

E M E R S O N ' S O U T L O O K

O N

N A T U R E , L I F E , A N D S O C I E T Y

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C H A P T E R O N E
P R E L I M I N A R Y S U R V E Y ; N A T U R E

Man is essentially a social creature; peace, prosperity and happiness are his portion when harmony is maintained in all his social dealings. His achievements embrace the earth as ethnical explorer, discoverer and conqueror. Biologically considered, man's body is identified with all nature with respect to its chemical constituents, with the bodies of animals regarding its functions, and with that of the mammalian vertebrates as to structure. Man, as a natural organism forms an insignificant part of nature when separated from all other objects and forms. In the animal kingdom man is not king. He can be floored by the animalcule.

But there exists, according to all the evidence, simple, complex and conscious, - a gap between man and his material environment. Man speaks and thinks. Emerson is only one of those thousands of wonderers and investigators who have sought to explain this gap; he tried to do this with thorough sincerity yet without anything like that conviction by which we recognize the shining of the sun. It is the 'spirit' of man, the consciousness of an indwelling essence, a tiny reflex of something signifying eternity, which would seem to point to this apparent separation. We wish to use this word 'apparent' since - all the evidence may not yet be collected, and perhaps all the evidence is non-collectible.

America was discovered in 1492. The Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. They were Puritans, many of them religiously devout and also possessed with a very stern sense of extreme discipline, just as extreme, in fact, as that which they were bent on breaking by any means. They were the fore-runners of a new nation in a new land. This is the American nation, and a nation will, in the natural course and progress of its development, produce writers.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston on May 25, 1803. For several generations, the Emersons had been prominent among the New England ministers. An inherited staical quality carried him through the childhood of poverty and a weak chest was no doubt a primary cause keeping the

boy to himself. His weakness became his first great battle for life; in a very real sense, this haunting ailment should be not a little responsible for a detachment - a longing through his life not to be obliged to maintain too close a contact with society. This lack of normal robustness reflects in much of his literary efforts as we find a similar trait in Cowper, the poet, and in Chopin, the musician and composer. Molière was a greater triumph because of a constitutional illness. Books attracted Emerson while yet a youngster; family prayers, Bible reading and study were family undertakings as important as the preparing of daily meals. Altogether, he grew up in a righteous family; it is especially well worth noting that, like so many others, particularly those households with a minister and preacher presiding as the head, and the accompanying devoted wife and mother, the Emersons were proud. But it was not the pride of intolerable arrogance, it was the simple pride of being looked up to and the accomplishment of independence.

Several generations of Emersons had illuminated the pulpit. This was an inheritance for Ralph Waldo to carry him safely through his religious childhood and period of youth. Then, as we shall hope to show, he would later throw off almost completely all the orthodox religious beliefs, beginning with those principally handed down from Calvinism, greatly thinned out by Unitarianism until, by means of current and environmental influences of one kind or another, he passed

through the complete stage of the chrysalis and emerged -- a full-grown spiritual being, not quite of this world but perhaps he was one of those angels Jacob saw in his dream, and the ladder was removed before this angel could reach it again.

Influence of the home surroundings, with particular reference to the inherited associations of the preceding generations of preachers, supplied the external features of many New England 'individuals'. Emerson was one of these individuals thus moulded. He might some day be a great lecturer; it will be seen, however, that he carried on the Emerson tradition of preachers, the essential difference here being that his preaching was to be done outside of the church. The second influence emanated from an aunt, Mary Emerson. She persuaded him that he might be destined to perform big things in a grand manner. Her persuasions are thoroughly described in Professor Michaud's sparkling biography, "An Enraptured Yankee." She was the first dynamic, personal force to stir the mind of her nephew, Ralph Waldo. So that we can notice two influences operating upon one object, bearing down upon it, as it were, for a conquest. This sort of influence has, obviously, been moving all through the world for a very long time; in America it is a distant wave from the Revolutionary War by which independence was achieved. We should especially note that the conspicuous 'individualism' which is to mark all of Emerson's life and writings repre-

