sup>27</sup> some servants, carrying heavy boxes, passed by on the road, and Mrs. Balcombe desired them, in rather an angry tone, to keep back. Napoleon interfered, saying, 'Respect the burden, Madam.'" In the time of the empire he directed attention to the improvement and embellishment of the markets of the capital. "The market-place," he said, "is the Louvre <sup>28</sup> of the common people." The principal works that have survived him are his magnificent roads. He filled the troops with his spirit, and a sort of freedom and companionship grew

up between him and them, which the forms of his court never permitted between the officers and himself. They performed, under his eye, that which no others could do. The best document of his relation to his troops is the order of the day on the morning of the battle of Austerlitz, in which Napoleon promises the troops that he will keep his person out of reach of fire. This declaration, which is the reverse of that ordinarily made by generals and sovereigns on the eve of a battle, sufficiently explains the devotion of the army to their leader.

But though there is in particulars this identity between Napoleon and the mass of the people, his real strength lay in their conviction that he was their representative in his genius and aims, not only when he courted, but when he controlled, and even when he decimated them by his conscriptions. He knew as well as any Jacobin <sup>29</sup> in France, how to philosophize on liberty and equality; and when allusion was made to the precious blood of the centuries, which was spilled by the killing of the Duc d'Enghien,<sup>30</sup> he suggested, "Neither is my blood ditch-water." People felt that no longer the throne was occupied and the land sucked of its nourishment, by a small class of legitimates, secluded from all community with the children of the soil, and holding the ideas and superstitions of a long-forgotten state of society. Instead of the vampyre, a man of themselves held, in the Tuileries, knowledge and ideas like their own, opening of course to them and their children all places of power and trust. The day of sleepy, selfish policy, ever narrowing the means and opportunities of young men, was ended, and a day of expansion and demand was come. A market for all the powers and productions of man was opened; brilliant prizes glittered in the eyes of youth and talent. The old, iron-bound, feudal France was changed into a young Ohio or New York; and those who smarted under the immediate rigors of the new monarch, pardoned them as the necessary severities of the military system which had driven out the oppressor. And even when the majority of the people

had begun to ask whether they had really gained anything under the exhausting levies of men and money of the new master, the whole talent of the country, in every rank and kindred, took his part and defended him as its natural patron. In 1814, when advised to rely on the higher classes, Napoleon said to those around him, "Gentlemen, in the situation in which I stand, my only nobility is the rabble of the Faubourgs."<sup>31</sup>

Napoleon met this natural expectation. The necessity of his position required a hospitality to every sort of talent, and its appointment to trusts; and his feeling went along with this policy. Like every superior person, he undoubtedly felt a desire for men and compeers, and a wish to measure his power with other masters, and an impatience with fools and underlings. In Italy, he sought for men and found none. "Good God!" he said, "how rare men are! There are eighteen millions in Italy, and I have with difficulty found two, — Dandolo<sup>32</sup> and Melzi."<sup>33</sup> In later years, with larger experience, his respect for mankind was not increased. In a moment of bitterness he said to one of his oldest friends, "Men deserve the contempt with which they inspire me. I have only to put some gold lace on the coat of my virtuous republicans and they immediately become just what I wish them." This impatience of levity was, however, an oblique tribute of respect to those able persons who commanded his regard not only when he found them friends and coadjutors but also when they resisted his will. He could not confound Fox<sup>34</sup> and Pitt,<sup>35</sup> Carnot,<sup>36</sup> Lafayette<sup>37</sup> and Bernadotte,<sup>38</sup> with the danglers of his court; and in spite of the detraction which his systematic egotism dictated toward the great captains who conquered with and for him, ample acknowledgements are made by him to Lannes,<sup>39</sup> Duroc, Kleber, Dessaix, Massena, Murat, Ney, and Augereau. If he felt himself their patron and the founder of their fortunes, as when he said, "I made my generals out of mud," — he could

not hide his satisfaction in receiving from them a seconding and support commensurate with the grandeur of his enterprise. In the Russian campaign he was so much impressed by the courage and resources of Marshal Ney, that he said, "I have two hundred millions in my coffers, and I would give them all for Ney." The characters which he has drawn of several of his marshals are discriminating, and though they did not content the insatiable vanity of the French officers, are no doubt substantially just. And in fact every species of merit was sought and advanced under his government. "I know," he said, "the depth and draught of water <sup>40</sup> of every one of my generals." Natural power was sure to be well received at his court. Seventeen men in his time were raised from common soldiers to the rank of king, marshal, duke, or general; and the crosses of his legion of Honor were given to personal valor, and not to family connexion. "When soldiers have been baptized in the fire of a battle-field, they have all one rank in my eyes."

When a natural king becomes a titular king, everybody is pleased and satisfied. The Revolution entitled the strong populace of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and every horse-boy and powder-monkey in the army, to look on Napoleon as flesh of his flesh and the creature of *his* party; but there is something in the success of grand talent which enlists an universal sympathy. For in the prevalence of sense and spirit over stupidity and malversation, all reasonable men have an interest; and as intellectual beings we feel the air purified by the electric shock, when material force is overthrown by intellectual energies. As soon as we are removed out of the reach of local and accidental partialities, Man feels that Napoleon fights for him; these are honest victories; this strong steam-engine does our work. Whatever appeals to the imagination, by transcending the ordinary limits of human ability, wonderfully encourages and liberates us. This capacious head, revolving and disposing sovereignly trains of affairs, and animating such multitudes of agents; this eye



which looked through Europe; this prompt invention; this inexhaustible resource: — what events! what romantic pictures! What strange situations! — when spying the Alps, by a sunset in the Sicilian sea; drawing up his army for battle in sight of the Pyramids, and saying to his troops, “From the tops of those pyramids, forty centuries look down on you”; fording the Red Sea; wading in the gulf of the Isthmus of Suez. On the shore of Ptolemais,<sup>41</sup> gigantic projects agitated him. “Had Acre<sup>42</sup> fallen, I should have changed the face of the world.” His army, on the night of the battle of Austerlitz, which was the anniversary of his inauguration as Emperor, presented him with a bouquet of forty standards taken in the fight. Perhaps it is a little puerile, the pleasure he took in making these contrasts glaring; as when he pleased himself with making kings wait in his antechambers, at Tilsit,<sup>43</sup> at Paris, and at Erfurt.<sup>44</sup> We cannot, in the universal imbecility, indecision, and indolence of men, sufficiently congratulate ourselves on this strong and ready actor who took occasion by the beard, and showed us how much may be accomplished by the mere force of such virtues as all men possess in less degrees; namely, by punctuality, by personal attention, by courage and thoroughness. “The Austrians,” he said, “do not know the value of time.” I should cite him, in his earlier years, as a model of prudence. His power does not consist in any wild and extravagant force; in any enthusiasm like Mahomet, or singular power of persuasion; but in the exercise of common sense on each emergency, instead of abiding by laws and customs. The lesson he teaches is that which vigor always teaches; — that there is always room for it. To what heaps of cowardly doubts is not that man’s life an answer? When he appeared it was the belief of all military men that there could be nothing new in war; as it is the belief of men to-day that nothing new can be undertaken in politics, or in church, or in letters, or in trade, or in farming, or in our social manners and customs; and as

it is at all times the belief of society that the world is used up. But Bonaparte knew better than society; and moreover knew that he knew better. I think all men know better than they do; know that the institutions that we so volubly commend are go-carts and baubles; but they dare not trust their presentiments. Bonaparte relied on his own sense, and did not care a bean for other people's. The world treated his novelties just as it treats everybody's novelties, — made infinite objection, mustered all the impediments; but he snapped his finger at their objections. "What creates great difficulty," he remarks, "in the profession of the land-commander, is the necessity of feeding so many men and animals. If he allows himself to be guided by the commissaries he will never stir, and all his expeditions will fail." An example of his common sense is what he says of the passage of the Alps in winter, which all writers, one repeating after the other, had described as impracticable. "The winter," says Napoleon, "is not the most unfavorable season for the passage of lofty mountains. The snow is then firm, the weather settled, and there is nothing to fear from avalanches, the real and only danger to be apprehended in the Alps. On those high mountains there are often very fine days in December, of a dry cold, with extreme calmness in the air." Read his account, too, of the way in which battles are gained. "In all battles a moment occurs when the bravest troops, after having made the greatest efforts, feel inclined to run. That terror proceeds from a want of confidence in their own courage, and it only requires a slight opportunity, a pretence, to restore confidence to them. The art is, to give rise to the opportunity and to invent the pretence. At Arcola I won the battle with twenty-five horsemen. I seized that moment of lassitude, gave every man a trumpet, and gained the day with this handful. You see that two armies are two bodies which meet and endeavor to frighten each other; a moment of panic occurs, and that moment must be turned to advantage. When a man has been

present in many actions, he distinguishes that moment without difficulty: it is as easy as casting up an addition."

This deputy of the nineteenth century added to his gifts a capacity for speculation on general topics. He delighted in running through the range of practical, of literary, and of abstract questions. His opinion is always original and to the purpose. On the voyage to Egypt he liked, after dinner, to fix on three or four persons to support a proposition, and as many to oppose it. He gave a subject, and the discussions turned on questions of religion, the different kinds of government, and the art of war. One day he asked whether the planets were inhabited? On another, what was the age of the world? Then he proposed to consider the probability of the destruction of the globe, either by water or by fire: at another time, the truth or fallacy of presentiments, and the interpretation of dreams. He was very fond of talking of religion. In 1806 he conversed with Fournier, bishop of Montpellier, on matters of theology. There were two points on which they could not agree, viz. that of hell, and that of salvation out of the pale of the church. The Emperor told Josephine <sup>45</sup> that he disputed like a devil on these two points, on which the bishop was inexorable. To the philosophers he readily yielded all that was proved against religion as the work of men and time, but he could not hear of materialism. One fine night, on deck, amid a clatter of materialism, Bonaparte pointed to the stars, and said, "You may talk as long as you please, gentlemen, but who made all that?" He delighted in the conversation of men of science, particularly of Monge <sup>46</sup> and Berthollet; <sup>47</sup> but the men of letters he slighted; they were "manufacturers of phrases." Of medicine too he was fond of talking, and with those of its practitioners whom he most esteemed, — with Corvisart <sup>48</sup> at Paris, and with Antonomarchi <sup>49</sup> at St. Helena. "Believe me," he said to the last, "we had better leave off all these remedies: life is a fortress which neither you nor I know anything about. Why throw

obstacles in the way of its defence? Its own means are superior to all the apparatus of your laboratories. Corvisart candidly agreed with me that all your filthy mixtures are good for nothing. Medicine is a collection of uncertain prescriptions, the results of which, taken collectively, are more fatal than useful to mankind. Water, air, and cleanliness are the chief articles in my pharmacœpia."

His memoirs, dictated to Count Montholon <sup>50</sup> and General Gourgaud <sup>51</sup> at St. Helena, have great value, after all the deduction that it seems is to be made from them on account of his known disingenuousness. He has the good-nature of strength and conscious superiority. I admire his simple, clear narrative of his battles; — good as Cæsar's; his good-natured and sufficiently respectful account of Marshal Wurmser <sup>52</sup> and his other antagonists; and his own equality as a writer to his varying subject. The most agreeable portion is the Campaign in Egypt.

He had hours of thought and wisdom. In intervals of leisure, either in the camp or the palace, Napoleon appears as a man of genius directing on abstract questions the native appetite for truth and the impatience of words he was wont to show in war. He could enjoy every play of invention, a romance, a *bon mot*, as well as a stratagem in a campaign. He delighted to fascinate Josephine and her ladies, in a dim-lighted apartment, by the terrors of a fiction to which his voice and dramatic power lent every addition.

I call Napoleon the agent or attorney of the middle class of modern society; of the throng who fill the markets, shops, counting-houses, manufactories, ships, of the modern world, aiming to be rich. He was the agitator, the destroyer of prescription, the internal improver, the liberal, the radical, the inventor of means, the opener of doors and markets, the subverter of monopoly and abuse. Of course the rich and aristocratic did not like him. England the centre of capital, and Rome and Austria, centres of tradition and genealogy, op-

posed him. The consternation of the dull and conservative classes, the terror of the foolish old men and old women of the Roman conclave, who in their despair took hold of anything, and would cling to red-hot iron, — the vain attempts of statist to amuse and deceive him, of the emperor of Austria to bribe him; and the instinct of the young, ardent, and active men every where, which pointed him out as the giant of the middle class, make his history bright and commanding. He had the virtues of the masses of his constituents: he had also their vices. I am sorry that the brilliant picture has its reverse. But that is the fatal quality which we discover in our pursuit of wealth, that it is treacherous, and is bought by the breaking or weakening of the sentiments; and it is inevitable that we should find the same fact in the history of this champion, who proposed to himself simply a brilliant career, without any stipulation or scruple concerning the means.

Bonaparte was singularly destitute of generous sentiments. The highest-placed individual in the most cultivated age and population of the world, — he has not the merit of common truth and honesty. He is unjust to his generals; egotistic and monopolizing; meanly stealing the credit of their great actions from Kellermann, from Bernadotte; intriguing to involve his faithful Junot in hopeless bankruptcy, in order to drive him to a distance from Paris, because the familiarity of his manners offends the new pride of his throne. He is a boundless liar. The official paper, his "Moniteur," and all his bulletins, are proverbs for saying what he wished to be believed; and worse, — he sat, in his premature old age, in his lonely island, coldly falsifying facts and dates and characters, and giving to history a theatrical *éclat*.<sup>53</sup> Like all Frenchmen he has a passion for stage effect. Every action that breathes of generosity is poisoned by this calculation. His star, his love of glory, his doctrine of the immortality of the soul, are all French. "I must dazzle and astonish. If I were to give the liberty of the press, my power could not last three days."

To make a great noise is his favorite design. "A great reputation is a great noise: the more there is made, the farther off it is heard. Laws, institutions, monuments, nations, all fall; but the noise continues, and resounds in after ages." His doctrine of immortality is simply fame. His theory of influence is not flattering. "There are two levers for moving men, — interest and fear. Love is a silly infatuation, depend upon it. Friendship is but a name. I love nobody. I do not even love my brothers: perhaps Joseph <sup>54</sup> a little, from habit, and because he is my elder; and Duroc, I love him too; but why? — because his character pleases me: he is stern and resolute, and I believe the fellow never shed a tear. For my part I know very well that I have no true friends. As long as I continue to be what I am, I may have as many pretended friends as I please. Leave sensibility to women; but men should be firm in heart and purpose, or they should have nothing to do with war and government." He was thoroughly unscrupulous. He would steal, slander, assassinate, drown, and poison, as his interest dictated. He had no generosity, but mere vulgar hatred; he was intensely selfish; he was perfidious; he cheated at cards; he was a prodigious gossip, and opened letters, and delighted in his infamous police, and rubbed his hands with joy when he had intercepted some morsel of intelligence concerning the men and women about him, boasting that "he knew everything"; and interfered with the cutting the dresses of the women; and listened after the hurrahs and the compliments of the street, incognito. His manners were coarse. He treated women with low familiarity. He had the habit of pulling their ears and pinching their cheeks when he was in good humor, and of pulling the ears and whiskers of men, and of striking and horse-play with them, to his last days. It does not appear that he listened at key-holes, or at least that he was caught at it. In short, when you have penetrated through all the circles of power and splendor, you were not dealing with a gentleman, at last; but

with an impostor and a rogue; and he fully deserves the epithet of *Jupiter Scapin*,<sup>55</sup> or a sort of Scamp Jupiter.

In describing the two parties into which modern society divides itself, — the democrat and the conservative, — I say, Bonaparte represents the Democrat, or the party of men of business, against the stationary or conservative party. I omitted then to say, what is material to the statement, namely that these two parties differ only as young and old. The democrat is a young conservative; the conservative is an old democrat. The aristocrat is the democrat ripe and gone to seed; — because both parties stand on the one ground of the supreme value of property, which one endeavors to get, and the other to keep. Bonaparte may be said to represent the whole history of this party, its youth and its age; yes, and with poetic justice its fate, in his own. The counter-revolution, the counter-party, still waits for its organ and representative, in a lover and a man of truly public and universal aims.

Here was an experiment, under the most favorable conditions, of the powers of intellect without conscience. Never was such a leader so endowed and so weaponed; never leader found such aids and followers. And what was the result of this vast talent and power, of these immense armies, burned cities, squandered treasures, immolated millions of men, of this demoralized Europe? It came to no result. All passed away like the smoke of his artillery, and left no trace. He left France smaller, poorer, feebler than he found it; and the whole contest for freedom was to be begun again. The attempt was in principle suicidal. France served him with life and limb and estate, as long as it could identify its interest with him; but when men saw that after victory was another war;<sup>56</sup> after the destruction of armies, new conscriptions; and they who had toiled so desperately were never nearer to the reward, — they could not spend what they had earned, nor repose on their down-beds, nor strut in their châteaux, — they deserted him. Men found that his absorb-

ing egotism was deadly to all other men. It resembled the torpedo, which inflicts a succession of shocks on any one who takes hold of it, producing spasms which contract the muscles of the hand, so that the man cannot open his fingers; and the animal inflicts new and more violent shocks, until he paralyzes and kills his victim. So this exorbitant egotist narrowed, improverished, and absorbed the power and existence of those who served him; and the universal cry of France and of Europe in 1814 was, "Enough of him"; "Assez de Bonaparte."

It was not Bonaparte's fault. He did all that in him lay to live and thrive without moral principle. It was the nature of things, the eternal law of man and of the world which balked and ruined him; and the result, in a million experiments, will be the same. Every experiment, by multitudes or by individuals, that has a sensual and selfish aim, will fail. The pacific Fourier<sup>57</sup> will be as inefficient as the pernicious Napoleon. As long as our civilization is essentially one of property, of fences, of exclusiveness, it will be mocked by delusions. Our riches will leave us sick; there will be bitterness in our laughter, and our wine will burn our mouth. Only that good profits which we can taste with all doors open, and which serves all men.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A Franciscan monk who practiced the more austere rule of Matteo di Bassi, whose followers wore pointed hoods, known as "capuches," which gave this group their name. Later a separate order.

<sup>2</sup> *Mirabeau*, Honoré Gabriel Victor Riquetti, Comte de, leader of the French revolutionists, noted for his oratory (1749-1791).

<sup>3</sup> *Dumont*, Pierre Étienne Louis, supporter of Mirabeau. He became disgusted with the violence and cruelty of the revolutionists and withdrew to England (1759-1829).

<sup>4</sup> The legislative body that governed France (1792-1795) and abolished royalty.

<sup>5</sup> *Lord Elgin*, Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin, British ambassador and antiquarian, responsible for the collection of



Greek ornamental sculpture and friezes known as the Elgin Marbles (1766-1841).

<sup>6</sup> The French form; the English form is *savantes*, "learned men."

<sup>7</sup> *Fontanes*, Louis, Marquis de, French poet and statesman (1757-1821).

<sup>8</sup> *Necker*, Jacques, French financier and statesman, father of Madame de Staël (1732-1804).

<sup>9</sup> The governing committee of five men as provided by the French constitution of 1795 in the new republic.

<sup>10</sup> *General Clarke*, Henri Jacques Guillaume, Count of Hunebourg, Duke of Feltre, marshal of France (1765-1818).

<sup>11</sup> *General Junot*, Androche, Duke of Abrantes, marshal of France (1771-1813).

<sup>12</sup> December 2, 1805, between Napoleon and allied Austrian and Russian forces. Austerlitz is a town of Moravia, now a part of Czecho-Slovakia.

<sup>13</sup> A town in Germany.

<sup>14</sup> October 14, 1806, against the Prussians. Jena is situated on the Saale River in the duchy of Saxe-Weimar, Germany.

<sup>15</sup> A village in northern Italy where Napoleon won a victory over the Austrians, November 15-17, 1796.

<sup>16</sup> General hand-to-hand fight.

<sup>17</sup> A town in Brescia, province of Lombardy, Italy, where the Austrians were defeated by Napoleon in 1796.

<sup>18</sup> *Las Casas*, Marie Joseph Emmanuel Augustin Dieudonne, Comte de, French naval captain and historian, with Napoleon at St. Helena (1766-1842).

<sup>19</sup> A village in Pavia province in northern Italy.

<sup>20</sup> *Kellermann*, François Christophe, Duke of Valmy, distinguished French general (1735-1820).

<sup>21</sup> One of the royal palaces, located near the Louvre, built by Catherine de Medici, 1564. At one time used as a parliament house. Destroyed during the Commune, 1871. Gardens on the site since 1883.

<sup>22</sup> *Bourrienne*, Louis Antoine Favelet de, French politician and writer, at one time a friend of Napoleon; wrote famous *Memoirs of Bourrienne* (1769-1834).

<sup>23</sup> Mythical hero, king of Ithaca, engaged in the Trojan War, hero of Homer's *Odyssey*.

<sup>24</sup> William Henry of Nassau, Prince of Orange, joint sovereign with Mary II of England (1650-1702).

<sup>25</sup> The family name of the royal family descended from Louis IX of France; deposed during the French Revolution.

<sup>26</sup> British Island in the south Atlantic where Napoleon was exiled, 1815-1821.

<sup>27</sup> Wife of an elderly merchant at St. Helena and mother of

two young daughters with whom Napoleon played at blind man's buff. Napoleon often spent his evenings at the Balcombe home.

<sup>28</sup> Situated at Paris, one of the largest groups of buildings in the world, a palace in ancient times. Now houses many great collections of art as well as public offices.

<sup>29</sup> A name given members of the "Society of Friends of the Constitution," a revolutionary group, because the meeting place was in an old Jacobin convent in Paris. This society organized the Reign of Terror.

<sup>30</sup> One of the black marks against Napoleon. The duke was the last of the Bourbon family. He was executed at Vincennes, March, 1804, on suspicion of conspiracy. This act turned many people against Napoleon.

<sup>31</sup> Refers to the attack of the common mob from the Faubourgs (suburbs), on the convention which had met for the reorganization of the government on less radical lines. The mob was repelled but not without much bloodshed, and France came under the control of the middle class.

<sup>32</sup> *Dandolo*, Enrico, blind doge of Venice (ca. 1108-1205).

<sup>33</sup> *Melzi*, Francesco, friend and pupil of Leonardo da Vinci.

<sup>34</sup> *Fox*, Charles James, English statesman and orator (1749-1806).

<sup>35</sup> *Pitt*, William, English statesman and orator (1759-1806).

<sup>36</sup> *Carnot*, Lazare Nicholas Marguerite, French general and statesman (1753-1853).

<sup>37</sup> *Lafayette*, See page 22, note 40.

<sup>38</sup> *Bernadotte*, Jean Baptiste Jules, marshal of France. Charles XIV, king of Sweden and Norway (1764-1844).

<sup>39</sup> All were officers under Napoleon.

<sup>40</sup> Napoleon is using the nautical term, of course, as applied to the efficiency of a ship.

<sup>41</sup> Roman name of an ancient city and seaport of Syria.

<sup>42</sup> The modern name for Ptolemais.

<sup>43</sup> A manufacturing town in East Prussia where Napoleon concluded a treaty of peace with the sovereigns of Russia and Prussia, 1807.

<sup>44</sup> A district in Saxony.

<sup>45</sup> Marie Josephe-Rose Tasher de la Pagèrie, empress of France, widow of Viscount Beauharnais, married Napoleon I, 1796; divorced, 1809 (1763-1814).

<sup>46</sup> *Monge*, Gaspard, Count of Peluse, celebrated mathematician, the creator of descriptive geometry (1746-1818).

<sup>47</sup> *Berthollet*, Claude Louis de, French chemist (1748-1822).

<sup>48</sup> *Corvisart-Desmarests*, Jean Nicholas, French physician (1755-1821).

<sup>49</sup> *Antonomarchi* (Antommarchi) Francesco, Napoleon's own surgeon at St. Helena.

<sup>50</sup> Another of Napoleon's generals, who shared his exile and

wrote accounts of Napoleon's life at St. Helena (1782-1853).

<sup>51</sup> Also on Napoleon's staff. He coöperated with Montholon in publishing Napoleon's *Memoirs*.

<sup>52</sup> *Marshal Wurmser*, Dagobert Sigismund (Count), Austrian general (1724-1797).

<sup>53</sup> Showiness of achievement, brilliancy of conduct.

<sup>54</sup> The brother of Napoleon. He became king of Naples in 1806 and of Spain in 1808. He lived in the United States 1815-1830 (1768-1854).

<sup>55</sup> Scapin is a comic rogue in Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. The Abbé de Pradt called Napoleon by this nickname.

<sup>56</sup> Emerson saw truly what the world at large is only beginning to see, that wars are not the bases for true peace.

<sup>57</sup> See page 125, note 48.

## GÖETHE; OR, THE WRITER

I FIND a provision in the constitution of the world for the writer, or secretary, who is to report the doings of the miraculous spirit of life that everywhere throbs and works. His office is a reception of the facts into the mind, and then a selection of the eminent and characteristic experiences.

Nature will be reported. All things are engaged in writing their history. The planet, the pebble, goes attended by its shadow. The rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain; the river its channel in the soil; the animal its bones in the stratum; the fern and leaf their modest epitaph in the coal. The falling drop makes its sculpture in the sand or the stone. Not a foot steps into the snow or along the ground, but prints, in characters more or less lasting, a map of its march. Every act of the man inscribes itself in the memories of his fellows and in his own manners and face. The air is full of sounds; the sky, of tokens; the ground is all memoranda and signatures, and every object covered over with hints which speak to the intelligent.

In nature, this self-registration is incessant, and the narrative is the print of the seal. It neither exceeds nor comes short of the fact. But nature strives upward; and, in man, the report is something more than print of the seal. It is a new and finer form of the original. The record is alive, as that which is recorded is alive. In man, the memory is a kind of looking-glass, which, having received the images of surrounding objects, is touched with life, and disposes them in a new order. The facts do not lie in it inert; but some subside and

others shine; so that soon we have a new picture, composed of the eminent experiences. The man co-operates. He loves to communicate; and that which is for him to say lies as a load on his heart until it is delivered. But, besides the universal joy of conversation, some men are born with exalted powers for this second creation. Men are born to write. The gardener saves every slip and seed and peach-stone: his vocation is to be a planter of plants. Not less does the writer attend his affair. Whatever he beholds or experiences, comes to him as a model and sits for its picture. He counts it all nonsense that they say that some things are undescribable. He believes that all that can be thought can be written, first or last; and he would report the Holy Ghost, or attempt it. Nothing so broad, so subtle, or so dear, but comes therefore commended to his pen, and he will write. In his eyes, a man is the faculty of reporting, and the universe is the possibility of being reported. In conversation, in calamity, he finds new materials; as our German poet said, "some god gave me the power to paint what I suffer."<sup>1</sup> He draws his rents from rage and pain. By acting rashly, he buys the power of talking wisely. Vexations, and a tempest of passion, only fill his sails; as the good Luther<sup>2</sup> writes, "When I am angry, I can pray well, and preach well": and, if we knew the genesis of fine strokes of eloquence, they might recall the complaisance of Sultan Amurath,<sup>3</sup> who struck off some Persian heads, that his physician, Vesalius,<sup>4</sup> might see the spasms in the muscles of the neck. His failures are the preparation of his victories. A new thought or a crisis of passion apprises him that all that he has yet learned and written is exoteric, — is not the fact, but some rumor of the fact. What then? Does he throw away the pen? No; he begins again to describe in the new light which has shined on him, — if, by some means, he may yet save some true word. Nature conspires. Whatever can be thought can be spoken, and still rises for utterance, though to rude and stammering organs. If they cannot compass it, it

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waits and works, until at last it moulds them to its perfect will, and is articulated.

This striving after imitative expression, which one meets everywhere, is significant of the aim of nature, but is mere stenography. There are higher degrees, and nature has more splendid endowments for those whom she elects to a superior office; for the class of scholars or writers, who see connection where the multitude see fragments, and who are impelled to exhibit the facts in order, and so to supply the axis on which the frame of things turns. Nature has dearly at heart the formation of the speculative man, or scholar. It is an end never lost sight of, and is prepared in the original casting of things. He is no permissive or accidental appearance, but an organic agent, one of the estates of the realm, provided and prepared from of old and from everlasting, in the knitting and contexture of things. Presentiments, impulses, cheer him. There is a certain heat in the breast which attends the perception of a primary truth, which is the shining of the spiritual sun down into the shaft of the mine. Every thought which dawns on the mind, in the moment of its emergency announces its own rank, — whether it is some whimsy, or whether it is a power.

If he have his incitements, there is, on the other side, invitation and need enough of his gift. Society has, at all times, the same want, namely of one sane man with adequate powers of expression to hold up each object of monomania in its right relations. The ambitious and mercenary bring their last new mumbo-jumbo,<sup>5</sup> whether tariff, Texas, railroad, Romanism, mesmerism,<sup>6</sup> or California; and, by detaching the object from its relations, easily succeed in making it seen in a glare; and a multitude go mad about it, and they are not to be reprov'd or cured by the opposite multitude who are kept from this particular insanity by an equal frenzy on another crochet. But let one man have the comprehensive eye that can replace this isolated prodigy in its right neighborhood and bearings, —

the illusion vanishes, and the returning reason of the community thanks the reason of the monitor.

The scholar is the man of the ages, but he must also wish with other men to stand well with his contemporaries. But there is a certain ridicule, among superficial people, thrown on the scholars or clerisy, which is of no import unless the scholar heed it. In this country, the emphasis of conversation and of public opinion commends the practical man; and the solid portion of the community is named with significant respect in every circle. Our people are of Bonaparte's opinion concerning ideologists. Ideas are subversive of social order and comfort, and at last make a fool of the possessor. It is believed the ordering a cargo of goods from New York to Smyrna, or the running up and down to procure a company of subscribers to set a-going five or ten thousand spindles, or the negotiations of a caucus and the practising on the prejudices and facility of country-people to secure their votes in November, — is practical and commendable.

If I were to compare action of a much higher strain with a life of contemplation, I should not venture to pronounce with much confidence in favor of the former. Mankind have such a deep stake in inward illumination, that there is much to be said by the hermit or monk in defence of his life of thought and prayer. A certain partiality, a headiness and loss of balance, is the tax which all action must pay. Act, if you like, — but you do it at your peril. Men's actions are too strong for them. Show me a man who has acted and who has not been the victim and slave of his action. What they have done commits and enforces them to do the same again. The first act, which was to be an experiment, becomes a sacrament. The fiery reformer embodies his aspiration in some rite or covenant, and he and his friends cleave to the form and lose the aspiration. The Quaker has established Quakerism, the Shaker<sup>7</sup> has established his monastery and his dance; and although each prates of spirit, there is no spirit, but repeti-

tion, which is anti-spiritual. But where are his new things of to-day? In actions of enthusiasm<sup>8</sup> this drawback appears, but in those lower activities, which have no higher aim than to make us more comfortable and more cowardly; in actions of cunning, actions that steal and lie, actions that divorce the speculative from the practical faculty and put a ban on reason and sentiment, there is nothing else but drawback and negation. The Hindoos write in their sacred books, "Children only, and not the learned, speak of the speculative and the practical faculties as two. They are but one, for both obtain the selfsame end, and the place which is gained by the followers of the one is gained by the followers of the other. That man seeth, who seeth that the speculative and the practical doctrines are one." For great action must draw on the spiritual nature. The measure of action is the sentiment from which it proceeds. The greatest action may easily be one of the most private circumstances.

This disparagement will not come from the leaders, but from inferior persons. The robust gentlemen who stand at the head of the practical class share the ideas of the time, and have too much sympathy with the speculative class. It is not from men excellent in any kind that disparagement of any other is to be looked for. With such, Talleyrand's<sup>9</sup> question is ever the main one; not, is he rich? is he committed? is he well-meaning? has he this or that faculty? is he of the movement? is he of the establishment? — but, *Is he anybody?* does he stand for something? He must be good of his kind. That is all that Talleyrand, all that State-street,<sup>10</sup> all that the common sense of mankind asks. Be real and admirable, not as we know, but as you know. Able men do not care in what kind a man is able, so only that he is able. A master likes a master, and does not stipulate whether it be orator, artist, craftsman, or king.

Society has really no graver interest than the well-being of the literary class. And it is not to be denied that men are



cordial in their recognition and welcome of intellectual accomplishments. Still the writer does not stand with us on any commanding ground. I think this to be his own fault. A pound passes for a pound. There have been times when he was a sacred person: he wrote Bibles,<sup>11</sup> the first hymns, the codes, the epics, tragic songs, Sibylline<sup>12</sup> verses, Chaldean<sup>13</sup> oracles, Laconian<sup>14</sup> sentences, inscribed on temple walls. Every word was true, and woke the nations to new life. He wrote without levity and without choice. Every word was carved before his eyes into the earth and sky; and the sun and stars were only letters of the same purport and of no more necessity. But how can he be honored when he does not honor himself; when he loses himself in the crowd; when he is no longer the lawgiver, but the sycophant, ducking to the giddy opinion of a reckless public; when he must sustain with shameless advocacy some bad government, or must bark, all the year round, in opposition; or write conventional criticism, or profligate novels; or at any rate write without thought, and without recurrence by day and by night to the sources of inspiration?

Some reply to these questions may be furnished by looking over the list of men of literary genius in our age. Among these, no more instructive name occurs than that of Gœthe to represent the power and duties of the scholar or writer.

I described Bonaparte as a representative on the popular external life and aims of the nineteenth century. Its other half, its poet, is Gœthe, a man quite domesticated in the century, breathing its air, enjoying its fruits, impossible at any earlier time, and taking away, by his colossal parts, the reproach of weakness which but for him would lie on the intellectual works of the period. He appears at a time when a general culture has spread itself and has smoothed down all sharp individual traits; when, in the absence of heroic characters, a social comfort and co-operation have come in. There is no poet, but scores of poetic writers; no Columbus,

but hundreds of post-captains, with transit-telescope, barometer, and concentrated soup and pemmican;<sup>15</sup> no Demosthenes,<sup>16</sup> no Chatham,<sup>17</sup> but any number of clever parliamentary and forensic debaters; no prophet or saint, but colleges of divinity; no learned man, but learned societies, a cheap press, reading-rooms, and book-clubs without number. There was never such a miscellany of facts. The world extends itself like American trade. We conceive Greek or Roman life, life in the middle ages, to be a simple and comprehensible affair; but modern life to respect a multitude of things, which is distracting.

Gœthe was the philosopher of this multiplicity; hundred-handed, Argus-eyed,<sup>18</sup> able and happy to cope with this rolling miscellany of facts and sciences, and by his own versatility to dispose of them with ease; a manly mind, unembarrassed by the variety of coats of convention with which life had got encrusted, easily able by his subtlety to pierce these and to draw his strength from nature, with which he lived in full communion. What is strange too, he lived in a small town, in a petty state, in a defeated state, and in a time when Germany played no such leading part in the world's affairs as to swell the bosom of her sons with any metropolitan pride, such as might have cheered a French, or English, or once, a Roman or Attic genius. Yet there is no trace of provincial limitation in his muse. He is not a debtor to his position, but was born with a free and controlling genius.

The Helena, or the second part of Faust,<sup>19</sup> is a philosophy of literature set in poetry; the work of one who found himself the master of histories, mythologies, philosophies, sciences, and national literatures, in the encyclopædical manner in which modern erudition, with its international intercourse of the whole earth's population, researches into Indian, Etruscan,<sup>20</sup> and all Cyclopæan<sup>21</sup> arts; geology, chemistry, astronomy; and every one of these kingdoms assuming a certain aerial and poetic character, by reason of the multitude. One

looks at a king with reverence; but if one should chance to be at a congress of kings, the eye would take liberties with the peculiarities of each. These are not wild miraculous songs, but elaborate forms to which the poet has confided the results of eighty years of observation. This reflective and critical wisdom makes the poem more truly the flower of this time. It dates itself. Still he is a poet, — poet of a prouder laurel than any contemporary, and, under this plague of microscopes (for he seems to see out of every pore of his skin), strikes the harp with a hero's strength and grace.

The wonder of the book is its superior intelligence. In the menstruum <sup>22</sup> of this man's wit, the past and the present ages, and their religions, politics, and modes of thinking, are dissolved into archetypes and ideas. What new mythologies sail through his head! The Greeks said that Alexander went as far as Chaos; Gœthe went, only the other day, as far; and one step farther he hazarded, and brought himself safe back.

There is a heart-cheering freedom in his speculation. The immense horizon which journeys with us lends its majesty to trifles and to matters of convenience and necessity, as to solemn and festal performances. He was the soul of his century. If that was learned, and had become, by population, compact organization, and drill of parts, one great Exploring Expedition, accumulating a glut of facts and fruits too fast for any hitherto-existing savants to classify, — this man's mind had ample chambers for the distribution of all. He had a power to unite the detached atoms again by their own law. He has clothed our modern existence with poetry. Amid littleness and detail, he detected the Genius of life, the old cunning Proteus, nestling close beside us, and showed that the dulness and prose we ascribe to the age was only another of his masks: —

“His very flight is presence in disguise:”

— that he had put off a gay uniform for a fatigue dress, and

was not a whit less vivacious or rich in Liverpool or the Hague than once in Rome or Antioch. He sought him in public squares and main streets, in boulevards and hotels; and, in the solidest kingdom of routine and the senses, he showed the lurking dæmonic power; that, in actions of routine, a thread of mythology and fable spins itself: and this, by tracing the pedigree of every usage and practice, every institution, utensil, and means, home to its origin in the structure of man. He had an extreme impatience of conjecture and of rhetoric. "I have guesses enough of my own; if a man write a book, let him set down only what he knows." He writes in the plainest and lowest tone, omitting a great deal more than he writes, and putting ever a thing for a word. He has explained the distinction between the antique and the modern spirit and art. He has defined art, its scope and laws. He has said the best things about nature that ever were said. He treats nature as the old philosophers, as the seven wise masters<sup>23</sup> did, — and, with whatever loss of French tabulation and dissection, poetry and humanity remain to us; and they have some doctoral skill. Eyes are better on the whole than telescopes or microscopes. He has contributed a key to many parts of nature, through the rare turn for unity and simplicity in his mind. Thus Gœthe suggested the leading idea of modern botany, that a leaf or the eye of a leaf is the unit of botany, and that every part of the plant is only a transformed leaf to meet a new condition; and, by varying the conditions, a leaf may be converted into any other organ, and any other organ into a leaf. In like manner, in osteology, he assumed that one vertebra of the spine might be considered the unit of the skeleton: the head was only the uppermost vertebræ transformed. "The plant goes from knot to knot, closing, at last, with the flower and the seed. So the tape-worm, the caterpillar, goes from knot to knot and closes with the head. Men and the higher animals are built up through the vertebræ, the powers being concentrated in the head." In optics

again he rejected the artificial theory of seven colors, and considered that every color was the mixture of light and darkness in new proportions. It is really of very little consequence what topic he writes upon. He sees at every pore, and has a certain gravitation towards truth. He will realize what you say. He hates to be trifled with and to be made to say over again some old wife's fable that has had possession of men's faith these thousand years. He may as well see if it is true as another. He sifts it. I am here, he would say, to be the measure and judge of these things. Why should I take them on trust? And therefore what he says of religion, of passion, of marriage, of manners, property, of paper money, of periods of beliefs, of omens, of luck, or whatever else, refuses to be forgotten.

Take the most remarkable example that could occur of this tendency to verify every term in popular use. The Devil had played an important part in mythology in all times. Gæthe would have no word that does not cover a thing. The same measure will still serve: "I have never heard of any crime which I might not have committed." So he flies at the throat of this imp. He shall be real; he shall be modern; he shall be European; he shall dress like a gentleman and accept the manners, and walk in the streets, and be well initiated in the life of Vienna and of Heidelberg in 1820, — or he shall not exist. Accordingly, he stripped him of mythologic gear, of horns, cloven foot, harpoon tail, brimstone and blue-fire, and, instead of looking in books and pictures, looked for him in his own mind, in every shade of coldness, selfishness, and unbelief that, in crowds, or in solitude, darkens over the human thought, — and found that the portrait gained reality and terror by everything he added and by everything he took away. He found that the essence of this hobgoblin which had hovered in shadow about the habitations of men ever since they were men, was pure intellect, applied, — as always there is a tendency, — to the service of the senses: and he flung

into literature, in his Mephistopheles,<sup>24</sup> the first organic figure that has been added for some ages, and which will remain as long as the Prometheus.<sup>25</sup>

I have no design to enter into any analysis of his numerous works. They consist of translations, criticism, dramas, lyric, and every other description of poems, literary journals, and portraits of distinguished men. Yet I cannot omit to specify the "Wilhelm Meister."

"Wilhelm Meister" is a novel in every sense, the first of its kind, called by its admirers the only delineation of modern society, — as if other novels, those of Scott for example, dealt with costume and condition, this with the spirit of life. It is a book over which some veil is still drawn. It is read by very intelligent persons with wonder and delight. It is preferred by some such to Hamlet, as a work of genius. I suppose no book of this century can compare with it in its delicious sweetness, so new, so provoking to the mind, gratifying it with so many and so solid thoughts, just insights into life and manners and characters; so many good hints for the conduct of life, so many unexpected glimpses into a higher sphere, and never a trace of rhetoric or dulness. A very provoking book to the curiosity of young men of genius, but a very unsatisfactory one. Lovers of light reading, those who look in it for the entertainment they find in a romance, are disappointed. On the other hand, those who begin it with the higher hope to read in it a worthy history of genius, and the just award of the laurel to its toils and denials, have also reason to complain. We had an English romance here, not long ago, professing to embody the hope of a new age and to unfold the political hope of the party called "Young England," — in which the only reward of virtue is a seat in parliament, and a peerage. Gœthe's romance has a conclusion as lame and immoral. George Sand,<sup>26</sup> in *Consuelo* and its continuation, has sketched a truer and more dignified picture. In the progress of the story, the characters of the hero and heroine expand at a rate that shivers

the porcelain chess-table of aristocratic convention: they quit the society and habits of their rank, they lose their wealth, they become the servants of great ideas and of the most generous social ends; until at last the hero, who is the centre and fountain of an association for the rendering of the noblest benefits to the human race, no longer answers to his own titled name: it sounds foreign and remote in his ear. — “I am only man,” he says; “I breathe and work for man”; and this in poverty and extreme sacrifices. Gæthe’s hero, on the contrary, has so many weaknesses and impurities and keeps such bad company, that the sober English public, when the book was translated, were disgusted. And yet it is so crammed with wisdom, with knowledge of the world and with knowledge of laws; the persons so truly and subtly drawn, and with such few strokes, and not a word too much, — the book remains ever so new and unexhausted, that we must even let it go its way and be willing to get what good from it we can, assured that it has only begun its office, and has millions of readers yet to serve.

The argument is the passage of a democrat to the aristocracy, using both words in their best sense. And this passage is not made in any mean or creeping way, but through the hall door. Nature and character assist, and the rank is made real by sense and probity in the nobles. No generous youth can escape this charm of reality in the book, so that it is highly stimulating to intellect and courage.

The ardent and holy Novalis<sup>27</sup> characterized the book as “thoroughly modern and prosaic; the romantic is completely levelled in it; so is the poetry of nature; the wonderful. The book treats only of the ordinary affairs of men: it is a poetized civic and domestic story. The wonderful in it is expressly treated as fiction and enthusiastic dreaming”: — and yet, what is also characteristic, Novalis soon returned to this book, and it remained his favorite reading to the end of his life.

What distinguishes Gœthe for French and English readers' is a property which he shares with his nation, — a habitual reference to interior truth. In England and in America there is a respect for talent; and, if it is exerted in support of any ascertained or intelligible interest or party, or in regular opposition to any, the public is satisfied. In France there is even a greater delight in intellectual brilliancy for its own sake. And in all these countries, men of talent write from talent. It is enough if the understanding is occupied, the taste propitiated, — so many columns, so many hours, filled in a lively and creditable way. The German intellect wants the French sprightliness, the fine practical understanding of the English, and the American adventure; but it has a certain probity, which never rests in a superficial performance, but asks steadily, *To what end?* A German public asks for a controlling sincerity. Here is activity of thought; but what is it for? What does the man mean? Whence, whence all these thoughts?

Talent alone cannot make a writer. There must be a man behind the book; a personality which by birth and quality is pledged to the doctrines there set forth, and which exists to see and state things so, and not otherwise; holding things because they are things. If he cannot rightly express himself to-day, the same things subsist and will open themselves to-morrow. There lies the burden on his mind, — the burden of truth to be declared, — more or less understood; and it constitutes his business and calling in the world to see those facts through, and to make them known. What signifies that he trips and stammers; that his voice is harsh or hissing; that his method or his tropes are inadequate? That message will find method and imagery, articulation and melody. Though he were dumb it would speak. If not, — if there be no such God's word in the man, — what care we how adroit, how fluent, how brilliant he is?

It makes a great difference to the force of any sentence



whether there be a man behind it or no. In the learned journal, in the influential newspaper, I discern no form; only some irresponsible shadow; oftener some monied corporation, or some dangler who hopes, in the mask and robes of his paragraph, to pass for somebody. But through every clause and part of speech of a right book I meet the eyes of the most determined of men; his force and terror inundate every word; the commas and dashes are alive; so that the writing is athletic and nimble, — can go far and live long.