sents a very particular departure from orthodox Christianity as laid down from the time of Calvin. The Boston Unitarians had made a 'State Church' of their own chosen religion; and the induction of this new branch of Protestantism -- although it was begun elsewhere some time since in parts of Europe -- settled into a kind of self-complacency, a personal satisfaction swelling up within the beings whose material prosperity made them less anxious about the soul's ultimate salvation. Now all these and other considerations invaded, inevitably, 'many young minds' including that of the precocious but timid nephew of Mary Emerson. Culture, the heterogeneous literature of Europe which also included Greek and other Oriental ingredients, 'assisted' in broadening the so-called intellectual mind, especially the New England individual mind. "Much have I travelled in the realms of gold," wrote John Keats in the first line of his "On Looking Into Chapman's Homer." This is exactly the point we wish to convey with respect to the 'Culture of New England'. Material prosperity with its feeling of comfortable independence enabled many New Englanders to travel thousands of miles in the realms of gold -- without having to leave the rocking chair or the Chesterfield. This is what we intend to mean by the first establishment of American culture; and we shall say that in such centres as Boston, Philadelphia, New York, intellectual persons made just as good use of culture derived from books as anyone did, or could do, in Europe. But perhaps the

early American interpretations of this knowledge from books when coloured by 'local surroundings' reveal what we would call the learning process applied to the writing of American literature. Harvard College taught Latin and Greek, and some time later, in the second half of the nineteenth century, it began to pay particular attention to modern languages. George Ticknor and Edward Everett sailed to Germany in 1815 to study 'German Culture and German Prodigious Progress.' When they returned to New England, they had much to report about 'travelling in the realms of gold.' Harvard and Ralph Waldo Emerson were greatly interested. Harvard was interested socially, Emerson took all these things 'unto himself'. He brooded, he drifted into the ministry and floated out again. An atmosphere compounded of dreamful wonderment, the world about him, brahminical mysticism, practical and impractical speculations, Nature and the Supreme Being, personal friends and acquaintances, phenomena invisible as well as visible -- enshrined him. All this went through his mind and spiritual consciousness; then from it all, and after he had already written many pages of journalistic jottings, Nature emerged, Emerson's Nature. Let us look into it. From the 'Introduction' we choose a few sentences at the beginning:-

"Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why

should we not have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?"¹

Every 'idea' the writer resorts to in these expressions is as old as the most ancient of days. What, then, does he want to convey, what 'new thing'? And we shall, not discover, but observe upon the surface, in most of these essays, old thoughts in a slightly different setting. Moreover, such extra titles as: Commodity; Beauty; Language; and Discipline have already been effectively dealt with by hundreds of writers. True enough, originality appears as when, in "Nature", something like this occurs, -"I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing: I see all; the currents of Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God." But is originality such as this necessarily or absolutely true? If it is true, it must have always been so; others have said this same truth long, long ago. Emerson needed not thus to enquire so anxiously, nervously and self-consciously. The sun is new, the sun is old; and to all those who are still undecided as to whether the sun, or other object, is objective or subjective as a phenomenon, let it be quickly said -- at the risk of another repetition-- that the sun is 'real'. To study all the prospective possibilities and advantages of real objects granted us through the gracious wisdom of

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature.

the Eternal One is certainly best appreciated according to the manner used in the employment of all these gifts from on High. Long before Emerson appeared, even at the very dawn of things, every day brought its own revelations; the axial motion of the earth is forever a marvellous example of the utmost 'simplicity and ease' with which the Creator motivates His laws, those prime laws which need no fresh interpretations, though to be reminded of them in humbleness rather than by exalted utterances should always be in order. He wants not a historical religion but one 'by revelation'. This shows Emerson, from our viewpoint, skimming over values as old as time, values that, per se, constitute the essentially main root of present existence. If we cannot sing with complete spiritual persuasion,-

"O God our help in ages past
Our Hope for years to come,

then we should exert sufficient moral force -- not to sing this or other hymn any more. Since it is not expedient to stop the singing of hymns and songs of praise in the churches, we must dismiss this kind of superficial writing with the hope that further enquiry as to just what Emerson wants us to learn will demonstrate more solid and saner considerations.

There is no quarrel with the writer who wants, in any rational way, to produce an impression; the licence to do so, however, should be given to those who offer 'right' impressions in preference to an exhibition of mere novelties.