In England and America, one may be an adept in the writings of a Greek or Latin poet, without any poetic taste or fire. That a man has spent years on Plato and Proclus,<sup>28</sup> does not afford a presumption that he holds heroic opinions, or undervalues the fashions of his town. But the German nation must have the most ridiculous good faith on these subjects: the student, out of the lecture-room, still broods on the lessons; and the professor cannot divest himself of the fancy that the truths of philosophy have some application to Berlin and Munich. This earnestness enables them to out-see men of much more talent. Hence, almost all the valuable distinctions which are current in higher conversation have been derived to us from Germany. But whilst men distinguished for wit and learning, in England and France, adopt their study and their side with a certain levity, and are not understood to be very deeply engaged, from grounds of character, to the topic or the part they espouse, — Gœthe, the head and body of the German nation, does not speak from talent, but the truth shines through: he is very wise, though his talent often veils his wisdom. However excellent his sentence is, he has somewhat better in view. It awakens my curiosity. He has the formidable independence which converse with truth gives: hear you, or forbear, his fact abides; and your interest in the writer is not confined to his story and he dismissed from memory when he has performed his task creditably, as a baker when he has left his loaf; but his work is the least part

of him. The old Eternal Genius who built the world has confided himself more to this man than to any other.

I dare not say that Gœthe ascended to the highest grounds from which genius has spoken. He has not worshipped the highest unity; he is incapable of a self-surrender to the moral sentiment. There are nobler strains in poetry than any he has sounded. There are writers poorer in talent, whose tone is purer and more touches the heart. Gœthe can never be dear to men. His is not even the devotion to pure truth; but to truth for the sake of culture. He has no aims less large than the conquest of universal nature, of universal truth, to be his portion: a man not to be bribed, nor deceived, nor overawed; of a stoical self-command and self-denial, and having one test for all men, — *What can you teach me?* All possessions are valued by him for that only; rank, privileges, health, time, Being itself.

He is the type of culture, the amateur of all arts, and sciences, and events; artistic, but not artist; spiritual, but not spiritualist. There is nothing he had not right to know: there is no weapon in the army of universal genius he did not take into his hand, but with peremptory heed that he should not be for a moment prejudiced by his instruments. He lays a ray of light under every fact, and between himself and his dearest property. From him nothing was hid, nothing withholden. The lurking dæmons sat to him, and the saint who saw the dæmons; and the metaphysical elements took form. "Piety itself is no aim, but only a means whereby through purest inward peace, we may attain to highest culture." And his penetration of every secret of the fine arts will make Gœthe still more statuesque. His affections help him, like women employed by Cicero<sup>29</sup> to worm out the secret of conspirators. Enmities he has none. Enemy of him you may be, — if so you shall teach him aught which your good-will cannot, were it only what experience will accrue from your ruin. Enemy and welcome, but enemy on high terms. He cannot

hate anybody; his time is worth too much. Temperamental antagonisms may be suffered, but like feuds of emperors, who fight dignifiedly across kingdoms.

His autobiography, under the title of "Poetry and Truth Out of My Life," is the expression of the idea, — now familiar to the world through the German mind, but a novelty to England, Old and New, when that book appeared, — that a man exists for culture; not for what he can accomplish, but for what can be accomplished in him. The reaction of things on the man is the only noteworthy result. An intellectual man can see himself as a third person; therefore his faults and delusions interest him equally with his successes. Though he wishes to prosper in affairs, he wishes more to know the history and destiny of man; whilst the clouds of egotists drifting about him are only interested in a low success.

This idea reigns in the "Dichtung und Wahrheit,"<sup>30</sup> and directs the selection of the incidents; and nowise the external importance of events, the rank of the personages, or the bulk of incomes. Of course the book affords slender materials for what would be reckoned with us a "Life of Goethe"; — few dates, no correspondence, no details of offices or employments, no light on his marriage; and, a period of ten years, that should be the most active in his life, after his settlement at Weimar,<sup>31</sup> is sunk in silence. Meantime certain love affairs, that came to nothing, as people say, have the strangest importance: he crowds us with detail: — certain whimsical opinions, cosmogonies, and religions of his own invention, and especially his relations to remarkable minds and to critical epochs of thought: — these he magnifies. His "Daily and Yearly Journal," his "Italian Travels," his "Campaign in France," and the historical part of his "Theory of Colors," have the same interest. In the last, he rapidly notices Kepler,<sup>32</sup> Roger Bacon,<sup>33</sup> Galileo,<sup>34</sup> Newton,<sup>35</sup> Voltaire,<sup>36</sup> etc.; and the charm of this portion of the book consists in the simplest statement of the relation betwixt these grandees of

European scientific history and himself; the mere drawing of the lines from Gœthe to Kepler, from Gœthe to Bacon, from Gœthe to Newton. The drawing of the line is for the time and person, a solution of the formidable problem, and gives pleasure when Iphigenia<sup>37</sup> and Faust do not, without any cost of invention comparable to that of Iphigenia and Faust.

This lawgiver of art is not an artist. Was it that he knew too much, that his sight was microscopic and interfered with the just perspective, the seeing of the whole? He is fragmentary; a writer of occasional poems and of an encyclopædia of sentences. When he sits down to write a drama or a tale, he collects and sorts his observations from a hundred sides, and combines them into the body as fitly as he can. A great deal refuses to incorporate: this he adds loosely as letters of the parties, leaves from their journals, or the like. A great deal still is left that will not find any place. This the bookbinder alone can give any cohesion to; and hence, notwithstanding the looseness of many of his works, we have volumes of detached paragraphs, aphorisms, *Xenien*,<sup>38</sup> etc.

I suppose the worldly tone of his tales grew out of the calculations of self-culture. It was the infirmity of an admirable scholar, who loved the world out of gratitude; who knew where libraries, galleries, architecture, laboratories, savants, and leisure, were to be had, and who did not quite trust the compensations of poverty and nakedness. Socrates loved Athens; Montaigne, Paris; and Madame de Staël<sup>39</sup> said she was only vulnerable on that side (namely, of Paris). It has its favorable aspect. All the geniuses are usually so ill-assorted and sickly that one is ever wishing them somewhere else. We seldom see anybody who is not uneasy or afraid to live. There is a slight blush of shame on the cheek of good men and aspiring men, and a spice of caricature. But this man was entirely at home and happy in his century and the world. None was so fit to live, or more heartily enjoyed

the game. In this aim of culture, which is the genius of his works, is their power. The idea of absolute, eternal truth, without reference to my own enlargement by it, is higher. The surrender to the torrent of poetic inspiration is higher; but compared with any motives on which books are written in England and America, this is very truth, and has the power to inspire which belongs to truth. Thus has he brought back to a book some of its ancient might and dignity.

Goethe, coming into an over-civilized time and country, when original talent was oppressed under the load of books and mechanical auxiliaries and the distracting variety of claims, taught men how to dispose of this mountainous miscellany and make it subservient. I join Napoleon with him, as being both representatives of the impatience and reaction of nature against the *morgue* of conventions, — two stern realists, who, with their scholars, have severally set the axe at the root of the tree of cant and seeming, for this time and for all time. This cheerful laborer, with no external popularity or provocation, drawing his motive and his plan from his own breast, tasked himself with stints for a giant, and without relaxation or rest, except by alternating his pursuits, worked on for eighty years with the steadiness of his first zeal.

It is the last lesson of modern science that the highest simplicity of structure is produced, not by few elements, but by the highest complexity. Man is the most composite of all creatures; the wheel-insect, *volvax globator*,<sup>40</sup> is at the other extreme. We shall learn to draw rents and revenues from the immense patrimony of the old and recent ages. Goethe teaches courage, and the equivalence of all times; that the disadvantages of any epoch exist only to the faint-hearted. Genius hovers with his sunshine and music close by the darkest and deafest eras. No mortgage, no attainder, will hold on men or hours. The world is young: the former great men call to us affectionately. We too must write Bibles, to unite again the heavens and the earthly world. The secret of genius

is to suffer no fiction to exist for us; to realize all that we know; in the high refinement of modern life, in arts, in sciences, in books, in men, to exact good faith, reality, and a purpose; and first, last, midst, and without end, to honor every truth by use.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> From Gœthe's *Tasso*. The German version is:

“Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt,  
Gab mir ein Gott zu sagen, was ich leide.”

In 1822, forty years after the *Tasso* was written, these verses were used as a motto for Gœthe's poem, *Die Marienbader Elegie* (The Elegy of Marienbad). The editor is indebted to Dr. F. A. Wittmer, Washington and Jefferson College, for this reading.

<sup>2</sup> See page 23, note 51.

<sup>3</sup> There were Turkish Sultans by this name. Emerson probably refers to the fourth, known as “the Turkish Nero,” because of his cruelty.

<sup>4</sup> *Veselius*, Andreas, Italian physician, forced to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land as a penance by the Inquisition, because he dared to question some of the conclusions of the great Galen. It was while he was thus paying the price of his heresy that the sultan performed this experiment for his benefit (1514-1564).

<sup>5</sup> A name given to a practice among the Kaffirs of Africa by which a husband punishes a wife who is unruly by appearing at night in a fantastic disguise and scaring her into submission.

<sup>6</sup> The science of animal magnetism, used in the curing of diseases, a kind of hypnotism; named for its inventor, Friedrich Anton Mesmer (1733-1815).

<sup>7</sup> The Shakers were founded in America in 1774 by Anne Lee, though the term had previously been applied to a certain group of Quakers in England. They flourished until about 1830. Now they are almost extinct. They are communists, the sexes living in separate dormitories. The dance is the ecstatic ceremony which, no doubt, gave them their name.

<sup>8</sup> Here used in the philosophical sense of religious ecstasy or elevation of the soul.

<sup>9</sup> *Talleyrand-Perigord*, Charles Maurice de, brilliant French churchman and diplomatist, as well as writer (1754-1838).

<sup>10</sup> A famous street in Boston.

<sup>11</sup> That is, Emerson is implying the original sacredness of the writing art.

<sup>12</sup> A collection of oracles in Greek hexameters, first collected

on Mt. Ida in the time of Solon and later brought to Italy. Emerson is referring, no doubt, to ancient classical poetry.

<sup>13</sup> An oracle was a prophecy given out at the seat of the worship of some divinity by priests, usually in answer to inquiry by votaries.

<sup>14</sup> Laconia was another name for Sparta. The phrase means consisting of a few words after the Laconian fashion; -cf. the adjective "laconic."

<sup>15</sup> A food first prepared by American Indians and much used by explorers because of its compactness. It is prepared by pounding sun-cured strips of venison into fine particles and mixing them with melted fat; sometimes compressed into cakes.

<sup>16</sup> Athenian orator and patriot (384-322 B.C.).

<sup>17</sup> Celebrated English statesman, noted for his oratory in debate (1759-1806).

<sup>18</sup> From the Greek mythological Argos, who had a hundred eyes. Juno is supposed to have used him as a spy on Io, of whom she was jealous. Hence, the phrase means jealous.

<sup>19</sup> *Faust* was the great dramatic masterpiece of the German poet, Gœthe.

<sup>20</sup> The Etruscans were the inhabitants of ancient Etruria, in Italy, which in later times was merged into Rome. Art relics consist of pottery, gems, bronze, sculptures, and paintings on the walls of tombs.

<sup>21</sup> See page 148, note 82.

<sup>22</sup> A menstruum here means a solvent; that is, a liquid which dissolves a solid body. Hence, the application to wit.

<sup>23</sup> See page 58, note 58.

<sup>24</sup> Chief character of Gœthe's drama, *Faust*.

<sup>25</sup> Refers to the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus.

<sup>26</sup> *George Sand*, Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, Madame Dudevant, French novelist. The *Consuelo* is considered her best work (1804-1876).

<sup>27</sup> Pseudonym of Frederich von Hardenberg, a German writer (1772-1801).

<sup>28</sup> Greek philosopher of the Neoplatonic school of thought (ca. 411-485).

<sup>29</sup> *Cicero*, Marcus Tullius, Roman advocate, orator, and writer (106-43 B.C.).

<sup>30</sup> Poetry and Truth.

<sup>31</sup> A literary center in Germany, sometimes called "the German Athens," the capital of the grand duchy of Saxe-Weimar.

<sup>32</sup> *Kepler*, Johannes, German astronomer (1571-1630).

<sup>33</sup> A learned and beloved English monk and philosopher of the Franciscan order at Oxford (ca. 1214-1294).

<sup>34</sup> *Galileo (Galilei)*, Italian mathematician who did much for founding our modern science (1564-1642).

<sup>35</sup> See page 56, note 15.

<sup>36</sup> See page 23, note 66.

<sup>37</sup> In the Greek myth this daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra was offered by her father as a sacrifice to Artemis, who from anger against him for killing a hart in her sacred grove caused a calm which detained the Greek ships at Aulis on the expedition against Troy. Artemis substituted a stag for the maiden and carried her off to Taurus to become her priestess.

<sup>38</sup> A collection of distichs written in collaboration with Schiller as a retaliation on the critics.

<sup>39</sup> *Madame de Staël-Holstein*, French author and social leader (1766-1817).

<sup>40</sup> A fresh water organism, composed of minute cells, occurring in spherical colonies about one-fiftieth of an inch in diameter.



# OTHER ESSAYS

## SELF-RELIANCE

I READ the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional. The soul always hears an admonition in such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment they instil is of more value than any thought they may contain. To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, — that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost, and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men, but what *they* thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is sui-

cide; that he must take himself for better for worse as his portion;) that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is not without preëstablished harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.

( Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

What pretty oracles nature yields us on this text in the face and behavior of children, babes, and even brutes! That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because

our arithmetic has computed the strength and means opposed to our purpose, these have not. Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces we are disconcerted. Infancy conforms to nobody; all conform to it; so that one babe commonly makes four or five out of the adults who prattle and play to it. So God has armed youth and puberty and manhood no less with its own piquancy and charm, and made it enviable and gracious and its claims not to be put by, if it will stand by itself. Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and me. Hark! in the next room who spoke so clear and emphatic. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries. Bashful or bold then, he will know how to make us seniors very unnecessary.

The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner, and would disdain as much as a lord to do or say aught to conciliate one, is the healthy attitude of human nature. A boy is in the parlor what the pit is in the playhouse; independent, irresponsible, looking out from his corner on such people and facts as pass by, he tries and sentences them on their merits, in the swift, summary way of boys, as good, bad, interesting, silly, eloquent, troublesome. He cumpers himself never about consequences, about interests; he gives an independent, genuine verdict. You must court him; he does not court you. But the man is as it were clapped into jail by his consciousness. As soon as he has once acted or spoken with *éclat* he is a committed person, watched by the sympathy or the hatred of hundreds, whose affections must now enter into his account. There is no Lethe<sup>2</sup> for this. Ah, that he could pass again into his neutrality! Who can thus avoid all pledges and, having observed, observe again from the same unaffected, unbiased, unbribable, unaffrighted innocence, — must always be formidable. He would utter opinions on all passing affairs, which being seen to be not private but necessary, would sink like darts into the ear of men and put them in fear.

These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere<sup>3</sup> is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.

(Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist.) He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make to a valued adviser who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, "What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within?" my friend suggested, — "But these impulses may be from below, not from above." I replied, "They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil." (No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. (Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it.) A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition as if every thing were titular and ephemeral but he. I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions. Every decent and well-spoken individual affects and sways me more than is right. I ought to go upright and vital, and speak the rude truth in all ways. If malice and vanity wear the coat of philanthropy, shall that pass? If an angry bigot assumes this bountiful cause of Abolition, and comes to me with his last news from Barbadoes,<sup>4</sup> why should I not say to him, "Go

love thy infant; love thy wood-chopper; be good-natured and modest; have that grace; and never varnish your hard, uncharitable ambition with this incredible tenderness for black folk a thousand miles off. Thy love afar is spite at home." Rough and graceless would be such greeting, but truth is handsomer than the affection of love. Your goodness must have some edge to it, — else it is none. The doctrine of hatred must be preached, as the counteraction of the doctrine of love, when that pules and whines. I shun father and mother and wife and brother when my genius calls me. I would write on the lintels of the door-post, *Whim*. I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation. Expect me not to show cause why I seek or why I exclude company. Then, again, do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison if need be; but your miscellaneous popular charities; the education at college of fools; the building of meeting-houses to the vain end to which many now stand; alms to sots, and the thousand-fold Relief Societies; — though I confess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, it is a wicked dollar, which by and by I shall have the manhood to withhold.

Virtues are, in the popular estimate, rather the exception than the rule. There is the man *and* his virtues. Men do what is called a good action, as some piece of courage or charity, much as they would pay a fine in expiation of daily non-appearance on parade. Their works are done as an apology or extenuation of their living in the world, — as invalids and the insane pay a high board. Their virtues are penances. (I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is

for itself and not for a spectacle.) I much prefer that it should be of a lower strain, so it be genuine and equal, than that it should be glittering and unsteady. I wish it to be sound and sweet, and not to need diet and bleeding. I ask primary evidence that you are a man, and refuse this appeal from the man to his actions. I know that for myself it makes no difference whether I do or forbear those actions which are reckoned excellent. I cannot consent to pay for a privilege where I have intrinsic right. Few and mean as my gifts may be, I actually am, and do not need for my own assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony.

(What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think.) This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you is that it scatters your force. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character. If you maintain a dead church, contribute to a dead Bible Society, vote with a great party either for the Government or against it, spread your table like base housekeepers, — under all these screens I have difficulty to detect the precise man you are: and of course so much force is withdrawn from your proper life. But do your work, and I shall know you. Do your work, and you shall reinforce yourself. A man must consider what a blindman's buff is this game of conformity. If I know your sect I anticipate your argument. I hear a preacher announce for his text and topic the expediency of one of the institutions of his church. Do I not know beforehand that not possibly can he say a new and spontaneous word? Do I not know that

with all this ostentation of examining the grounds of the institution he will do no such thing? Do I not know that he is pledged to himself not to look but at one side, the permitted side, not as a man, but as a parish minister? He is a retained attorney, and these airs of the bench are the emptiest affectation. Well, most men have bound their eyes with one or another handkerchief, and attached themselves to some one of these communities of opinion. This conformity makes them not false in a few particulars, authors of a few lies, but false in all particulars. Their every truth is not quite true.

Their two is not the real two, their four not the real four; so that every word they say chagrins us and we know not where to begin to set them right. Meantime nature is not slow to equip us in the prison uniform of the party to which we adhere. We come to wear one cut of face and figure, and acquire by degrees the gentlest asinine expression. There is a mortifying experience in particular, which does not fail to wreak itself also in the general history; I mean "the foolish face of praise", the forced smile which we put on in company where we do not feel at ease, in answer to conversation which does not interest us. The muscles, not spontaneously moved but moved by a low usurping wilfulness, grow tight about the outline of the face, with the most disagreeable sensation.

For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face. The by-standers look askance on him in the public street or in the friend's parlor. If this aversation had its origin in contempt and resistance like his own he might well go home with a sad countenance; but the sour faces of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause, but are put on and off as the wind blows and a new paper directs. Yet is the discontent of the multitude more formidable than that of the senate and the college. It is easy enough for a firm man who knows the world to brook the rage of the cultivated classes. Their rage is decorous and prudent, for they are

timid, as being very vulnerable themselves. But when to their feminine rage the indignation of the people is added, when the ignorant and the poor are aroused, when the unintelligent brute force that lies at the bottom of society is made to growl and mow, it needs the habit of magnanimity and religion to treat it godlike as a trifle of no concernment.

The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loath to disappoint them.

But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place? Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day. In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity, yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color. Leave your theory, as Joseph his coat in the hands of the harlots,<sup>5</sup> and flee.

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day. — "Ah, then, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood." Is it so bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoras<sup>6</sup> was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the sallies of



his will are rounded in by the law of his being, as the inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh <sup>7</sup> are insignificant in the curve of the sphere. Nor does it matter how you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic or Alexandrian stanza; <sup>8</sup> — read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing. In this pleasing contrite wood-life which God allows me, let me record day by day my honest thought without prospect or retrospect, and, I cannot doubt, it will be found symmetrical, though I mean it not and see it not. My book should smell of pines and resound with the hum of insects. The swallow over my window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his bill into my web also. We pass for what we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment.

There will be an agreement in whatever variety of actions, so they be each honest and natural in their hour. For of one will, the actions will be harmonious, however unlike they seem. These varieties are lost sight of at a little distance, at a little height of thought. One tendency unites them all. The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency. Your genuine action will explain itself and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing. Act singly, and what you have already done singly will justify you now. Greatness appeals to the future. If I can be firm enough to-day to do right and scorn eyes, I must have done so much right before as to defend me now. Be it how it will, do right now. Always scorn appearances and you always may. The force of character is cumulative. All the foregone days of virtue work their health into this. What makes the majesty of the heroes of the senate and the field, which so fills the imagination? The consciousness of a train of great days and victories behind.

They shed an united light on the advancing actor. He is attended as by a visible escort of angels. That is it which throws thunder in Chatham's voice, and dignity into Washington's port, and America into Adams's eye. Honor is venerable to us because it is no ephemera.<sup>9</sup> It is always ancient virtue. We worship it to-day because it is not of to-day. We love it and pay it homage because it is not a trap for our love and homage, but is self-dependent, self-derived, and therefore of an old immaculate pedigree, even if shown in a young person.

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazetted and ridiculous henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife.<sup>10</sup> Let us never bow and apologize more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it kind, I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times; and hurl in the face of custom and trade and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor moving wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you and all men and all events. Ordinarily, every body in society reminds us of somewhat else, or of some other person. Character, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. The man must be so much that he must make all circumstances indifferent. Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design; — and posterity seem to follow his steps as a procession. A man Cæsar is born, and for ages after we have a Roman Empire. Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius that he is confounded with virtue and

the possible of man. An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man; as, Monachism,<sup>11</sup> of the Hermit Antony; the Reformation,<sup>12</sup> of Luther; Quakerism,<sup>13</sup> of Fox; Methodism,<sup>14</sup> of Wesley; Abolition,<sup>15</sup> of Clarkson. Scipio,<sup>16</sup> Milton called "the height of Rome"; and all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.

(Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper in the world which exists for him.) But the man in the street, finding no worth in himself which corresponds to the force which built a tower or sculptured a marble god, feels poor when he looks on these. To him a palace, a statue, or a costly book have an alien and forbidding air, much like a gay equipage, and seem to say like that, "Who are you, sir?" Yet they all are his, suitors for his notice, petitioners to his faculties that they will come out and take possession. The picture waits for my verdict; it is not to command me, but I am to settle its claims to praise. That popular fable of the sot<sup>17</sup> who was picked up dead-drunk in the street, carried to the duke's house, washed and dressed and laid in the duke's bed, and, on his waking, treated with all obsequious ceremony like the duke, and assured that he had been insane, owes its popularity to the fact that it symbolizes so well the state of man, who is in the world a sort of sot, but now and then wakes up, exercises his reason and finds himself a true prince.

Our reading is mendicant and sycophantic. In history our imagination plays us false. Kingdom and lordship, power and estate, are a gaudier vocabulary than private John and Edward in a small house and common day's work; but the things of life are the same to both; the sum total of both is the same. Why all this deference to Alfred<sup>18</sup> and Scanderbeg<sup>19</sup> and Gustavus?<sup>20</sup> Suppose they were virtuous; did they wear out virtue? As great a stake depends on your private act to-day as followed their public and renowned steps. When

private men shall act with original views, the lustre will be transferred from the actions of kings to those of gentlemen.

The world has indeed been instructed by its kings, who have so magnetized the eyes of nations. It has been taught by this colossal symbol the mutual reverence that is due from man to man. The joyful loyalty with which men have everywhere suffered the king, the noble, or the great proprietor to walk among them by a law of his own, make his own scale of men and things and reverse theirs, pay for benefits not with money but with honor, and represent the law in his person, was the hieroglyphic by which they obscurely signified their consciousness of their own right and comeliness, the right of every man.

The magnetism which all original action exerts is explained when we inquire the reason of self-trust. Who is the Trustee? What is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded? What is the nature and power of that science-baffling star, without parallax,<sup>21</sup> without calculable elements, which shoots a ray of beauty even into trivial and impure actions, if the least mark of independence appear? The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last face behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed. We first share the life by which things exist and afterwards see them as appearances in nature and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and of thought. Here are the lungs of that inspiration which giveth man wisdom, and which cannot be denied without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap

of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm. Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due. He may err in the expression of them, but he knows that these things are so, like day and night, not to be disputed. My wilful actions and acquisitions are but roving; — the idlest reverie, the faintest native emotion, command my curiosity and respect. Thoughtless people contradict as readily the statement of perceptions as of opinions, or rather much more readily; for they do not distinguish between perception and notion. They fancy that I choose to see this or that thing. But perception is not whimsical, but fatal. If I see a trait, my children will see it after me, and in course of time all mankind, — although it may chance that no one has seen it before me. For my perception of it is as much a fact as the sun.

The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speaketh he should communicate, not one thing, but all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time, souls, from the centre of the present thought; and new date and new create the whole. Whenever a mind is simple and receives a divine wisdom, then old things pass away, — means, teachers, texts, temples fall; it lives now, and absorbs past and future into the present hour. All things are made sacred by relation to it, — one thing as much as another. All things are dissolved to their centre by their cause, and in the universal miracle petty and particular miracles disappear. If therefore a man claims to know and speak of God and carries you backward to the

phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Is the acorn better than the oak which is its fulness and completion? Is the parent better than the child into whom he has cast his ripened being? Whence then this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul. Time and space are but physiological colors which the eye makes, but the soul is light; where it is, is day; where it was, is night; and history is an impertinence and an injury if it be any thing more than a cheerful apologue or parable of my being and becoming.

Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say "I think", "I am", but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are, they exist with God to-day. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence. Before a leaf-bud has burst, its whole life acts; in the full-blown flower there is no more; in the leafless root there is no less. Its nature is satisfied and it satisfies nature in all moments alike. But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time.

This should be plain enough. Yet see what strong intellects dare not yet hear God himself unless he speak the phraseology of I know not what David, or Jeremiah, or Paul. We shall not always set so great a price on a few texts, on a few lives. We are like children who repeat by rote the sentences of grandames and tutors, and, as they grow older, of the men of talents and character they chance to see, — painfully recollecting the exact words they spoke; afterwards, when they come into the point of view which those had who uttered these

sayings, they understand them and are willing to let the words go; for any time they can use words as good when occasion comes. So was it with us, so will it be, if we proceed. If we live truly, we shall see truly. It is as easy for the strong man to be strong, as it is for the weak to be weak. When we have new perception, we shall gladly disburden the memory of its hoarded treasures as old rubbish. When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.

And now at last the highest truth on this subject remains unsaid; probably cannot be said; for all that we say is the far-off remembering of the intuition. That thought by what I can now nearest approach to say it, is this. When good is near you, when you have life in yourself, it is not by any known or accustomed way; you shall not discern the foot-prints of any other; you shall not see the face of man; you shall not hear any name; — the way, the thought, the good, shall be wholly strange and new. It shall exclude example and experience. You take the way from man, not to man. All persons that ever existed are its forgotten ministers. Fear and hope are alike beneath it. There is somewhat low even in hope. In the hour of vision there is nothing that can be called gratitude, nor properly joy. The soul raised over passion beholds identity and eternal causation, perceives the self-existence of Truth and Right, and calms itself with knowing that all things go well. Vast spaces of nature; the Atlantic Ocean, the South Sea; long intervals of time; years, centuries, are of no account. This which I think and feel underlay every former state of life and circumstances, as it does underlie my present and what is called life and what is called death.

Life only avails, not the having lived. Power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim. This one fact the world hates; that the soul

*becomes*; for that forever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty, all reputation to a shame; confounds the saint with the rogue; shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside. Why then do we prate of self-reliance? Inasmuch as the soul is present there will be power not confident but agent. To talk of reliance is a poor external way of speaking. Speak rather of that which relies because it works and is. Who has more obedience than I masters me, though he should not raise his finger. Round him I must revolve by the gravitation of spirits. We fancy it rhetoric when we speak of eminent virtue. We do not yet see that virtue is Height, and that a man or a company of men, plastic and permeable to principles, by the law of nature must overpower and ride all cities, nations, kings, rich men, poets, who are not.

This is the ultimate fact which we so quickly reach on this, as on every topic, the resolution of all into the ever-blessed ONE. Self-existence is the attribute of the Supreme Cause, and it constitutes the measure of good by the degree in which it enters into all lower forms. All things real are so by so much virtue as they contain. Commerce, husbandry, hunting, whaling, war, eloquence, personal weight, are somewhat, and engage my respect as examples of its presence and impure action. I see the same law working in nature for conservation and growth. Power is, in Nature, the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself. The genesis and maturation of a planet, its poise and orbit, the bended tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and vegetable, are demonstrations of the self-sufficing and therefore self-relying soul.

Thus all concentrates; let us not rove; let us sit at home with the cause. Let us stun and astonish the intruding rabble of men and books and institutions by a simple declaration of the divine fact. Bid the invaders take the shoes from off their feet, for God is here within. Let our simplicity judge them,



and our docility to our own law demonstrate the poverty of nature and fortune beside our native riches.

But now we are a mob. Man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay at home, to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of men. We must go alone. Isolation must precede true society. I like the silent church before the service begins, better than any preaching. How far off, how cool, how chaste the persons look, begirt each one with a precinct or sanctuary! So let us always sit. Why should we assume the faults of our friend, or wife, or father, or child, because they sit around our hearth, or are said to have the same blood? All men have my blood and I have all men's. Not for that will I adopt their petulance or folly; even to the extent of being ashamed of it. But your isolation must not be mechanical, but spiritual, that is, must be elevation. At times the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles. Friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, charity, all knock at once at thy closet door and say, "Come out unto us". But keep thy state; come not into their confusion. The power men possess to annoy me I give them by a weak curiosity. No man can come near me but through my act. "What we love that we have, but by desire we bereave ourselves of the love."

If we cannot at once rise to the sanctities of obedience and faith, let us at least resist our temptations; let us enter into the state of war and wake Thor and Woden,<sup>22</sup> courage and constancy, in our Saxon breasts. This is to be done in our smooth times by speaking the truth. Check this lying hospitality and lying affection. Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them, "O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law. I will have

no covenants but proximities. I shall endeavor to nourish my parents, to support my family, to be the chaste husband of one wife, — but these relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way. I appeal from your customs. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I must be myself. I will not hide my tastes or aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do strongly before the sun and moon whatever inly rejoices me and the heart appoints. If you are noble, I will love you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not in the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly but humbly and truly. It is alike your interest, and mine, and all men's, however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in truth. Does this sound harsh to-day? You will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and if we follow the truth it will bring us out safe at last." — But so may you give these friends pain. Yes, but I cannot sell my liberty and my power, to save their sensibility. Besides, all persons have their moments of reason, when they look out into the region of absolute truth; then will they justify me and do the same thing.

The populace think that your rejection of popular standards is a rejection of all standard, and mere antinomianism;<sup>23</sup> and the bold sensualist will use the name of philosophy to gild his crimes. But the law of consciousness abides. There are two confessionals, in one or the other of which we must be shriven. You may fulfil your round of duties by clearing yourself in the *direct*, or in the *reflex* way. Consider whether you have satisfied your relations to father, mother, cousin, neighbor, town, cat, and dog; whether any of these can upbraid you. But I may also neglect this reflex standard and absolve me to myself. I have my own stern claims and perfect

circle. It denies the name of duty to many offices that are called duties. But if I can discharge its debts it enables me to dispense with the popular code. If any one imagines that this law is lax, let him keep its commandment one day.

And truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity and has ventured to trust himself for a task-master. High be his heart, faithful his will, clear his sight, that he may in good earnest be doctrine, society, law, to himself, that a simple purpose may be to him as strong as iron necessity is to others!

If any man consider the present aspects of what is called by distinction *society*, he will see the need of these ethics. The sinew and heart of man seem to be drawn out, and we are become timorous desponding whimperers. We are afraid of truth, afraid of fortune, afraid of death, and afraid of each other. Our age yields no great and perfect persons. We want men and women who shall renovate life and our social state, but we see that most natures are insolvent; cannot satisfy their own wants, have an ambition out of all proportion to their practical force, and so do lean and beg day and night continually. Our housekeeping is mendicant, our arts, our occupations, our marriages, our religion we have not chosen, but society has chosen for us. We are parlor soldiers. We shun the rugged battle of fate, where strength is born.

If our young men miscarry in their first enterprizes they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is *ruined*. If the finest genius studies at one of our colleges and is not installed in an office within one year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened and in complaining the rest of his life. A sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who *teams it, farms it, peddles*, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years, and always like a cat

falls on his feet, is worth a hundred of these city dolls. He walks abreast with his days and feels no shame in not "studying a profession", for he does not postpone his life, but lives already. He has not one chance, but a hundred chances. Let a Stoic <sup>24</sup> open the resources of man and tell men they are not leaning willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear; that a man is the word made flesh, born to shed healing to the nations; that he should be ashamed of our compassion, and that the moment he acts from himself, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries and customs out of the window, — we pity him no more but thank and revere him; — and that teacher shall restore the life of man to splendor and make his name dear to all history.

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views.

1. In what prayers do men allow themselves! That which they call a holy office is not so much as brave and manly. Prayer looks abroad and asks for some foreign addition to come through some foreign virtue, and loses itself in endless mazes of natural and supernatural, and mediatorial and miraculous. Prayer that craves a particular commodity — anything less than all good, is vicious. Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the spirit of God pronouncing his works good. But prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God, he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard through-

out nature, though for cheap ends. Caratach,<sup>25</sup> in Fletcher's *Bonduca*, when admonished to inquire the mind of the god Audate, replies,

"His hidden meaning lies in our endeavors;  
Our valors are our best gods."

Another sort of false prayers are our regrets. Discontent is the want of self-reliance: it is infirmity of will. Regret calamities if you can thereby help the sufferer; if not, attend your own work and already the evil begins to be repaired. Our sympathy is just as base. We come to them who weep foolishly and sit down and cry for company, instead of imparting to them truth and health in rough electric shocks, putting them once more in communication with their own reason. The secret of fortune is joy in our hands. Welcome evermore to gods and men is the self-helping man. For him all doors are flung wide. Him all tongues greet, all honors crown, all eyes follow with desire. Our love goes out to him and embraces him because he did not need it. We solicitously and apologetically caress and celebrate him because he held on his way and scorned our disapprobation. The gods love him because men hated him. "To the persevering mortal," said Zoroaster,<sup>26</sup> "the blessed Immortals are swift."

As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect. They say with those foolish Israelites, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die. Speak thou, speak any man with us, and we will obey." Everywhere I am hindered of meeting God in my brother, because he has shut his own temple doors and recites fables merely of his brother's, or his brother's brother's God. Every new mind is a new classification. If it prove a mind of uncommon activity and power, a Locke,<sup>27</sup> a Lavoisier,<sup>28</sup> a Hutton,<sup>29</sup> a Bentham,<sup>30</sup> a Fourier,<sup>31</sup> it imposes its classification on other men, and lo! a new system. In proportion to the depth of the thought, and so to the number of the objects it touches and brings within

reach of the pupil, is his complacency. But chiefly is this apparent in creeds and churches, which are also classifications of some powerful mind acting on the great elemental thought of Duty and man's relation to the Highest. Such is Calvinism, Quakerism, Swedenborgism. The pupil takes the same delight in subordinating every thing to the new terminology as a girl who has just learned botany in seeing a new earth and new seasons thereby. It will happen for a time that the pupil will find his intellectual power has grown by the study of his master's mind. But in all unbalanced minds the classification is idolized, passes for the end and not for a speedily exhaustible means, so that the walls of the system blend to their eye in the remote horizon with the walls of the universe; the luminaries of heaven seem to them hung on the arch their master built. They cannot imagine how you aliens have any right to see — how you can see; "It must be somehow that you stole the light from us." They do not yet perceive that light, un-systematic, indomitable, will break into any cabin, even into theirs. Let them chirp awhile and call it their own. If they are honest and do well, presently their neat new pincfold will be too straight and low, will crack, will lean, will rot and vanish, and the immortal light, all young and joyful, million-orbed, million-colored, will beam over the universe as on the first morning.

2. It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of Traveling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination, did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In manly hours we feel that duty is our place. The soul is no traveller; the wise man stays at home, and when his necessities, his duties, on any occasion call him from his house, or into foreign lands, he is at home still, and shall make men sensible by the expression of his countenance that he goes, the missionary of wisdom and virtue, and visits

cities and men like a sovereign and not like an interloper or a valet.

I have no churlish objection to the circumnavigation of the globe for the purposes of art, of study, and benevolence, so that the man is first domesticated, or does not go abroad with the hope of finding somewhat greater than he knows. He who travels to be amused or to get somewhat which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. In Thebes,<sup>32</sup> in Palmyra,<sup>33</sup> his will and mind have become old and dilapidated as they. He carries ruins to ruins.

Travelling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places. At home I dream that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern Fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I seek the Vatican<sup>34</sup> and the palaces. I affect to be intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go.

3. But the rage of travelling is a symptom of a deeper unsoundness affecting the whole intellectual action. The intellect is vagabond, and our system of education fosters restlessness. Our minds travel when our bodies are forced to stay at home. We imitate; and what is imitation but the travelling of the mind? Our houses are built with foreign taste; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments; our opinions, our tastes, our faculties, lean, and follow the Past and the Distant. The soul created the arts wherever they have flourished. It was in his own mind that the artist sought his model. It was an application of his own thought to the thing to be done and the conditions to be observed. And why need we copy the Doric<sup>35</sup> or the Gothic model? Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought, and quaint expression are as near to us as to any, and if the American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, con-

sidering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government, he will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also.

Insist on yourself, never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what it is, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master who could have taught Shakespeare? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great man is a unique. The Scipionism of Scipio is precisely that part he could not borrow. Shakespeare will never be made by the study of Shakespeare. Do that which is assigned you and you cannot hope too much or dare too much. There is at this moment for you an utterance brave and grand as that of the colossal chisel of Phidias,<sup>36</sup> or trowel of the Egyptians, or the pen of Moses or Dante, but different from all these. Not possibly will the soul, all rich, all eloquent, with thousand-cloven tongue, deign to repeat itself; but if you can hear what these patriarchs say, surely you can reply to them in the same pitch of voice; for the ear and the tongue are two organs of one nature. Abide in the simple and noble regions of thy life, obey thy heart, and thou shalt reproduce the Foreworld<sup>37</sup> again.

4. As our Religion, our Education, our Art look abroad, so does our spirit of society. All men plume themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves.

Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given something is taken. Society acquires new



arts and loses old instincts. What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil, and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat, and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under! But compare the health of the two men and you shall see that the white man has lost his aboriginal strength. If the traveller tell us truly, strike the savage with a broad axe and in a day or two the flesh shall unite and heal as if you struck the blow into soft pitch, and the same blow shall send the white to his grave.

The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has got a fine Geneva <sup>38</sup> watch, but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich <sup>39</sup> nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe; the equinox he knows as little; and the whole bright calendar of the year is without a dial in his mind. His note-books impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit; the insurance-office increases the number of accidents; and it may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a Christianity entrenched in establishments and forms some vigor of wild virtue. For every Stoic was a Stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?

There is no more deviation in the moral standard than in the standard of height or bulk. No greater men are now than ever were. A singular equality may be observed between the great men of the first and of the last ages; nor can all the science, art, religion, and philosophy of the nineteenth century avail to educate greater men than Plutarch's heroes, three or four and twenty centuries ago. Not in time is the race progressive. Phocion,<sup>40</sup> Socrates, Anaxagoras,<sup>41</sup> Diogenes,<sup>42</sup> are

great men, but they leave no class. He who is really of their class will not be called by their name, but be his own man, and in his turn the founder of a sect. The arts and inventions of each period are only its costume and do not invigorate men. The harm of the improved machinery may compensate its good. Hudson<sup>43</sup> and Behring<sup>44</sup> accomplished so much in their fishing-boats as to astonish Parry<sup>45</sup> and Franklin,<sup>46</sup> whose equipment exhausted the resources of science and art. Galileo,<sup>47</sup> with an opera-glass, discovered a more splendid series of celestial phenomena than any one since. Columbus found the New World in an undecked boat. It is curious to see the periodical disuse and perishing of means and machinery which were introduced with loud laudation a few years or centuries before. The great genius returns to essential man. We reckoned the improvements of the art of war among the triumphs of science, and yet Napoleon conquered Europe by the Bivouac,<sup>48</sup> which consisted of falling back on naked valor and disencumbering it of all aids. The Emperor held it impossible to make a perfect army, says Las Casas,<sup>49</sup> "without abolishing our arms, magazines, commissaries, and carriages, until, in imitation of the Roman custom, the soldier should receive his supply of corn, grind it in his hand-mill, and bake his bread himself."

Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience dies with them.

And so the reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long that they have come to esteem the religious, learned, and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these, because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has,

and not by what each is. But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, out of new respect for his nature. Especially he hates what he has if he see that it is accidental, — came to him by inheritance, or gift, or crime; then he feels that it is not having; it does not belong to him, has no root in him, and merely lies there because no revolution or no robber takes it away. But that which a man is, does always by necessity acquire; and what the man acquires, is living property, which does not wait the beck of rulers, or mobs, or revolutions, or fire, or storm, or bankruptcies, but perpetually renews itself wherever the man breathes. “Thy lot or portion of life,” said the Caliph Ali,<sup>50</sup> “is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking after it.” Our dependence on these foreign goods leads us to our slavish respect for numbers. The political parties meet in numerous conventions; the greater the concourse and with each new uproar of announcement, The delegation from Essex! The Democrats from New Hampshire! The Whigs of Maine! the young patriot feels himself stronger than before by a new thousand of eyes and arms. In like manner the reformers summon conventions and vote and resolve in multitude. But not so O friends! will the God deign to enter and inhabit you, but by a method precisely the reverse. It is only as a man puts off all foreign support and stands alone that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner. Is not a man better than a town? Ask nothing of men, and, in the endless mutation, thou only firm column must presently appear the upholder of all that surrounds thee. He who knows that power is inborn, that he is weak only because he has looked for good out of him and elsewhere, and, so perceiving, throws himself unhesitatingly on his thought, instantly rights himself, stands in the erect position, commands his limbs, works miracles; just as a man who stands on his feet is stronger than a man who stands on his head.

So use all that is called Fortune. Most men gamble with

her, and gain all, and lose all, as her wheel rolls. But do thou leave as unlawful these winnings, and deal with Cause and Effect, the chancellors of God. In the Will work and acquire, and thou hast chained the wheel of Chance, and shalt sit out hereafter out of fear from her rotations. A political victory, a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick or the return of your absent friend, or some other favorable event raises your spirits, and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is an illustration of the quality that makes Emerson a Transcendentalist and a mystic.

<sup>2</sup> The River of Oblivion in the classical underworld, used here as a symbol for an anodyne or drug.

<sup>3</sup> This is especial evidence of Emerson's extreme individualism, which this essay as a whole illustrates. In his *Journal*, "At Harrisburg, April," 1850, he records a conversation with an old Quaker, W. L. Fisher, with whom he held "sweet counsel", in which both agree that the "personal force", "the vital power in Man" is responsible for all social accomplishment.

<sup>4</sup> An island of the British West Indies, thought to be named from the Indian fig tree which the Portugese call *las barbadas*, meaning "the bearded".

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Genesis* XXXIX, 7-20.

<sup>6</sup> Commented on in the other essays.

<sup>7</sup> The Andes Mountains in South America and the Himalaya Mountains in India.

<sup>8</sup> An iambic hexameter verse, sometimes having an added syllable; so named because used in early French romances concerning Alexander the Great.

<sup>9</sup> Anything of a short life.

<sup>10</sup> The Spartans were very economical of words. They indulged in no luxuries, either at table or elsewhere.

<sup>11</sup> The monastic manner of life; the principle or practice of living as monks and nuns. Saint Anthony (251-*ca.* 356), one of the Christian Fathers, was the founder of Christian monastic life.

<sup>12</sup> The great religious revolution of the sixteenth century, ending in the establishment of Protestantism. Luther (1483-1546) was the leader of the Reformation.

<sup>13</sup> The form of belief cherished by the religious body called the

Society of Friends, founded by George Fox, a religious reformer of the seventeenth century.

<sup>14</sup> The spirit, doctrine, and worship of the religious body known as Methodists, which grew out of a religious movement begun at Oxford in the earlier half of the eighteenth century, starting in the students' club for religious improvement and study of the Bible in which John Wesley (1703-1791) as a leader was associated with Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and others.

<sup>15</sup> Refers here to the legal extinction of slavery sponsored by Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846), an English philanthropist.

<sup>16</sup> There were two Scipios, Scipio Africanus the Elder (237-183 B.C.), Roman general and consul, who defeated Hannibal at Zama, 202 B.C., and Scipio Africanus the Younger (185-129 B.C.), Roman general and consul who burned Carthage.

<sup>17</sup> The same story which forms the Induction to the *Taming of the Shrew* of Shakespere.

<sup>18</sup> *Alfred* the Great, king of the West Saxons in England; repelled the invasions of the Danes; established the English navy (849-901).

<sup>19</sup> George Castriot, an Albanian chief, who maintained the independence of his principality against the Turks (1594-1632).

<sup>20</sup> The king of Sweden prominent in the Thirty Years War, a great defender of the cause of Protestantism (1594-1632).

<sup>21</sup> Such displacement of an object's actual position in space as would appear if the object were viewed from some other than the standard point. An astronomical term.

<sup>22</sup> Thor was the Scandinavian god of war, thunder, and agriculture. Woden was chief of the gods, lord of battle and victory, source of wisdom and culture, founder of writing, poetry, and history.

<sup>23</sup> The doctrine that faith frees the Christian from the claims and obligations of the moral law; taught by John Agricola in Germany about 1535.

<sup>24</sup> Member of one of the chief schools of Greek philosophy founded by Zeno about 308 B.C.

<sup>25</sup> Act I, Scene I. John Fletcher was an English dramatic poet, collaborator of Beaumont (1579-1625).

<sup>26</sup> The traditional founder of the ancient Irano-Persian religion, who flourished about 60 B.C.

<sup>27</sup> See page 23, note 53.

<sup>28</sup> *Lavoisier*, Antoine Lourent, a French chemist, founder of modern chemistry (1743-1794).

<sup>29</sup> There are various celebrities by the name of Hutton. Here we may have mention of Charles Hutton (1737-1823), an English mathematician; or James Hutton (1726-1797), a Scottish physician, geologist, and author of the Plutonic theory of geology.

<sup>30</sup> *Bentham*, Jeremy, an English jurist, exponent of the doctrine of utilitarianism (1748-1832).

- <sup>31</sup> See page 125, note 48.
- <sup>32</sup> Ancient capital of upper Egypt.
- <sup>33</sup> An ancient city on an oasis of the Syrian desert, site of extensive ruins.
- <sup>34</sup> Palace of the popes in Rome.
- <sup>35</sup> Doric is used here as a type of the classical and Gothic as a type of the mediæval.
- <sup>36</sup> Phidias was the most celebrated sculptor of ancient Greece.
- <sup>37</sup> Antediluvian world.
- <sup>38</sup> City in Switzerland famous for its watchmaking.
- <sup>39</sup> A river port in Kent near London, containing a royal observatory. Its meridian is the prime or zero meridian for maritime purposes.
- <sup>40</sup> Athenian general and patriot (*ca.* 402–317).
- <sup>41</sup> Greek philosopher, regarded as the father of modern science (500–428 B.C.).
- <sup>42</sup> A Greek cynic philosopher, said to have lived in a tub and sought at midday with a lantern for an honest man (412–325 B.C.).
- <sup>43</sup> *Hudson*, Hendrik, an English navigator in the service of the Dutch who explored the Hudson River (1575–1611).
- <sup>44</sup> *Behring*, Vitus, a Danish navigator who discovered Bering Sea and Straits (1680–1741).
- <sup>45</sup> *Parry*, Sir William Edward, British admiral and Arctic explorer (1790–1855).
- <sup>46</sup> *Franklin*, Sir John, English Arctic explorer (1786–1847).
- <sup>47</sup> See page 193, note 34.
- <sup>48</sup> Temporary or open-air camp.
- <sup>49</sup> See page 171, note 18.
- <sup>50</sup> The fourth of the immediate successors of Mohammed and his adopted son (*ca.* 600–661).

## COMPENSATION

**E**VER since I was a boy I have wished to write a discourse on Compensation; for it seemed to me when very young that on this subject life was ahead of theology and the people knew more than the preachers taught. The documents too from which the doctrine is to be drawn, charmed my fancy by their endless variety, and lay always before me, even in sleep; for they are the tools in our hands, the bread in our basket, the transactions of the street, the farm and the dwelling-house; greetings, relations, debts, and credits, the influence of character, the nature and endowment of all men. It seemed to me also that in it might be shown men a ray of divinity, the present action of the soul of this world, clean from all vestige of tradition; and so the heart of man might be bathed by an inundation of eternal love, conversing with that which he knows was always and always must be, because it really is now. It appeared moreover that if this doctrine could be stated in terms with any resemblance to those bright intuitions in which this truth is sometimes revealed to us, it would be a star in many dark hours and crooked passages in our journey, that would not suffer us to lose our way.

I was lately confirmed in these desires by hearing a sermon at church. The preacher, a man esteemed for his orthodoxy, unfolded in the ordinary manner the doctrine of the Last Judgment. He assumed that judgment is not executed in this world; that the wicked are successful; that the good are miserable; and then urged from reason and from Scripture a compensation to be made to both parties in the next life. No offence appeared to be taken by the congregation at this

doctrine. As far as I could observe when the meeting broke up they separated without remark on the sermon.

Yet what was the import of this teaching? What did the preacher mean by saying that the good are miserable in the present life? Was it that houses and lands, offices, wine, horses, dress, luxury, are had by unprincipled men, whilst the saints are poor and despised; and that a compensation is to be made to these last hereafter, by giving them the like gratifications another day, — bank-stock and doubloons, venison and champagne? This must be the compensation intended; for what else? Is it that they are to have leave to pray and praise? to love and serve men? Why, that they can do now. The legitimate inference the disciple would draw was, "We are to have *such* a good time as the sinners have now"; — or, to push it to its extreme import, — "You sin now, we shall sin by-and-by; we would sin now, if we could; not being successful we expect our revenge tomorrow."

The fallacy lay in the immense concession that the bad are successful; that justice is not done now. The blindness of the preacher consisted in deferring to the base estimate of the market of what constitutes a manly success, instead of confronting and convicting the world from the truth, announcing the presence of the soul; the omnipotence of the will; and so establishing the standard of good and ill, of success and falsehood.

I find a similar base tone in the popular religious works of the day and the same doctrines assumed by the literary men when occasionally they treat the related topics. I think that our popular theology has gained in decorum, and not in principle, over the superstitions it has displaced. But men are better than their theology. Their daily life gives it the lie. Every ingenuous and aspiring soul leaves the doctrine behind him in his own experience, and all men feel sometimes the falsehood which they cannot demonstrate. For men are wiser than they know. That which they hear in schools and



pulpits without afterthought,<sup>1</sup> if said in conversation would probably be questioned in silence. If a man dogmatize in a mixed company on Providence and the divine laws, he is answered by a silence which conveys well enough to an observer the dissatisfaction of the hearer, but his incapacity to make his own statement.

I shall attempt in this and the following chapter <sup>2</sup> to record some facts that indicate the path of the law of Compensation; happy beyond my expectation if I shall truly draw the smallest arc of this circle.

POLARITY,<sup>3</sup> or action and reaction, we meet in every part of nature; in darkness and light; in heat and cold; in the ebb and flow of waters; in male and female; in the inspiration and expiration of plants and animals; in the equation of quantity on quality in the fluids of the animal body; in the systole and diastole <sup>4</sup> of the heart; in the undulations of fluids and of sound; in the centrifugal and centripetal gravity; in electricity, galvanism, and chemical affinity. Superinduce magnetism at one end of a needle, the opposite magnetism takes place at the other end. If the south attracts, the north repels. To empty here, you must condense there. An inevitable dualism bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole; as, spirit, matter; man, woman; odd, even; subjective, objective; in, out; upper, under; motion, rest; yea, nay.

Whilst the world is thus dual, so is every one of its parts. The entire system of things gets represented in every particle. There is somewhat that resembles the ebb and flow of the sea, day and night, man and woman, in a single needle of the pine, in a kernel of corn, in each individual of every animal tribe. The reaction, so grand in the elements, is repeated within these small boundaries. For example, in the animal kingdom the physiologist has observed that no creatures are favorites, but a certain compensation balances every gift and

every defect. A surplusage given to one part is paid out of a reduction from another part of the same creature. If the head and neck are enlarged, the trunk and extremities are cut short.

The theory of the mechanic forces is another example. What we gain in power is lost in time, and the converse. The periodic or compensating errors of the planets is another instance. The influences of climate and soil in political history are another. The cold climate invigorates. The barren soil does not breed fevers, crocodiles, tigers, or scorpions.

The same dualism underlies the nature and condition of man. Every excess causes a defect; every defect an excess. Every sweet hath its sour; every evil its good. Every faculty which is a receiver of pleasure has an equal penalty put on its abuse. It is to answer for its moderation with its life. For every grain of wit there is a grain of folly. For every thing you have missed, you have gained something else; and for every thing you gain, you lose something else. If riches increase, they are increased that use them. If the gatherer gathers too much, Nature takes out of the man what she puts into his chest; swells the estate, but kills the owner. Nature hates monopolies and exceptions. The waves of the sea do not more speedily seek a level from their loftiest tossing than the varieties of condition tend to equalize themselves. There is always some levelling circumstance that puts down the overbearing, the strong, the rich, the fortunate, substantially on the same ground with all others. Is a man too strong and fierce for society and by temper and position a bad citizen, — a morose ruffian, with a dash of the pirate in him? — Nature sends him a troop of pretty sons and daughters who are getting along in the dame's classes <sup>5</sup> at the village school, and love and fear for them smooths his grim scowl to courtesy. Thus she contrives to intenerate the granite and felspar, takes the boar out and puts the lamb in and keeps her balance true.

The farmer imagines power and place are fine things. But

the President has paid dear for his White House. It has commonly cost him all his peace, and the best of his manly attributes. To preserve for a short time so conspicuous an appearance before the world, he is content to eat dust before the real masters who stand erect behind the throne. Or do men desire the more substantial and permanent grandeur of genius? Neither has this an immunity. He who by force of will or of thought is great and overlooks thousands, has the charges of that eminence. With every influx of light comes new danger. Has he light? he must bear witness to the light, and always outrun that sympathy which gives him such keen satisfaction, by his fidelity to new revelations of the incessant soul. He must hate father and mother, wife and child.<sup>6</sup> Has he all that the world loves and covets and admires? — he must cast behind him their admiration and afflict them by faithfulness to his truth and become a byword and a hissing.

This law writes the laws of cities and nations. It is in vain to build or plot or combine against it. Things refuse to be mismanaged long. *Res nolunt diu male administrari.*<sup>7</sup> Though no checks to a new evil appear, the checks exist, and will appear. If the government is cruel, the governor's life is not safe. If you tax too high, the revenue will yield nothing. If you make the criminal code sanguinary, juries will not convict. If the law is too mild, private vengeance comes in. If the government is a terrific democracy, the pressure is resisted by an over-charge of energy in the citizen, and life glows with a fiercer flame. The true life and satisfactions of man seem to elude the utmost rigors or felicities of condition and to establish themselves with great indifference under all varieties of circumstance. Under all governments the influence of character remains the same, — in Turkey and in New England about alike. Under the primeval despots of Egypt, history honestly confesses that man must have been as free as culture could make him.

These appearances indicate the fact that the universe is

represented in every one of its particles. Every thing in nature contains all the powers of nature. Every thing is made of one hidden stuff; as the naturalist<sup>8</sup> sees one type under every metamorphosis, and regards a horse as a running man, a fish as a swimming man, a bird as a flying man, a tree as a rooted man. Each new form repeats not only the main character of the type, but part for part all the details, all the aims, furtherances, hindrances, energies, and whole system of every other. Every occupation, trade, art, transaction, is a compend of the world and a correlative of every other. Each one is an entire emblem of human life; of its good and ill, its trials, its enemies, its course, and its end. And each one must somehow accommodate the whole man and recite all his destiny.

The world globes itself in a drop of dew. The microscope cannot find the animacule which is less perfect for being little. Eyes, ears, taste, smell, motion, resistance, appetite, and organs of reproduction that take hold on eternity, — all find room to consist in the small creature. So do we put our life into every act. The true doctrine<sup>9</sup> of omnipresence is that God reappears with all his parts in every moss and cobweb. The value of the universe contrives to throw itself into every point. If the good is there, so is the evil; if the affinity, so the repulsion; if the force, so the limitation.

Thus is the universe alive. All things are moral. That soul which within us is a sentiment, outside of us is a law. We feel its inspiration; out there in history we can see its fatal strength. "It is in the world, and the world was made by it." Justice is not postponed. A perfect equity adjusts its balance in all parts of life. *Οἱ κυβοὶ Διὸς ἀεὶ ἐνπίπτουσι*,<sup>10</sup> — The dice of God are always loaded.<sup>11</sup> The world looks like a multiplication-table, or a mathematical equation, which, turn it how you will, balances itself. Take what figure you will, its exact value, nor more nor less, still returns to you. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue

rewarded, every wrong redressed; in silence and certainty. What we call retribution is the universal necessity by which the whole appears wherever a part appears. If you see smoke, there must be fire. If you see a hand or a limb, you know that the trunk to which it belongs is there behind.

Every act rewards itself, or in other words integrates itself, in a twofold manner; first in the thing, or in real nature; and secondly in the circumstance, or in apparent nature. Men call the circumstance the retribution. The causal retribution is in the thing and is seen by the soul. The retribution in the circumstance is seen by the understanding; it is inseparable from the thing, but is often spread over a long time and so does not become distinct until after many years. The specific stripes may follow late after the offence, but they follow because they accompany it. Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit that unsuspected ripens within the flower of the pleasure which concealed it. Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit, cannot be severed; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end preëxists in the means, the fruit in the seed.

Whilst thus the world will be whole and refuses to be parted, we seek to act partially, to sunder, to appropriate; for example, — to gratify the senses we sever the pleasure of the senses from the needs of the character. The ingenuity of man has been dedicated to the solution of one problem, — how to detach the sensual<sup>12</sup> sweet, the sensual strong, the sensual bright, etc., from the moral sweet, the moral deep, the moral fair; that is, again, to contrive to cut clean off this upper surface so thin as to leave it bottomless; to get a *one end*, without an *other end*. The soul says, "Eat"; the body would feast. The soul says, "The man and woman shall be one flesh and one soul"; the body would join the flesh only. The soul says, "Have dominion over all things to the ends of virtue"; the body would have the power over things to its own ends.

The soul strives amain to live and work through all things. It would be the only fact. All things shall be added unto it, — power, pleasure, knowledge, beauty. The particular man aims to be somebody; to set up for himself; to truck and higgler<sup>13</sup> for a private good; and, in particulars, to ride that he may ride; to dress that he may be dressed; to eat that he may eat; and to govern, that he may be seen. Men seek to be great; they would have offices, wealth, power, and fame. They think that to be great is to possess one side of nature, — the sweet, without the other side, the bitter.

This dividing and detaching is steadily counteracted. Up to this day it must be owned no projector has had the smallest success. The parted water reunites behind our hand. Pleasure is taken out of pleasant things, profit out of profitable things, power out of strong things, as soon as we seek to separate them from the whole. We can no more halve things and get the sensual good, by itself, than we can get an inside that shall have no outside, or a light without a shadow. "Drive out Nature with a fork,<sup>14</sup> she comes running back."

Life invests itself with inevitable conditions, which the unwise seek to dodge, which one and another brags that he does not know, that they do not touch him; — but the brag is on his lips, the conditions are in his soul. If he escapes them in one part they attack him in another more vital part. If he has escaped them in form and in the appearance, it is because he has resisted his life and fled from himself, and the retribution is so much death. So signal is the failure of all attempts to make this separation of the good from the bad, that the experiment would not be tried, — since to try it is to be mad, — but for the circumstance that when the disease began in the will, of rebellion and separation, the intellect is at once infected, so that the man ceases to see God whole in each object, but is able to see the sensual<sup>15</sup> allurements of an object and not see the sensual hurt; he sees the mermaid's head but not the dragon's tail, and thinks he can cut off

that which he would have from that which he would not have. "How secret art thou who dwellest in the highest heavens in silence,<sup>16</sup> O thou only great God, sprinkling with an unwearied providence certain penal blindnesses upon such as have unbridled desires!"\*

The human soul is true to these facts in the painting of fable, of history, of law, of proverbs, of conversation. It finds a tongue in literature unawares. Thus the Greeks called Jupiter, Supreme Mind; but having traditionally ascribed to him many base actions, they involuntarily made amends to reason by tying up the hands of so bad a god. He is made as helpless as a king of England. Prometheus<sup>17</sup> knows one secret which Jove must bargain for; Minerva,<sup>18</sup> another. He cannot get his own thunders; Minerva keeps the key of them: —

"Of all the gods, I only know the keys<sup>19</sup>  
That ope the solid doors within whose vaults  
His thunders sleep."

A plain confession of the in-working of the All and of its moral aim. The Indian mythology ends in the same ethics; and it would seem impossible for any fable to be invented and get any currency which was not moral. Aurora<sup>20</sup> forgot to ask youth for her lover, and though Tithonus is immortal, he is old. Achilles is not quite invulnerable;<sup>21</sup> the sacred waters did not wash the heel by which Thetis held him. Siegfried, in the Nibelungen,<sup>22</sup> is not quite immortal, for a leaf fell on his back whilst he was bathing in the Dragon's blood, and that spot which it covered is mortal. And so it must be. There is a crack in every thing God has made. It would seem there is always this vindictive circumstance stealing in at unawares even into the wild poesy in which the human fancy attempted to make bold holiday and to shake itself free of the old laws, — this back-stroke, this kick of the gun, certifying that the law

\* St. Augustine, Confessions, B. I. (Author's note).

is fatal; that in nature nothing can be given, all things are sold.

This is that ancient doctrine of Nemesis,<sup>23</sup> who keeps watch in the Universe and lets no offence go unchastised. The Furies<sup>24</sup> they said are attendants on justice, and if the sun in heaven should transgress his path they would punish him. The poets related that stone walls and iron swords and leathern thongs had an occult sympathy with the wrongs of their owners; that the belt which Ajax<sup>25</sup> gave Hector<sup>26</sup> dragged the Trojan hero over the field at the wheels of the car of Achilles,<sup>27</sup> and the sword which Hector gave Ajax was that on whose point Ajax fell. They recorded that when the Thasians<sup>28</sup> erected a statue to Theogenes,<sup>29</sup> a victor in the games, one of his rivals went to it by night and endeavored to throw it down by repeated blows, until at last he moved it from its pedestal and was crushed to death beneath its fall.

This voice of fable has in it somewhat divine. It came from thought above the will of the writer. That is the best part of each writer which has nothing private in it; that which he does not know; that which flowed out of his constitution and not from his too active invention; that which in the study of of a single artist you might not easily find, but in the study of many you would abstract as the spirit of them all. Phidias<sup>30</sup> it is not, but the work of man in that early Hellenic world that I would know. The name and circumstance of Phidias, however convenient for history, embarrass when we come to the highest criticism. We are to see that which man was tending to do in a given period, and was hindered, or, if you will, modified in doing, by the interfering volitions of Phidias, of Dante,<sup>31</sup> of Shakespeare, the organ whereby man at the moment wrought.

Still more striking is the expression of this fact in the proverbs of all nations, which are always the literature of reason, or the statements of an absolute truth without qualification. Proverbs, like the sacred books of each nation, are the sanctuary



of the intuitions. That which the droning world, chained to appearances, will not allow the realist to say in his own words, it will suffer him to say in proverbs without contradiction. And this law of laws, which the pulpit, the senate, and the college deny, is hourly preached in all markets and workshops by flights of proverbs, whose teaching is as true and as omnipresent as that of birds and flies.

All things are double, one against another. — Tit for tat; an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; blood for blood; measure for measure; love for love. — Give, and it shall be given you. — He that watereth shall be watered himself. — “What will you have?” quoth God; pay for it and take it. — Nothing venture, nothing have. — Thou shalt be paid exactly for what thou hast done, no more, no less. — Who doth not work shall not eat. — Harm watch, harm catch. — Curses always recoil on the head of him who imprecates them. — If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other end fastens itself around your own. — Bad counsel confounds the adviser. — The Devil is an ass.<sup>32</sup>

It is thus written, because it is thus in life. Our action is overmastered and characterised above our will by the law of nature. We aim at a petty end quite aside from the public good, but our act arranges itself by irresistible magnetism in a line with the poles of the world.

A man cannot speak but he judges himself. With his will or against his will he draws his portrait to the eye of his companions by every word. Every opinion reacts on him who utters it. It is a thread-ball thrown at a mark, but the other end remains in the thrower's bag. Or rather it is a harpoon hurled at the whale, unwinding, as it flies, a coil of cord in the boat, and, if the harpoon is not good, or not well thrown, it will go nigh to cut the steersman in twain or to sink the boat.

You cannot do wrong without suffering wrong. “No man had ever a point of pride that was not injurious to him,” said

Burke.<sup>33</sup> The exclusive in fashionable life does not see that he excludes himself from enjoyment, in the attempt to appropriate it. The exclusionist in religion does not see that he shuts the door of heaven on himself, in striving to shut out others. Treat men as pawns and ninepins and you shall suffer as well as they. If you leave out their heart, you shall lose your own. The senses would make things of all persons; of women, of children, of the poor. The vulgar proverb, "I will get it from his purse or get it from his skin", is sound philosophy.

All infractions of love and equity in our social relations are speedily punished. They are punished by fear. Whilst I stand in simple relations to my fellow-man, I have no displeasure in meeting him. We meet as water meets water, or as two currents of air mix, with perfect diffusion and interpenetration of nature. But as soon as there is any departure from simplicity and attempt at halfness, or good for me that is not good for him, my neighbor feels the wrong; he shrinks from me as far as I have shrunk from him; his eyes no longer seek mine; there is war between us; there is hate in him and fear in me.

All the old abuses in society, universal and particular, all unjust accumulations of property and power, are avenged in the same manner. Fear is an instructor of great sagacity and the herald of all revolutions. One thing he teaches, that there is rottenness where he appears. He is a carrion crow, and though you see not well what he hovers for, there is death somewhere. Our property is timid, our laws are timid, our cultivated classes are timid. Fear for ages has boded and mowed and gibbered over government and property. That obscene bird is not there for nothing. He indicates great wrongs which must be revised.

Of the like nature is that expectation of change which instantly follows the suspension of our voluntary activity. The terror of cloudless noon, the emerald of Polycrates,<sup>34</sup>

the awe of prosperity, the instinct which leads every generous soul to impose on itself tasks of a noble asceticism and vicarious virtue, are the tremblings of the balance of justice through the heart and mind of man.

Experienced men of the world know very well that it is best to pay scot and lot as they go along, and that a man often pays dear for a small frugality. The borrower runs in his own debt. Has a man gained any thing who has received a hundred favors and rendered none? Has he gained by borrowing, through indolence or cunning, his neighbor's wares, or horses, or money? There arises on the deed the instant acknowledgment of benefit on the one part and of debt on the other; that is, of superiority and inferiority. The transaction remains in the memory of himself and his neighbor; and every new transaction alters according to its nature their relation to each other. He may soon come to see that he had better have broken his own bones than to have ridden in his neighbor's coach, and that "the highest price he can pay for a thing is to ask for it".

A wise man will extend this lesson to all parts of life, and know that it is always the part of prudence to face every claimant and pay every just demand on your time, your talents, or your heart. Always pay; for first or last you must pay your entire debt. Persons and events may stand for a time between you and justice, but it is only a postponement. You must pay at last your own debt. If you are wise you will dread a prosperity which only loads you with more. Benefit is the end of nature. But for every benefit which you receive, a tax is levied. He is great who confers the most benefits. He is base, — and that is the one base thing in the universe, — to receive favors and render none. In the order of nature we cannot render benefits to those from whom we receive them, or only seldom. But the benefit we receive must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, cent for cent, to somebody. Beware of too much good staying in your hand. It will fast corrupt and worm worms. Pay it away quickly in some sort.

Labor is watched over by the same pitiless laws. Cheapest, say the prudent, is the dearest labor. What we buy in a broom, a mat, a wagon, a knife, is some application of good sense to a common want. It is best to pay in your land a skilful gardener, or to buy good sense applied to gardening; in your sailor, good sense applied to navigation; in the house, good sense applied to cooking, sewing, serving; in your agent, good sense applied to accounts and affairs. So do you multiply your presence, or spread yourself throughout your estate. But because of the dual constitution of things, in labor as in life there can be no cheating. The thief steals from himself. The swindler swindles himself. For the real price of labor is knowledge and virtue, whereof wealth and credit are signs. These signs, like paper money, may be counterfeited or stolen, but that which they represent, namely, knowledge and virtue, cannot be counterfeited or stolen. These ends of labor cannot be answered but by real exertions of the mind, and in obedience to pure motives. The cheat, the defaulter, the gambler, cannot extort the benefit, cannot extort the knowledge of material and moral nature which his honest care and pains yield to the operative. The law of nature is, Do the thing, and you shall have the power; but they who do not the thing have not the power.

Human labor, through all its forms, from the sharpening of a stake to the construction of a city or an epic, is one immense illustration of the perfect compensation of the universe. The absolute balance of Give and Take, the doctrine that every thing has its price, — and if that price is not paid, not that thing but something else is obtained, and that it is impossible to get anything without its price, — is not less sublime in the columns of a ledger than in the budgets of states, in the laws of light and darkness, in all the action and reaction of nature. I cannot doubt that the high laws which each man sees ever implicated in those processes with which he is conversant, the stern ethics which sparkle on his chisel-edge,

which are measured out by his plumb and foot-rule, which stand as manifest in the footing of the shop-bill as in the history of a state, — do recommend to him his trade, and though seldom named, exalt his business to his imagination.

The league between virtue and nature engages all things to assume a hostile front to vice. The beautiful laws and substances of the world persecute and whip the traitor. He finds that things are arranged for truth and benefit, but there is no den in the wide world to hide a rogue. Commit a crime, and the earth is made of glass. Commit a crime, and it seems as if a coat of snow fell on the ground, such as reveals in the woods the track of every partridge and fox and squirrel and mole. You cannot recall the spoken word, you cannot wipe out the foot-track, you cannot draw up the ladder, so as to leave no inlet or clew. Some damning circumstance always transpires. The laws and substances of nature, — water, snow, wind, gravitation, — become penalties to the thief.

On the other hand the law holds with equal sureness for all right action. (Love, and you shall be loved. All love is mathematically just, as much as two sides of an algebraic equation.) The good man has absolute good, which like fire turns every thing to its own nature, so that you cannot do him any harm; but as the royal armies sent against Napoleon, when he approached cast down their colors and from enemies became friends, so disasters of all kinds, as sickness, offence, poverty, prove benefactors: —

“Winds blow and waters roll<sup>35</sup>  
Strength to the brave and power and deity,  
Yet in themselves are nothing.”

The good are befriended even by weakness and defect. As no man had ever a point of pride that was not injurious to him, so no man had ever a defect that was not somewhere made useful to him. The stag in the fable<sup>36</sup> admired his horns and blamed his feet, but when the hunter came, his

feet saved him, and afterwards, caught in the thicket, his horns destroyed him. Every man in his lifetime needs to thank his faults. As no man thoroughly understands a truth until he has contended against it, so no man has a thorough acquaintance with the hindrances or talents of men until he has suffered from the one and seen the triumph of the other over his own want of the same. Has he a defect of temper that unfits him to live in society? Thereby he is driven to entertain himself alone and acquire habits of self-help; and thus, like the wounded oyster, he mends his shell with pearl.

Our strength grows out of our weakness. The indignation which arms itself with secret forces does not awaken until we are pricked and stung and sorely assailed. A great man is always willing to be little. Whilst he sits on the cushion of advantages, he goes to sleep. When he is pushed, tormented, defeated, he has a chance to learn something; he has been put on his wits, on his manhood; he has gained facts; learns his ignorance; is cured of the insanity of conceit; has got moderation and real skill. The wise man always throws himself on the side of his assailants. It is more his interest than it is theirs to find his weak point. The wound cicatrizes and falls off from him like a dead skin and when they would triumph, lo! he has passed on invulnerable. Blame is safer than praise. I hate to be defended in a newspaper. As long as all that is said is said against me, I feel a certain assurance of success. But as soon as honeyed words of praise are spoken for me I feel as one that lies unprotected before his enemies. In general, every evil to which we do not succumb is a benefactor. As the Sandwich Islander believes that the strength and valor of the enemy he kills passes into himself, so we gain the strength of the temptation we resist.

The same guards which protect us from disaster, defect, and enmity, defend us, if we will, from selfishness and fraud. Bolts and bars are not the best of our institutions, nor is

shrewdness in trade a mark of wisdom. Men suffer all their life long under the foolish superstition that they can be cheated. But it is as impossible for a man to be cheated by any one but himself, as for a thing to be and not to be at the same time. There is a third silent party to all our bargains. The nature and soul of things takes on itself the guaranty of the fulfilment of every contract, so that honest service cannot come to loss. If you serve an ungrateful master, serve him the more. Put God in your debt. Every stroke shall be repaid. The longer the payment is withholden, the better for you; for compound interest on compound interest is the rate and usage of this exchequer.

The history of persecution is a history of endeavors to cheat nature, to make water run up hill, to twist a rope of sand. It makes no difference whether the actors be many or one, a tyrant or a mob. A mob is a society of bodies voluntarily be-reaving themselves of reason and traversing its work. The mob is man voluntarily descending to the nature of the beast. Its fit hour of activity is night. Its actions are insane, like its whole constitution. It persecutes a principle; it would whip a right; it would tar and feather justice, by inflicting fire and outrage upon the houses and persons of those who have these. It resembles the prank of boys, who run with fire-engines to put out the ruddy aurora streaming to the stars. The inviolate spirit turns their spite against the wrongdoers. The martyr cannot be dishonored. Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame; every prison a more illustrious abode; every burned book or house enlightens the world; every suppressed or expunged word reverberates through the earth from side to side. Hours of sanity and consideration are always arriving to communities, as to individuals, when the truth is seen and the martyrs are justified.

Thus do all things preach the indifferency of circumstances. The man is all. Every thing has two sides, a good and an evil. Every advantage has its tax. I learn to be content. But the

doctrine of compensation is not the doctrine of indifferency. The thoughtless say, on hearing these representations, — “What boots <sup>37</sup> it to do well? there is one event to good and evil; If I gain any good I must pay for it; if I lose any good I gain some other; all actions are indifferent.”

There is a deeper fact in the soul than compensation; to wit, its own nature. The soul is not a compensation, but a life. The soul *is*. Under all this running sea of circumstance, whose waters ebb and flow with perfect balance, lies the aboriginal abyss of real Being. Existence, or God, is not a relation or a part, but the whole. Being is the vast affirmative, excluding negation, self-balanced, and swallowing up all relations, parts, and times within itself. Nature, truth, virtue, are the influx from thence. Vice is the absence or departure of the same. Nothing, Falsehood, may indeed stand as the great Night or shade on which as a background the living universe paints itself forth; but no fact is begotten by it; it cannot work, for it is not. It cannot work any good; it cannot work any harm. It is harm inasmuch as it is worse not to be than to be.

We feel defrauded of the retribution due to evil acts, because the criminal adheres to his vice and contumacy and does not come to a crisis or judgment anywhere in visible nature. There is no stunning confutation of his nonsense before men and angels. Has he therefore outwitted the law? Inasmuch as he carries the malignity and the lie with him he so far deceases from nature. In some manner there will be a demonstration of the wrong to the understanding also; but, should we not see it, this deadly deduction makes square the eternal account.

Neither can it be said, on the other hand, that the gain of rectitude must be bought by any loss. There is no penalty to virtue; no penalty to wisdom; they are proper additions of being. In a virtuous action I properly *am*; in a virtuous act I add to the world; I plant into deserts conquered from Chaos



and Nothing and see the darkness receding on the limits of the horizon. There can be no excess of love, none to knowledge, none to beauty, when these attributes are considered in the purest sense. The soul refuses limits and always affirms in man an Optimism, never a Pessimism.

His life is a progress, and not a station. His instinct is trust. Our instinct uses "more" and "less" in application to man, always of the *presence of the soul*, and not of its absence; the brave man is greater than the coward; the true, the benevolent, the wise, is more a man and not less, than the fool and knave. There is no tax on the good of virtue, for that is the incoming of God himself, or absolute existence, without any comparative. Material good has its tax, and if it came without desert or sweat, has no root in me, and the next wind will blow it away. But all the good of nature is the soul's, and may be had if paid for in nature's lawful coin; that is, by labor which the heart and the head allow. I no longer wish to meet a good I do not earn; for example to find a pot of buried gold, knowing that it brings with it new burdens. I do not wish more external goods, — neither possessions, nor honors, nor powers, nor persons. The gain is apparent; the tax is certain. But there is no tax on the knowledge that the compensation exists and that it is not desirable to dig up treasure. Herein I rejoice with a serene eternal peace. I contract the boundaries of possible mischief. I learn the wisdom of St. Bernard,<sup>38</sup> "Nothing can work me damage except myself; the harm that I sustain I carry about with me and never am a real sufferer but by my own fault."

In the nature of the soul is the compensation for the inequalities of condition. The radical tragedy of nature seems to be the distinction of More and Less. How can Less not feel the pain; how not feel indignation or malevolence towards More? Look at those who have less faculty, and one feels sad and knows not well what to make of it. He almost shuns their eye; he fears they will upbraid God. What should

they do? It seems a great injustice. But see the facts nearly and these mountainous inequalities vanish. Love reduces them as the sun melts the iceberg in the sea. The heart and soul of all men being one, this bitterness of *His* and *Mine* ceases. His is mine. I am my brother and my brother is me. If I feel overshadowed and outdone by great neighbors, I can yet love; I can still receive; and he that loveth maketh his own the grandeur he loves. Thereby I make the discovery that my brother is my guardian, acting for me with the friendliest designs, and the estate I so admired and envied is my own. It is the nature of the soul to appropriate all things. Jesus and Shakespeare are fragments of the soul, and by love I conquer and incorporate them in my own conscious domain. His virtue, — is not that mine? His wit, — if it cannot be made mine, it is not wit.

Such also is the natural history of calamity. The changes which break up at short intervals the prosperity of men are advertisements of a nature whose law is growth. Every soul is by this intrinsic necessity quitting its whole system of things, its friends and home and laws and faith, as the shellfish crawls out of its beautiful but stony case, because it no longer admits of its growth, and slowly forms a new house. In proportion to the vigor of the individual these revolutions are frequent, until in some happier mind they are incessant and all worldly relations hang very loosely about him, becoming as it were a transparent fluid membrane through which the living form is seen, and not, as in most men, an indurated heterogeneous fabric of many dates and of no settled character, in which the man is imprisoned. Then there can be enlargement, and the man of to-day scarcely recognizes the man of yesterday. And such should be the outward biography of man in time, a putting off of dead circumstances day by day, as he renews his raiment day by day. But to us, in our lapsed estate, resting, not advancing, resisting, not cooperating with the divine expansion, this growth comes by shocks.

We cannot part with our friends. We cannot let our angels go. We do not see that they only go out that archangels may come in. We are idolators of the old. We do not believe in the riches of the soul, in its proper eternity and omnipresence. We do not believe there is any force in to-day to rival or recreate that beautiful yesterday. We linger in the ruins of the old tent where once we had bread and shelter and organs, nor believe that the spirit can feed, cover, and nerve us again. We cannot again find aught so dear, so sweet, so graceful. But we sit and weep in vain. The voice of the Almighty saith, 'Up and onward forevermore!' We cannot stay amid the ruins. Neither will we rely on the new; and so we walk ever with reverted eyes, like those monsters who look backwards.

And yet the compensations of calamity are made apparent to the understanding also, after long intervals of time. A fever, a mutilation, a cruel disappointment, a loss of wealth, a loss of friends, seems at the moment unpaid loss, and unpayable. But the sure years reveal the deep remedial force that underlies all facts. The death of a dear friend, wife, brother, lover, which seemed nothing but privation, somewhat later assumes the aspect of a guide or genius; for it commonly operates revolutions in our way of life, terminates an epoch of infancy or of youth which was waiting to be closed, breaks up a wonted occupation or a household or style of living, and allows the formation of new ones more friendly to the growth of character. It permits or constrains the formation of new acquaintances and the reception of new influences that prove of the first importance to the next years; and the man or woman who would have remained a sunny garden-flower, with no room for its roots and too much sunshine for its head, by the falling of the walls and the neglect of the gardener is made the banian of the forest, yielding shade and fruit to wide neighborhoods of men.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Emerson is here bringing out the truth so well recognized by all orators, evangelists, and playwrights, that audience psychology is on a different plane from the individual. This is responsible for the different technics in literature to be spoken and literature to be read; as the drama and the novel.

<sup>2</sup> The following chapter is the essay on *Spiritual Laws*.

<sup>3</sup> For a scientific definition, see a good dictionary. Emerson uses the word merely in its popular sense of opposite qualities.

<sup>4</sup> Of the heart. The contraction and expansion of the heart respectively, in its process of the circulation of the body, is kept up.

<sup>5</sup> Primary education in early days of the American system was in the hands mostly of elderly ladies. These schools were called "dames' schools."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Luke XIV*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> The Latin for the preceding sentence.

<sup>8</sup> A reference, of course, to the scientist's faith in evolution.

<sup>9</sup> This expresses Emerson's essential belief in Pantheism; that is, that all nature is an expression of God. The Unitarians still lay much stress upon Nature in their sermons.

<sup>10</sup> A quotation from the Greek poet Sophocles.

<sup>11</sup> This is dangerously close to a joke, though Emerson is not much given to humor. The loading of dice is a dishonest way of winning the game by so weighting the die that it tends to fall with the large numbers up.

<sup>12</sup> Emerson seems to be using this word here more in the sense of "sensuous" than "sensual," which today probably has a lower meaning than in the early nineteenth century.

<sup>13</sup> Meaning to carry on a contest between buyer and seller in the establishment of a price. This was a common practice among merchants before the one-price practice prevailed.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Horace, *Epistles*, I, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Here used in the lower sense.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Book I. Also, *Isaiah*, XXXIII, 5.

<sup>17</sup> According to Greek mythology, the founder of civilization. Hesiod tells how, in a controversy between gods and men, Prometheus deceived Zeus, who in revenge withdrew fire from men. Prometheus stole it and carried it to earth, for which crime he was punished by being chained to a rock where every day an eagle preyed upon his liver.

<sup>18</sup> In Roman mythology she was supposed to be the daughter of Jupiter and the goddess of invention, thought, and intelligence.

<sup>19</sup> From Æschylus' *Eumenides*, 827-828, Sedgwick ed., we are told by Dr. J. P. Pritchard, Washington and Jefferson College.

It is a part of Athena's speech, *καὶ κληῖδας οἶδα δώματος (δωμάτων?) μὴν θεῶν ἐν ᾧ κεραυνὸς ἐστὶν εσφραγισμένος.*

<sup>20</sup> Tithonus was a Trojan prince so beautiful that Aurora, goddess of the dawn, persuaded Jupiter to make him immortal, but forgot to ask to have him preserved as a young man. So he grew so old and ugly that Aurora had to change him into a grasshopper.

<sup>21</sup> His mother, Thetis, dipped him in the River Styx to make him invulnerable, but neglected to dip his heel under. So he died later from a wound in his heel.

<sup>22</sup> The *Nibelungenlied* is a German epic of which the hero's name is Siegfried.

<sup>23</sup> In Greek mythology the personification of retribution, the divinity of chastisement and vengeance.

<sup>24</sup> The Furies were Greek divinities: Tesiphone, Alecto, and Megæra. They were the ministers of the vengeance of the gods. See Gayley's *Classic Myths*.

<sup>25</sup> Bravest of all the Greeks who besieged Troy except Achilles. He typifies brute strength and courage without reason.

<sup>26</sup> Son of Priam, king of Troy; leader of the Trojans; opponent of Achilles.

<sup>27</sup> Hero on the Greek side in the Trojan War.

<sup>28</sup> Inhabitants of the island of Thasos southeast of Thrace.

<sup>29</sup> A famous Greek athlete from Thasos in the Olympian games. He was supposed to have become a god after death.

<sup>30</sup> The greatest of the Greek sculptors (fifth century B.C.).

<sup>31</sup> *Dante*, Alighieri, Italian poet, writer of *The Divine Comedy* (1265-1321).

<sup>32</sup> A common expression. See Ben Jonson's comedy, *The Divell is an Asse*, IV, 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Burke*, Edmund, Irish orator, statesman, and writer (1729-1797).

<sup>34</sup> Polycrates, emperor of Samos, was supposed to have been too fortunate for his own good. So under the advice of the king of Egypt, Amasis, he threw away his most prized possession, a ring, only to have it returned to him in the stomach of a fish sent him next day as a gift. This indicated that he was doomed, for the gods are always kind to those they intend to destroy. Sure enough, Polycrates was crucified by an enemy.

<sup>35</sup> From Wordsworth's sonnet, *Near Dover, September, 1802*, revised, 1807.

<sup>36</sup> One of Æsop's fables.

<sup>37</sup> Old verb, now obsolete, meaning "benefit." Horse traders in New England, when offering additional inducements to a bargain, called them "to boot"; that is, thrown in as gifts.

<sup>38</sup> Abbot of Clairvaux Monastery, a most gifted preacher, influential in ending the so-called papal schism; *i.e.*, the claims of two popes (1091-1153).

## MANNERS

HALF the world, it is said, knows not how the other half lives. Our Exploring Expedition saw the Feejee Islanders getting their dinner off human bones; and they are said to eat their own wives and children. The husbandry of the modern inhabitants of Gournou (west of old Thebes) is philosophical to a fault. To set up their housekeeping, nothing is requisite but two or three earthen pots, a stone to grind meal, and a mat which is the bed. The house, namely, a tomb, is ready without rent or taxes. No rain can pass through the roof, and there is no door, for there is no want of one, as there is nothing to lose. If the house do not please them, they walk out and enter another, as there are several hundreds at their command. "It is somewhat singular," adds Belzoni,<sup>1</sup> to whom we owe this account, "to talk of happiness among people who live in sepulchres, among the corpses and rags of an ancient nation which they know nothing of." In the deserts of Borgoo,<sup>2</sup> the rock-Tibboos still dwell in caves, like cliff-swallows, and the language of these negroes is compared by their neighbors to the shrieking of bats and to the whistling of birds. Again, the Bornoos<sup>3</sup> have no proper names; individuals are called after their height, thickness, or other accidental quality, and have nicknames merely. But the salt, the dates, the ivory, and the gold, for which these horrible regions are visited, find their way into countries, where the purchaser and consumer can hardly be ranked in one race with these cannibals and man-stealers; countries where man serves himself with metals, wood, stone, glass, gum, cotton, silk, and wool; honors himself with architecture; writes laws, and contrives to execute his will through the hands of many nations; and, especially, establishes a

select society, running through all the countries of intelligent men, a self-constituted aristocracy, or fraternity of the best, which, without written law or exact usage of any kind, perpetuates itself, colonizes every new-planted island, and adopts and makes its own whatever personal beauty or extraordinary native endowment anywhere appears.

What fact more conspicuous in modern history, than the creation of the gentleman? Chivalry is that, and loyalty is that, and, in English literature, half the drama, and all the novels, from Sir Philip Sidney <sup>4</sup> to Sir Walter Scott,<sup>5</sup> paint this figure. The word *gentleman*, which, like the word Christian, must hereafter characterize the present and the few preceding centuries, by the importance attached to it, is a homage to personal and incommunicable properties. Frivolous and fantastic additions have got associated with the name, but the steady interest of mankind in it must be attributed to the valuable properties which it designates. An element which unites all the most forcible persons of every country; makes them intelligible and agreeable to each other, and is somewhat so precise, that it is at once felt if an individual lack the masonic sign, — cannot be any casual product, but must be an average result of the character and faculties universally found in men. It seems a certain permanent average; as the atmosphere is a permanent composition, whilst so many gases are combined only to be decomposed. *Comme il faut*,<sup>6</sup> is the Frenchman's description of good society, *as we must be*. It is a spontaneous fruit of talents and feelings of precisely that class who have most vigor, who take the lead in the world of this hour, and, though far from pure, far from constituting the gladdest and highest tone of human feeling, is as good as the whole society permits it to be. It is made of the spirit, more than of the talent of men, and is a compound result, into which every great force enters as an ingredient; namely, virtue, wit, beauty, wealth, and power.

There is something equivocal in all the words in use to

express the excellence of manners and social cultivation, because the quantities are fluxional, and the last effect is assumed by the senses as the cause. The word *gentleman* has not any correlative abstract to express the quality. *Gentility* is mean, and *gentillesse* is obsolete. But we must keep alive in the vernacular the distinction between *fashion*, a word of narrow and often sinister meaning, and the heroic character which *the gentleman* imports. The usual words, however, must be respected; they will be found to contain the root of the matter. The point of distinction in all this class of names, as courtesy, chivalry, fashion, and the like, is, that the flower and fruit, not the grain of the tree, are contemplated. It is beauty which is the aim this time, and not worth. The result is now in question, although our words intimate well enough the popular feeling, that the appearance supposes a substance. The gentleman is a man of truth, lord of his own actions, and expressing that lordship in his behavior, not in any manner dependent and servile either on persons, or opinions, or possessions. Beyond this fact of truth and real force, the word denotes good-nature or benevolence; manhood first, and then gentleness. The popular notion certainly adds a condition of ease and fortune; but that is a natural result of personal force and love, that they should possess and dispense the goods of the world. In times of violence, every eminent person must fall in with many opportunities to approve his stoutness and worth; therefore every man's name that emerged at all from the mass in the feudal ages, rattles in our ear like a flourish of trumpets. But personal force never goes out of fashion. That is still paramount to-day, and in the moving crowd of good society the men of valor and reality are known, and rise to their natural place. The competition is transferred from war to politics and trade, but the personal force appears readily enough in these new arenas.

Power first, or no leading class. In politics and in trade,



bruisers and pirates are of better promise than talkers and clerks. God knows that all sorts of gentlemen knock at the door; but whenever used in strictness and with any emphasis, the name will be found to point at original energy. It describes a man standing in his own right and working after untaught methods. In a good lord there must first be a good animal, at least to the extent of yielding the incomparable advantage of animal spirits. The ruling class must have more, but they must have these, giving in every company the sense of power, which makes things easy to be done which daunt the wise. The society of the energetic class, in their friendly and festive meetings, is full of courage and of attempts, which intimidate the pale scholar. The courage which girls exhibit is like a battle of Lundy's Lane,<sup>8</sup> or a sea fight. The intellect relies on memory to make some supplies to face these extemporaneous squadrons. But memory is a base mendicant with basket and badge, in the presence of these sudden masters. The rulers of society must be up to the work of the world, and equal to their versatile office: men of the right Cæsarian pattern,<sup>9</sup> who have great range of affinity. I am far from believing the timid maxim of Lord Falkland<sup>10</sup> ("that for ceremony there must go two to it; since a bold fellow will go through the cunningest forms"), and am of opinion that the gentleman is the bold fellow whose forms are not to be broken through; and only that plenteous nature is rightful master which is the complement of whatever person it converses with. My gentleman gives the law where he is; he will outpray saints in chapel, outgeneral veterans in the field, and outshine all courtesy in the hall. He is good company for pirates and good with academicians; so that it is useless to fortify yourself against him; he has the private entrance to all minds, and I could as easily exclude myself, as him. The famous gentlemen of Asia and Europe have been of this strong type; Saladin,<sup>11</sup> Sapor,<sup>12</sup> the Cid,<sup>13</sup> Julius Cæsar,<sup>14</sup> Scipio,<sup>15</sup> Alexander,<sup>16</sup> Pericles,<sup>17</sup> and the lordliest personages. They sat very carelessly

in their chairs, and were too excellent themselves to value any condition at a high rate.

A plentiful fortune is reckoned necessary, in the popular judgment, to the completion of this man of the world; and it is a material deputy which walks through the dance which the first has led. Money is not essential, but this wide affinity is, which transcends the habits of clique and caste and makes itself felt by men of all classes. If the aristocrat is only valid in fashionable circles, and not with truckmen, he will never be a leader in fashion; and if the man of the people cannot speak on equal terms with the gentleman, so that the gentleman shall perceive that he is already really of his own order, he is not to be feared. Diogenes,<sup>18</sup> Socrates,<sup>19</sup> and Epaminondas,<sup>20</sup> are gentlemen of the best blood who have chosen the condition of poverty when that of wealth was equally open to them. I use these old names, but the men I speak of are my contemporaries. Fortune will not supply to every generation one of these well-appointed knights, but every collection of men furnishes some example of the class; and the politics of this country, and the trade of every town, are controlled by these hardy and irresponsible doers, who have invention to take the lead, and a broad sympathy which puts them in fellowship with crowds, and makes their action popular.

The manners of this class are observed and caught with devotion by men of taste. The association of these masters with each other and with men intelligent of their merits, is mutually agreeable and stimulating. The good forms, the happiest expressions of each, are repeated and adopted. By swift consent everything superfluous is dropped, everything graceful is renewed. Fine manners show themselves formidable to the uncultivated man. They are a subtler science of defence to parry and intimidate; but once matched by the skill of the other party, they drop the point of the sword, — points and fences disappear, and the youth finds himself in a more transparent atmosphere, wherein life is a

less troublesome game, and not a misunderstanding rises between the players. Manners aim to facilitate life, to get rid of impediments, and bring the man pure to energize. They aid our dealing and conversation as a railway aids travelling, by getting rid of all avoidable obstructions of the road, and leaving nothing to be conquered but pure space. These forms very soon become fixed, and a fine sense of propriety is cultivated with the more heed that it becomes a badge of social and civil distinction. Thus grows up Fashion, an equivocal semblance, the most puissant, the most fantastic and frivolous, the most feared and followed, and which morals and violence assault in vain.

There exists a strict relation between the class of power, and the exclusive and polished circles. The last are always filled or filling from the first. The strong men usually give some allowance even to the petulances of fashion, for that affinity they find in it. Napoleon, child of the revolution, destroyer of the old noblesse, never ceased to court the Faubourg <sup>21</sup> St. Germain; doubtless with the feeling that fashion is a homage to men of his stamp. Fashion, though in a strange way, represents all manly virtue. It is virtue gone to seed: it is a kind of posthumous honor. It does not often caress the great, but the children of the great: it is a hall of the Past. It usually sets its face against the great of this hour. Great men are not commonly in its halls; they are absent in the field: they are working, not triumphing. Fashion is made up of their children; of those who through the value and virtue of somebody, have acquired lustre to their name, marks of distinction, means of cultivation and generosity, and in their physical organization a certain health and excellence which secures to them if not the highest power to work, yet high power to enjoy. The class of power, the working heroes, the Cortez,<sup>22</sup> the Nelson,<sup>23</sup> the Napoleon, see that this is the festivity and permanent celebration of such as they; that fashion is funded talent; is Mexico, Marengo,<sup>24</sup> and Trafal-

gar <sup>25</sup> beaten out thin; that the brilliant names of fashion run back to just such busy names as their own, fifty or sixty years ago. They are the sowers, their sons shall be the reapers, and *their* sons, in the ordinary course of things, must yield the possession of the harvest to new competitors with keener eyes and stronger frames. The city is recruited from the country. In the year 1805, it is said, every legitimate monarch in Europe was imbecile. The city would have died out, rotted, and exploded, long ago, but that it was reinforced from the fields. It is only country which came to town day before yesterday that is city and court to-day.

Aristocracy and fashion are certain inevitable results. These mutual selections are indestructible. If they provoke anger in the least favored class, and the excluded majority revenge themselves on the excluding minority by the strong hand and kill them, at once a new class finds itself at the top, as certainly as cream rises in a bowl of milk: and if the people should destroy class after class, until two men only were left, one of these would be the leader and would be involuntarily served and copied by the other. You may keep this minority out of sight and out of mind, but it is tenacious of life, and is one of the estates of the realm. I am the more struck with this tenacity, when I see its work. It respects the administration of such unimportant matters, that we should not look for any durability in its rule. We sometimes meet men under some strong moral influence, as a patriotic, a literary, a religious movement, and feel that the moral sentiment rules man and nature. We think all other distinctions and ties will be slight and fugitive, this of caste or fashion for example; yet come from year to year and see how permanent that is, in this Boston or New York life of man, where too it has not the least countenance from the law of the land. Not in Egypt or in India a firmer or more impassable line. Here are associations whose ties go over and under and through it, a meeting of merchants, a military corps, a college class, a fire-club, a

professional association, a political, a religious convention; — the persons seem to draw inseparably near; yet, that assembly once dispersed, its members will not in the year meet again. Each returns to his degree in the scale of good society, porcelain remains porcelain, and earthen earthen. The objects of fashion may be frivolous, or fashion may be objectless, but the nature of this union and selection can be neither frivolous nor accidental. Each man's rank in that perfect graduation depends on some symmetry in his structure, or some agreement in his structure to the symmetry of society. Its doors unbar instantaneously to a natural claim of their own kind. A natural gentleman finds his way in, and will keep the oldest patrician out who has lost his intrinsic rank. Fashion understands itself; good breeding and personal superiority of whatever country readily fraternize with those of every other. The chiefs of savage tribes have distinguished themselves in London and Paris by the purity of their tournure.<sup>26</sup>

To say what good of fashion we can, it rests on reality, and hates nothing so much as pretenders; to exclude and mystify pretenders, and send them into everlasting "Coventry,"<sup>27</sup> is its delight. We condemn, in turn, every other gift of men of the world; but the habit even in little and the least matters of not appealing to any but our own sense of propriety, constitutes the foundation of all chivalry. There is almost no kind of self-reliance, so it be sane and proportioned, which fashion does not occasionally adopt and give it the freedom of its saloons. A sainted soul is always elegant, and, if it will, passes unchallenged into the most guarded ring. But so will Jock the teamster pass, in some crisis that brings him thither, and find favor, as long as his head is not giddy with the new circumstance, and the iron shoes do not wish to dance in waltzes and cotillons. For there is nothing settled in manners, but the laws of behavior yield to the energy of the individual. The maiden at her first ball, the countryman at a city dinner, believes that there is a ritual according to

which every act and compliment must be performed, or the failing party must be cast out of this presence. Later they learn that good sense and character make their own forms every moment, and speak or abstain, take wine or refuse it, stay or go, sit in a chair or sprawl with children on the floor, or stand on their head, or what else soever, in a new and aboriginal way; and that strong will is always in fashion, let who will be unfashionable. All that fashion demands is composure, and self-content. A circle of men perfectly well-bred would be a company of sensible persons in which every man's native manners and character appeared. If the fashionist have not this quality, he is nothing. We are such lovers of self-reliance that we excuse in a man many sins if he will show us a complete satisfaction in his position, which asks no leave to be, of mine, or any man's good opinion. But any deference to some eminent man or woman of the world, forfeits all privilege of nobility. He is an underling: I have nothing to do with him; I will speak with his master. A man should not go where he cannot carry his whole sphere or society with him, — not bodily, the whole circle of his friends, but atmospherically. He should preserve in a new company the same attitude of mind and reality of relation which his daily associates draw him to, else he is shorn of his best beams, and will be an orphan in the merriest club. "If you could see Vich Ian Vohr with his tail on! ——" But Vich Ian Vohr<sup>28</sup> must always carry his belongings in some fashion, if not added as honor, then severed as disgrace.

There will always be in society certain persons who are mercuries of its approbation, and whose glance will at any time determine for the curious their standing in the world. These are the chamberlains of the lesser gods. Accept their coldness as an omen of grace with the loftier deities, and allow them all their privilege. They are clear in their office, nor could they be thus formidable without their own merits. But do not measure the importance of this class by their pre-

tension, or imagine that a fop can be the dispenser of honor and shame. They pass also at their just rate; for how can they otherwise, in circles which exist as a sort of herald's office for the sifting of character?

As the first thing man requires of man is reality, so that appears in all the forms of society. We pointedly, and by name, introduce the parties to each other. Know you before all heaven and earth, that this is Andrew, and this is Gregory, — they look each other in the eye; they grasp each other's hand, to identify and signalize each other. It is a great satisfaction. A gentleman never dodges; his eyes look straight forward, and he assures the other party, first of all, that he has been met. For what is it that we seek, in so many visits and hospitalities? Is it your draperies, pictures, and decorations? Or do we not insatiably ask, "Was a man in the house?" I may easily go into a great household where there is much substance, excellent provision for comfort, luxury, and taste, and yet not encounter there any *Amphitryon*,<sup>29</sup> who shall subordinate these appendages. I may go into a cottage, and find a farmer who feels that he is the man I have come to see, and fronts me accordingly. It was therefore a very natural point of old feudal etiquette that a gentleman who received a visit, though it were of his sovereign, should not leave his roof, but should wait his arrival at the door of his house. No house, though it were the Tuileries,<sup>30</sup> or the Escorial,<sup>31</sup> is good for anything without a master. And yet we are not often gratified by this hospitality. Every body we know surrounds himself with a fine house, fine books, conservatory, gardens, equipage, and all manner of toys, as screens to interpose between himself and his guest. Does it not seem as if man was of a very sly, elusive nature, and dreaded nothing so much as a full *rencontre* front to front with his fellow? It were unmerciful, I know, quite to abolish the use of these screens, which are of eminent convenience, whether the guest is too great or too little. We call together

many friends who keep each other in play, or by luxuries and ornaments we amuse the young people, and guard our retirement. Or if perchance a searching realist comes to our gate, before whose eye we have no care to stand, then again we run to our curtain, and hide ourselves as Adam at the voice of the Lord God in the garden. Cardinal Caprara,<sup>32</sup> the Pope's legate at Paris, defended himself from the glances of Napoleon by an immense pair of green spectacles. Napoleon remarked them, and speedily managed to rally them off: and yet Napoleon, in his turn, was not great enough with eight hundred thousand troops at his back, to face a pair of freeborn eyes, but fenced himself with etiquette and within triple barriers of reserve; and, as all the world knows from Madame de Staël,<sup>33</sup> was wont, when he found himself observed, to discharge his face of all expression. But emperors and rich men are by no means the most skilful masters of good manners. No rent-roll nor army-list can dignify skulking and dissimulation; and the first point of courtesy must always be truth, as really all the forms of good breeding point that way.

I have just been reading, in Mr. Hazlitt's<sup>34</sup> translation, Montaigne's account of his journey into Italy, and am struck with nothing more agreeably than the self-respecting fashions of the time. His arrival in each place, the arrival of a gentleman of France, is an event of some consequence. Wherever he goes he pays a visit to whatever prince or gentleman of note resides upon his road, as a duty to himself and to civilization. When he leaves any house in which he has lodged for a few weeks, he causes his arms to be painted and hung up as a perpetual sign to the house, as was the custom of gentlemen.

The complement of this graceful self-respect, and that of all the points of good breeding I most require and insist upon, is deference. I like that every chair should be a throne, and hold a king. I prefer a tendency to stateliness, to an excess of fellowship. Let the incommunicable objects of nature and the metaphysical isolation of man teach us independence.



Let us not be too much acquainted. I would have a man enter his house through a hall filled with heroic and sacred sculptures, that he might not want the hint of tranquillity and self-poise. We should meet each morning as from foreign countries, and, spending the day together, should depart at night, as into foreign countries. In all things I would have the island of a man inviolate. Let us sit apart as the gods, talking from peak to peak all round Olympus. No degree of affection need invade this religion. This is myrrh and rosemary to keep the other sweet. Lovers should guard their strangeness. If they forgive too much, all slides into confusion and meanness. It is easy to push this deference to a Chinese etiquette; but coolness and absence of heat and haste indicate fine qualities. A gentleman makes no noise; a lady is serene. Proportionate is our disgust at those invaders who fill a studious house with blast and running, to secure some paltry convenience. Not less I dislike a low sympathy of each with his neighbor's needs. Must we have a good understanding with one another's palates? as foolish people who have lived long together know when each wants salt or sugar. I pray my companion, if he wishes for bread, to ask me for bread, and if he wishes for sassafras or arsenic, to ask me for them, and not to hold out his plate as if I knew already. Every natural function can be dignified by deliberation and privacy. Let us leave hurry to slaves. The compliments and ceremonies of our breeding should recall, however remotely, the grandeur of our destiny.

The flower of courtesy does not very well bide handling, but if we dare to open another leaf, and explore what parts go to its conformation, we shall find also an intellectual quality. To the leaders of men, the brain as well as the flesh and the heart must furnish a proportion. Defect in manners is usually the defect of fine perceptions. Men are too coarsely made for the delicacy of beautiful carriage and customs. It is not quite sufficient to good breeding, a union of kindness and inde-

pendence. We imperatively require a perception of, and a homage to beauty in our companions. Other virtues are in request in the field and workyard, but a certain degree of taste is not to be spared in those we sit with. I could better eat with one who did not respect the truth or the laws than with a sloven and unpresentable person. Moral qualities rule the world, but at short distances the senses are despotic. The same discrimination of fit and fair runs out, if with less rigor, into all parts of life. The average spirit of the energetic class is good sense, acting under certain limitations and to certain ends. It entertains every natural gift. Social in its nature, it respects everything which tends to unite men. It delights in measure. The love of beauty is mainly the love of measure or proportion. The person who screams, or uses the superlative degree, or converses with heat, puts whole drawing-rooms to flight. If you wish to be loved, love measure. You must have genius or a prodigious usefulness, if you will hide the want of measure. This perception comes in to polish and perfect the parts of the social instruments. Society will pardon much to genius and special gifts, but, being in its nature a convention, it loves what is conventional, or what belongs to coming together. That makes the good and bad of manners; namely, what helps or hinders fellowship. For fashion is not good sense absolute, but relative; not good sense private, but good sense entertaining company. It hates corners and sharp points of character, hates quarrelsome, egotistical, solitary, and gloomy people; hates whatever can interfere with total blending of parties; whilst it values all peculiarities as in the highest degree refreshing, which can consist with good fellowship. And besides the general infusion of wit to heighten civility, the direct splendor of intellectual power is ever welcome in fine society as the costliest addition to its rule and its credit.

The dry light must shine in to adorn our festival, but it must be tempered and shaded, or that will also offend. Accuracy

is essential to beauty, and quick perceptions to politeness, but not too quick perceptions. One may be too punctual and too precise. He must leave the omniscience of business at the door, when he comes into the palace of beauty. Society loves creole natures, and sleepy, languishing manners, so that they cover sense, grace, and good-will: the air of drowsy strength, which disarms criticism; perhaps because such a person seems to reserve himself for the best of the game, and not spend himself on surfaces; an ignoring eye, which does not see the annoyances, shifts, and inconveniences that cloud the brow and smother the voice of the sensitive.

Therefore besides personal force and so much perception as constitutes unerring taste, society demands in its patrician class another element already intimated, which it significantly terms good-nature, — expressing all degrees of generosity, from the lowest willingness and faculty to oblige, up to the heights of magnanimity and love. Insight we must have, or we shall run against one another and miss the way to our food; but intellect is selfish and barren. The secret of success in society is a certain heartiness and sympathy. A man who is not happy in the company cannot find any word in his memory that will fit the occasion. All his information is a little impertinent. A man who is happy there, finds in every turn of the conversation equally lucky occasions for the introduction of that which he has to say. The favorites of society and what it calls *whole souls*, are able men and of more spirit than wit, who have no uncomfortable egotism, but who exactly fill the hour and the company; contented and contenting, at a marriage or a funeral, a ball or a jury, a water-party or a shooting-match. England, which is rich in gentlemen, furnished, in the beginning of the present century, a good model of that genius which the world loves, in Mr. Fox, who added to his great abilities the most social disposition and real love of men. Parliamentary history has few better passages than the debate in which Burke <sup>35</sup> and Fox <sup>36</sup> separ-

rated in the House of Commons; when Fox urged on his old friend the claims of old friendship with such tenderness that the house was moved to tears. Another anecdote is so close to my matter, that I must hazard the story. A tradesman who had long dunned him for a note of three hundred guineas, found him one day counting gold, and demanded payment: — “No,” said Fox, “I owe this money to Sheridan;”<sup>37</sup> it is a debt of honor; if an accident should happen to me, he has nothing to show.” “Then,” said the creditor, “I change my debt into a debt of honor,” and tore the note in pieces. Fox thanked the man for his confidence and paid him, saying, “His debt was of older standing, and Sheridan must wait.” Lover of Liberty, friend of the Hindoo, friend of the African slave, he possessed a great personal popularity; and Napoleon said of him on the occasion of his visit to Paris, in 1805, “Mr. Fox will always hold the first place in an assembly at the Tuileries.”

We may easily seem ridiculous in our eulogy of courtesy, whenever we insist on benevolence as its foundation. The painted phantasm Fashion rises to cast a species of derision on what we say. But I will neither be driven from some allowance to Fashion as a symbolic institution, nor from the belief that love is the basis of courtesy. We must obtain *that*, if we can; but by all means we must affirm *this*. Life owes much of its spirit to these sharp contrasts. Fashion, which affects to be honor, is often, in all men's experience, only a ballroom code. Yet, so long as it is the highest circle in the imagination of the best heads on the planet, there is something necessary and excellent in it; for it is not to be supposed that men have agreed to be the dupes of anything preposterous; and the respect which these mysteries inspire in the most rude and sylvan characters, and the curiosity with which details of high life are read, betray the universality of the love of cultivated manners. I know that a comic disparity would be felt, if we should enter the acknowledged

“first circles” and apply these terrific standards of justice, beauty, and benefit to the individuals actually found there. Monarchs and heroes, sages and lovers, these gallants are not. Fashion has many classes and many rules of probation and admission, and not the best alone. There is not only the right of conquest which genius pretends, — the individual demonstrating his natural aristocracy best of the best; — but less claims will pass for the time; for Fashion loves lions, and points like Circe<sup>38</sup> to her horned company. This gentleman is this afternoon arrived from Denmark; and that is my Lord Ride, who came yesterday from Bagdad; here is Captain Friese, from Cape Turnagain; and Captain Symmes, from the interior of the earth; and Monsieur Jovaire, who came down this morning in a balloon; Mr. Hobnail, the reformer; and Reverend Jul Bat, who has converted the whole torrid zone in his Sunday-school; and Signor Torre del Greco, who extinguished Vesuvius by pouring into it the Bay of Naples; Spahi, the Persian ambassador; and Tul Wil Shan, the exiled nabob of Nepaul, whose saddle is the new moon. — But these are monsters of one day, and to-morrow will be dismissed to their holes and dens; for in these rooms, every chair is waited for. The artist, the scholar, and, in general, the clerisy, win their way up into these places, and get represented here, somewhat on this footing of conquest. Another mode is to pass through all the degrees, spending a year and a day in St. Michael’s Square, being steeped in Cologne water,<sup>39</sup> and perfumed, and dined, and introduced, and properly grounded in all the biography and politics, and anecdotes of the bou-doirs.

Yet these fineries may have grace and wit. Let there be grotesque sculpture about the gates and offices of temples. Let the creed and commandments even have the saucy homage of parody. The forms of politeness universally express benevolence in superlative degrees. What if they are in the mouths of selfish men, and used as means of selfishness?

What if the false gentleman almost bows the true out of the world? What if the false gentleman contrives so to address his companion as civilly to exclude all others from his discourse, and also to make them feel excluded? Real service will not lose its nobleness. All generosity is not merely French and sentimental; nor is it to be concealed that living blood and a passion of kindness does at last distinguish God's gentleman from Fashion's. The epitaph of Sir Jenkin Grout is not wholly unintelligible to the present age. "Here lies Sir Jenkin Grout, who loved his friend and persuaded his enemy: what his mouth ate, his hand paid for: what his servants robbed, he restored: if a woman gave him pleasure, he supported her in pain: he never forgot his children; and whoso touched his finger, drew after it his whole body." Even the line of heroes is not utterly extinct. There is still ever some admirable person in plain clothes, standing on the wharf, who jumps in to rescue a drowning man; there is still some absurd inventor of charities; some guide and comforter of runaway slaves; some friend of Poland; some Philhellene;<sup>40</sup> some fanatic who plants shade-trees for the second and third generation, and orchards when he is grown old; some well-concealed piety; some just man happy in an ill-fame; some youth ashamed of the favors of fortune and impatiently casting them on other shoulders. And these are the centres of society, on which it returns for fresh impulses. These are the creators of Fashion, which is an attempt to organize beauty of behavior. The beautiful and the generous are, in the theory, the doctors and apostles of this church: Scipio, and the Cid, and Sir Philip Sidney, and Washington, and every pure and valiant heart who worshipped Beauty by word and by deed. The persons who constitute the natural aristocracy are not found in the actual aristocracy, or only on its edge; as the chemical energy of the spectrum is found to be greatest just outside of the spectrum. Yet that is the infirmity of the seneschals, who do not know their sovereign

when he appears. The theory of society supposes the existence and sovereignty of these. It divines afar off their coming. It says with the elder gods, —

“As Heaven and Earth are fairer far<sup>41</sup>  
 Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;  
 And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth,  
 In form and shape compact and beautiful;  
 So, on our heels a fresh perfection treads;  
 A power, more strong in beauty, born of us,  
 And fated to excel us, as we pass  
 In glory that old Darkness:  
 ——— for, 't is the eternal law,  
 That first in beauty shall be first in might.”

Therefore, within the ethnical circle of good society there is a narrower and higher circle, concentration of its light, and flower of courtesy, to which there is always a tacit appeal of pride and reference, as to its inner and imperial court; the parliament of love and chivalry. And this is constituted of those persons in whom heroic dispositions are native, with the love of beauty, the delight in society, and the power to embellish the passing day. If the individuals who compose the purest circles of aristocracy in Europe, the guarded blood of centuries, should pass in review, in such manner as that we could, at leisure, and critically, inspect their behavior, we might find no gentleman and no lady; for although excellent specimens of courtesy and high breeding would gratify us in the assemblage, in the particulars we should detect offence. Because elegance comes of no breeding, but of birth. There must be romance of character, or the most fastidious exclusion of impertinencies will not avail. It must be genius which takes that direction: it must be not courteous, but courtesy. High behavior is as rare in fiction as it is in fact. Scott is praised for the fidelity with which he painted the demeanor and conversation of the superior classes. Certainly, kings and queens, nobles and great ladies, had some right to

complain of the absurdity that had been put in their mouths before the days of Waverley; but neither does Scott's dialogue bear criticism. His lords brave each other in smart epigrammatic speeches, but the dialogue is in costume, and does not please on the second reading: it is not warm with life. In Shakspeare alone the speakers do not strut and bridle, the dialogue is easily great, and he adds to so many titles that of being the best-bred man in England and in Christendom. Once or twice in a lifetime we are permitted to enjoy the charm of noble manners, in the presence of a man or woman who have no bar in their nature, but whose character emanates freely in their word and gesture. A beautiful form is better than a beautiful face; a beautiful behavior is better than a beautiful form: it gives a higher pleasure than statues or pictures; it is the finest of the fine arts. A man is but a little thing in the midst of the objects of nature, yet, by the moral quality radiating from his countenance he may abolish all considerations of magnitude, and in his manners equal the majesty of the world. I have seen an individual whose manners, though wholly within the conventions of elegant society, were never learned there, but were original and commanding and held out protection and prosperity; one who did not need the aid of a court-suit, but carried the holiday in his eye; who exhilarated the fancy by flinging wide the doors of new modes of existence; who shook off the captivity of etiquette, with happy, spirited bearing, good-natured and free as Robin Hood;<sup>42</sup> yet with the port of an emperor, if need be, — calm, serious, and fit to stand the gaze of millions.

The open air and the fields, the street and public chambers are the places where Man executes his will; let him yield or divide the sceptre at the door of the house. Woman, with her instinct of behavior, instantly detects in man a love of trifles, any coldness or imbecility, or, in short, any want of that large, flowing, and magnanimous deportment which is indispensable as an exterior in the hall. Our American institutions have



been friendly to her, and at this moment I esteem it a chief felicity of this country, that it excels in women. A certain awkward consciousness of inferiority in the men may give rise to the new chivalry in behalf of Women's Rights. Certainly let her be as much better placed in the laws and in social forms as the most zealous reformer can ask, but I confide so entirely in her inspiring and musical nature, that I believe only herself can show us how she shall be served. The wonderful generosity of her sentiments raises her at times into heroical and godlike regions, and verifies the pictures of Minerva,<sup>43</sup> Juno,<sup>44</sup> or Polymnia;<sup>45</sup> and by the firmness with which she treads her upward path, she convinces the coarsest calculators that another road exists than that which their feet know. But besides those who make good in our imagination the place of muses and of Delphic Sibyls,<sup>46</sup> are there not women who fill our vase with wine and roses to the brim, so that the wine runs over and fills the house with perfume; who inspire us with courtesy; who unloose our tongues and we speak; who anoint our eyes and we see? We say things we never thought to have said; for once, our walls of habitual reserve vanished and left us at large; we were children playing with children in a wide field of flowers. Steep us, we cried, in these influences, for days, for weeks, and we shall be sunny poets and will write out in many-colored words the romance that you are. Was it Hafiz<sup>47</sup> or Firdousi<sup>48</sup> that said of his Persian Lilla, "She was an elemental force, and astonished me by her amount of life, when I saw her day after day radiating, every instant, redundant joy and grace on all around her." She was a solvent powerful to reconcile all heterogeneous persons into one society: like air or water, an element of such a great range of affinities that it combines readily with a thousand substances. Where she is present all others will be more than they are wont. She was a unit and whole, so that whatsoever she did, became her. She had too much sympathy and desire to please, than that you could say her

manners were marked with dignity, yet no princess could surpass her clear and erect demeanor on each occasion. She did not study the Persian grammar, nor the books of the seven poets, but all the poems of the seven seemed to be written upon her. For though the bias of her nature was not to thought, but to sympathy, yet was she so perfect in her own nature as to meet intellectual persons by the fulness of her heart, warming them by her sentiments; believing, as she did, that by dealing nobly with all, all would show themselves noble.

I know that this Byzantine <sup>49</sup> pile of chivalry or Fashion, which seems so fair and picturesque to those who look at the contemporary facts for science or for entertainment, is not equally pleasant to all spectators. The constitution of our society makes it a giant's castle to the ambitious youth who have not found their names enrolled in its Golden Book,<sup>50</sup> and whom it has excluded from its coveted honors and privileges. They have yet to learn that its seeming grandeur is shadowy and relative: it is great by their allowance; its proudest gates will fly open at the approach of their courage and virtue. For the present distress, however, of those who are predisposed to suffer from the tyrannies of this caprice, there are easy remedies. To remove your residence a couple of miles, or at most four, will commonly relieve the most extreme susceptibility. For the advantages which fashion values are plants which thrive in very confined localities, in a few streets namely. Out of this precinct they go for nothing; are of no use in the farm, in the forest, in the market, in war, in the nuptial society, in the literary or scientific circle, at sea, in friendship, in the heaven of thought or virtue.

But we have lingered long enough in these painted courts. The worth of the thing signified must vindicate our taste for the emblem. Everything that is called fashion and courtesy humbles itself before the cause and fountain of honor, creator

of titles and dignities; namely, the heart of love. This is the royal blood, this is the fire, which, in all countries and contingencies, will work after its kind and conquer and expand all that approaches it. This gives new meanings to every fact. This impoverishes the rich, suffering no grandeur but its own. What *is* rich? Are you rich enough to help anybody? to succor the unfashionable and the eccentric? rich enough to make the Canadian in his wagon, the itinerant with his consul's paper which commends him "To the charitable," the swarthy Italian with his few broken words of English, the lame pauper hunted by overseers from town to town, even the poor insane or besotted wreck of man or woman, feel the noble exception of your presence and your house, from the general bleakness and stoniness; to make such feel that they were greeted with a voice which made them both remember and hope? What is vulgar but to refuse the claim on acute and conclusive reasons? What is gentle, but to allow it, and give their heart and yours one holiday from the national caution? Without the rich heart, wealth is an ugly beggar. The king of Schiraz<sup>51</sup> could not afford to be so bountiful as the poor Osman who dwelt at his gate. Osman had a humanity so broad and deep that although his speech was so bold and free with the Koran as to disgust all the dervishes, yet was there never a poor outcast, eccentric, or insane man, some fool who had cut off his beard, or who had been mutilated under a vow, or had a pet madness in his brain, but fled at once to him; that great heart lay there so sunny and hospitable in the centre of the country, that it seemed as if the instinct of all sufferers drew them to his side. And the madness which he harbored he did not share. Is not this to be rich? this only to be rightly rich?

But I shall hear without pain, that I pay the courtier very ill, and talk of that which I do not well understand. It is easy to see that what is called by distinction society and fashion has good laws as well as bad, has much that is necessary, and much that is absurd. Too good for banning, and

too bad for blessing, it reminds us of a tradition of the pagan mythology, in any attempt to settle its character. "I overheard Jove,<sup>52</sup> one day," said Silenus,<sup>53</sup> "talking of destroying the earth; he said it had failed; they were all rogues and vixens, who went from bad to worse as fast as the days succeeded each other. Minerva said, she hoped not; they were only ridiculous little creatures, with this odd circumstance, that they had a blur, or indeterminate aspect, seen far or seen near; if you called them bad, they would appear so; if you called them good, they would appear so; and there was no one person or action among them which would not puzzle her owl, much more all Olympus, to know whether it was fundamentally bad or good."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Belzoni*, Giovanni Battista, Italian voyager who made explorations in Egypt (1778-1822).

<sup>2</sup> *Borgoo* (*Borgu*), a district of Dahomey, (French) and northern Nigeria (British) in west Africa. *Rock-Tibboos* (*Tibbu* or *Tu*), a nomad tribe, mostly Negro, to be encountered west of the Sahara Desert. The proper name means "men of Tu," and to call them Rock-Tibboos is like saying "rock-men of rocks."

<sup>3</sup> *Bornoos* (Bornuese?), Negro inhabitants of Bornu, a country in central Sudan, south of the Sahara Desert.

<sup>4</sup> See page 147, note 48.

<sup>5</sup> Scotch poet and novelist (1771-1832).

<sup>6</sup> "As it should or must be."

<sup>7</sup> Courtesy, good breeding.

<sup>8</sup> This took place July 25, 1814, in the province of Ontario, Canada, when the Americans defeated the British.

<sup>9</sup> Like Julius Cæsar.

<sup>10</sup> *Lord Falkland*, Lucius Cary, Viscount, English patriot, adherent of the royal party (ca. 1610-1643).

<sup>11</sup> *Saladin* (Salah-ed-din), Yusuf Ibn Ayub, sultan of Syria and Egypt; opposed the Crusaders at Acre (1137-1193).

<sup>12</sup> Name common to several Persian rulers. Sapor I (died 272), opposed Rome and captured the emperor Valerian, 260 A.D. Sapor II (died 381), called the Great, was famous for persecuting the Christians.

<sup>13</sup> See page 146, note 33.

<sup>14</sup> See page 23, note 58.

<sup>15</sup> See page 223, note 16.

<sup>16</sup> See page 61, note 112.

<sup>17</sup> See page 58, note 52.

<sup>18</sup> See page 224, note 72.

<sup>19</sup> See page 58, note 48.

<sup>20</sup> A statesman of Thebes who twice successfully opposed Sparta (ca. 418–362).

<sup>21</sup> In Paris. A section of the city outside the original walls, very aristocratic in atmosphere, containing a royal château, park, and museums; famous as a pleasure resort.

<sup>22</sup> *Cortez*, Hernando, a Spanish explorer who subdued Mexico and discovered California (1485–1547).

<sup>23</sup> *Nelson*, Horatio, Viscount, English admiral, author of the famous slogan, "England expects every man to do his duty."

<sup>24</sup> A town in Italy, the scene of the defeat of the Austrians by Napoleon, June 14, 1800.

<sup>25</sup> The battle of Trafalgar, where Lord Nelson defeated the Spaniards and French and where he lost his life, took place off Cape Trafalgar on the coast of Spain.

<sup>26</sup> The outline or contour of the human figure.

<sup>27</sup> A town in Warwickshire. To be "sent to Coventry" was equivalent to being ostracized.

<sup>28</sup> A character in Scott's *Waverley*.

<sup>29</sup> A mythological character, the foster-father of Hercules.

<sup>30</sup> See page 171, note 21.

<sup>31</sup> A great palace, church, and monastery where the Spanish kings are buried. It is near Madrid and was built by Philip II in the sixteenth century.

<sup>32</sup> *Cardinal Caprara*, Giovanni Battista, an Italian cardinal who reestablished public worship in France in 1802 (1733–1810).

<sup>33</sup> A perfume first manufactured at Cologne.

<sup>34</sup> See *Montaigne*, note 27.

<sup>35</sup> See *Compensation*, note 33.

<sup>36</sup> See *Napoleon*, note 34.

<sup>37</sup> *Sheridan*, Richard Brinsley Butler, English dramatist and politician (1751–1816).

<sup>38</sup> In Greek mythology an enchantress who turned men into swine through a magic potion; a character in Homer's *Odyssey*.

<sup>39</sup> Name for perfume made of alcohol scented with aromatic oils manufactured at Cologne by Jean Farina in 1709.

<sup>40</sup> A lover of Greece and the Greeks.

<sup>41</sup> From Keats' *Hyperion*.

<sup>42</sup> See page 146, note 35.

<sup>43</sup> Goddess of wisdom, war, and all the liberal arts.

<sup>44</sup> Sister and wife of the god Jupiter.

<sup>45</sup> One of the Muses, patroness of singing and rhetoric.

<sup>46</sup> The Delphic Sibyl was supposed to be an inspired woman connected with the oracle.

<sup>47</sup> The popular name of the Persian poet Shams ed-Din Muhammad (died *ca.* 1389).

<sup>48</sup> *Nom de plume* of Abul Casim Mansur, the greatest of the Persian epic poets (*ca.* 939–1020).

<sup>49</sup> Pertaining to ancient Byzantium, now Constantinople.

<sup>50</sup> An official record of the nobles under the Venetian republic.

<sup>51</sup> Evidently refers to some oriental legend.

<sup>52</sup> *Jove*, chief of the gods in Roman mythology.

<sup>53</sup> *Silenus*, the eldest of the satyrs. Bacchus, the god of wine, was his disciple.

# Appendix

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

I. *What Constitutes a Great Man?* Among primitive peoples physical strength is a sufficient qualification. (e.g. The heroes in epics like the *Iliad*, *Nibelungenlied*, *Beowulf*, etc.) Among civilized peoples there are various viewpoints: (1) The military standard. (2) The Christian-pacifist standard. (3) The business, big-money standard. (4) The scholarly, intellectual standard. (5) The athletic standard.

1. Comment on each of these standards.

2. Formulate a standard of greatness that agrees with Emerson's conception.

3. In what respects was Emerson a great man?

4. In what respects, in your judgment, did he fall short of perfection?

5. Among the seven types of *Representative Men* cited by Emerson what qualities have they in common?

6. If you were selecting seven men to represent your ideas of greatness, whom would you choose? Would you agree with Emerson in the choice of any one type?

II. *Religion*: What is a Puritan? Are there various types of Puritans? Are there any Puritans today? Where? What caused the English Puritans to form separate sects? Look up the English history of Puritanism and write a composition on: (1) The first English Puritans (The Lollards). (2) The Lollard Martyrs (during Henry VIII's reign). (3) Puritanism during Shakespeare's time. (4) The Puritan Revolution. (5) Oliver Cromwell and his government. (6) The History of the Presbyterian Church. (7) The History of the Baptist Church. (8) The History of the Quakers. (9) The History of the Methodist Church. (10) The History of the Pilgrims from the time they left England to the time of the founding of the American colony. (11) The quarrel of Roger Williams with the Boston leaders and the founding of Rhode Island. (12) Early New England Literature. (13) What does a Unitarian believe? Give a history of the Unitarian Church. (14) What was Transcendentalism? What particular philosophies were taught by Kant, Fichte, Schelling, etc.?

III. *Biography*: Emerson mentions the names of a great many mystics, philosophers, writers, scientists, etc., which he takes no

pains to identify. The footnotes will aid you in locating the nationality, age, and speciality of each of these men. Select some of these names that appeal most to you. Look up the more intimate details of their biographies, and write biographical essays about them.

IV. *History*: Study the English and American backgrounds of Puritanism, and write essays on topics similar to the following:

1. What act of Charles I caused the great Revolution of 1649?
2. What was the attitude of Charles II toward religion?
3. What acts or decrees led either to the persecution of Dissenters or to forcing them to join the American colonists?
4. What was James II's attitude toward Dissenters?
5. In what ways did the Massachusetts Colony prove herself *self-reliant*, independent, and individual long before the Revolution of 1776?

## QUESTIONS

### USES OF GREAT MEN

1. Do you agree with the statement that "Nature seems to exist for the excellent"? Explain.
2. What is Emerson's idea of a great man?
3. "The true artist has the planet for his pedestal; the adventurer, after years of strife, has nothing broader than his own shoes." What does Emerson mean?
4. What does Emerson say about man's relation to nature and the universe?
5. Write short compositions using the following as topic sentences:
  - (1) Thus we sit by the fire and take hold of the poles of the earth.
  - (2) Every ship that comes to America got its chart from Columbus.
  - (3) Activity is contagious.
  - (4) Men are helpful through the intellect and the affections.
6. How does Emerson "illustrate the distinctive benefit of ideas"?
7. Explain: "Nature never spares the opium or nepenthe, but wherever she mars her creatures with some deformity or defect, lays her poppies plentifully on the bruise, etc."
8. What danger can there be in the influence of a great man?
9. Comment: "Men who know the same things are not long the best company for each other."
10. What is the prospect for great men to come in the future?



## PLATO

1. What does Emerson say about Plato's "range"?
2. What indebtedness does Plato show to his contemporaries and to preceding writers?
3. What does Emerson mean by saying that Plato's biography is "interior"?
4. What comparison does Emerson make between an immature person and the history of Europe?
5. How does Emerson define philosophy?
6. What idea brings the religious writers of East and West together?
7. Explain how Plato is a "balanced soul."
8. What does Emerson mean by the statement: "Every great artist has been such by synthesis"?
9. What qualities which Emerson praises in Plato do you think are true of his own nature?
10. What was Plato's conception of culture?
11. Describe Plato's material circumstances and characteristics.
12. Explain the statement: "He has clapped copyright on the world."
13. (New Readings.) What new ideas does Emerson add?
14. Explain why he calls Plato "this eldest Goethe."

## SWEDENBORG

1. What do you understand by a "mystic"? Do you think Emerson has (judging either by what he tells us of Swedenborg or what you learn from other sources) rightly taken Swedenborg as a typical mystic?
2. Discuss Swedenborg's life as a scientist.
3. Explain the statement: "Swedenborg was born into an atmosphere of great ideas."
4. Under what headings did Swedenborg classify his ideas?
5. What is Swedenborg's attitude toward nature?
6. What are Swedenborg's ideas about marriage?
7. In what respect did Emerson think Swedenborg and Behmen had failed?
8. What is unique about Swedenborg's Inferno (or Hell)?
9. What is Swedenborg's conception of Angels?
10. Was Swedenborg a poet in any sense?
11. In what way has Swedenborg rendered a double service to mankind?

## MONTAIGNE

1. Do you notice any change of style in this essay? If so, state in what particulars it may be detected.
2. What qualities attributed to Montaigne constitute Emerson's definition of *Scepticism*?
3. How did Emerson happen to discover Montaigne as a writer?
4. What was Montaigne's early profession? And how did he happen to leave it? At what age?
5. Explain the statement: "Montaigne is the frankest and honestest of all writers."
6. What sort of subjects did Montaigne choose for his essays? Characterize his style.
7. Emerson says, "We are natural believers." Comment on this statement.
8. What, according to Emerson, is belief?
9. Why are great believers often reckoned infidels?
10. What is Emerson's final "solution in which scepticism is lost"?

## SHAKSPEARE

1. To what extent does Emerson think geniuses should be original?
2. Look up the early history of the English stage previous to Shakspeare and write a description or an exposition of the material. (See *Development of Shakspeare as a Dramatist*, by G. P. Baker; *The English Religious Drama*, by Katherine Lee Bates; *The Mediæval Stage* by E. K. Chambers.)
3. Write an account of Shakspeare's youth at Stratford and London. (See Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakspeare*.)
4. Comment upon Emerson's inaccuracy in his reference to Chaucer's indebtedness to other writers. (See Lounsbury's *Chaucer*.)
5. Read the old English plays, *Ferrex and Porrex* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and write your impression of the age that enjoyed such plays.
6. Explain what Emerson means by saying that "Shakspeare is the only biographer of Shakspeare."
7. Write an appreciation of Shakspeare as Emerson views him.
8. Read some of Shakspeare's less familiar plays.

## NAPOLEON

1. What classes of society are there, according to Emerson, and where does he place Napoleon?

2. Why was Napoleon "the idol of common men"?
3. What was his attitude toward war? Toward social rank?
4. How did Napoleon account for his own greatness?
5. Resting your judgment on the anecdotes and quotations cited by Emerson, give your impressions of Napoleon as a man of action. As a general.
6. What was Napoleon's attitude toward religion? Toward medicine and health? Toward ladies? Toward politics?
7. Do you think Emerson quite consistent in his final appraisal of Napoleon as compared with what he has said in the earlier part of the essay?

## GÖETHE

1. Explain the significance of the long introduction with respect to the subject of Göethe.
2. Explain how Göethe was "the soul of his century."
3. What did Göethe do with the devil as a type?
4. What did Novalis mean by designating *Wilhelm Meister* as "thoroughly modern and prosaic"?
5. How differently do French and English readers regard Göethe?
6. Why cannot Göethe be "dear to men"?
7. Why is Göethe not an "artist"? (Note the sense in which the word *artist* is employed by Emerson.)

## SELF-RELIANCE

1. Discuss Emerson's idea of genius as expounded in this essay.
2. Explain what Emerson means when he says "God will not have his work made manifest by cowards."
3. Discuss Emerson's conception of boy nature.
4. Explain Emerson's dictum that "whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist."
5. How does Emerson feel about the alleged virtue of consistency?
6. Enlarge, with illustrations, on the statement that "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."
7. Explain Emerson's theory of "intuition."
8. What does Emerson mean when he says "The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soil"?
9. What is the meaning of the statement "No man can come near me but through my act"?
10. Discuss Emerson's conception of prayer.
11. What was Emerson's attitude toward truth?
12. What did Emerson believe about imitation?

13. What does Emerson say about the effect of civilization on man?
14. What was Emerson's attitude toward property?
15. Sum up the argument of the essay in a few words.

### COMPENSATION

1. What did Emerson think of the current theology of his time?
2. Discuss briefly Emerson's theory of dualism in the external world, in mechanic forces, and in man.
3. How does the law of compensation operate in political life?
4. What does Emerson mean by his statement "The dice of God are always loaded"?
5. Explain the meaning of the statement, "There is a crack in everything God has made."
6. Discuss the moral element of the classic fables.
7. What was Emerson's dictum concerning popular proverbs?
8. What was Emerson's theory of punishment for "infractions of love and equity"?
9. Discuss Emerson's attitude toward fear.
10. Explain Emerson's teaching about "paying the price."
11. What does Emerson mean when he says "Every evil to which we do not succumb is a benefactor"?
12. What does Emerson mean by his admonition to "put God in your debt"?
13. Discuss Emerson's conception of the relation of love to the soul of man.
14. What does Emerson believe with regard to the usages of calamity?

### MANNERS

1. Tell briefly the conception Emerson had of a gentleman.
2. What did Emerson believe to be the true attributes of the aristocrat?
3. What did Emerson think was the true office of good manners?
4. Explain how Emerson believed the cultivated classes are recruited from the common people.
5. Explain Emerson's idea of the relation of character to fashion.
6. Elaborate the idea in Emerson's dictum that "the first point of courtesy must always be the truth."
7. Give Emerson's conception of the importance of good taste in society.
8. What does Emerson mean in his use of the word "measure" as applied to social intercourse?

9. Explain why Emerson stresses "good nature" as a necessary attribute of social success.
10. What do you think of Emerson's faint attempts at humor in this essay?
11. Find Emerson's definition of "fashion."
12. What is Emerson's attitude toward woman as expressed in this essay?

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JAN 1989  
Grantville, PA