Emerson shrewdly observed a new field for his personal ideas. This he found in the fresh soil of the Youth all round and about him. This was to be the ground he would plough, harrow and harvest. The instruments that he would use he considered a bit rusty -- Harvard, the church, college authorities, his somewhat extensive reading. But he would renovate these instruments by passing them through the prism of his own thinking machinery; and the crystal mirror of his understanding would reflect his learning and his observations in the form of an entirely new creation. The first results are disappointing, they are pale, the light is polar, and the resultant harvest is very thin. He is experimenting. The instruments he uses are not very skilfully handled, and the adjustments he makes, or contrives to make, are awkward, even incorrect.

Emerson's great theme is the Spirit of all things, and particularly the spirit of man reflected faithfully and constantly in everything he does. This is undoubtedly a splendid and noble idea, there are occasions when this theme rises to great heights even to the possible establishment of pure idealism in the realm of spiritual truth. This is what a commentator writes:-

"Emerson in the substance of his work belongs with the divine writers, religious spiritualists, sacred moralists, mystic philosophers, in whose hands all things turn to religion, to whom all life is religious, and nothing moves in the world except to divine meanings."¹

1. G.E. Woodberry, R.W.Emerson, chap.4, p.108.

The same writer adds another very interesting aspect,-

"In themselves these ideas have small importance, relatively to what is deduced from them. They are, for the most part, fragments of old thoughts that have been long in the world, like boulders left by the primeval streams of man's intellect."¹

The transcendent loveliness of next summer's gladiolus will be possible only if we take 'last summer's bulb', put it away carefully in a quiet cellar there to repose satisfied with its performance, inspired with this 'past' performance towards the hope of a new resurrection, and perhaps an even more lovely blossom. This is the kind of fruitful contemplation not infrequently to be found in the works of Emerson. Meanwhile, however, we face a world of stern realities, a world not any too much imbued with spiritual tokens, a world too much divided with the fantastic ideas of visionaries tending to extreme isolationism on the one hand, and undermined by the falsetto tones of gross materialists on the other hand. There may be need of some new prism, but through it we shall have to reflect the real and permanent values of a world changing so rapidly that, without due care, we may fail to lay firm hold of those very ancient values without which there might be no lasting or worthwhile survival.

Individualism may be rightly considered a good quality in a person only when it consistently contributes

1. G.E.Woodberry, R.W.Emerson, chap. 4, p.108.

towards the general good; it must be socially constructive; it must make for social betterment. Pasteur's individuality becomes a shining example of a single genius whose practical research labours have brought a richer and more sustaining life to millions. Newman's "Lead Kindly Light" has afforded spiritual consolation throughout Christendom.--possibly further. There is more in this ineffable hymn than one can find, with much painstaking searching, in quartos of philosophy. From the welter of a dying Roman Empire, there stood forth a brave individual, one who was converted to Christianity under the good influence of St. Ambrose. And we have that imperishable classic: The Confessions of St. Augustine, a notable classic that is still read and appreciated.

But there is a rather dark side to individualism, the kind that puts the clock back, that halts the progressive welfare of civilization, and that even arrests, so to speak, its existence. What, for instance, did Napoleon really accomplish for France and for Europe? At what point of historical judgment does the pendulum of oscillating speculations come to rest? Or does this pendulum still move ever so slightly, not quite sure yet of a final landing place? Perhaps it is not quite precise to regard Napoleon as an exclusive individual. Emerson makes him both individualistic and thoroughly representative. In his essay on Napoleon, he goes so far as to say that:-

"... if Napoleon is Europe, it is because the people whom he sways are little Napoleons."

One speculation being perhaps as good as another, suppose we suggest our own. We shall try a comment parallel with Emerson's. If Napoleon failed -- as apparently he did in the end -- was it not because he was Napoleon, that he was most definitely not Europe; and that consequently the (French) people were not little Napoleons? For us, one of Napoleon's most admirable mental qualities manifested itself when he propounded his famous dictum: "La carrière ouverte aux talents." In this respect he outshone some present day Dictators; and this was at least one happy instance of his near approach to a universal humanism.

Emerson asserted his very marked individuality in a pronounced manner: he broke away completely from the faith and religion of his contemporaries and of his ancestors. If one can in any satisfactory way account for this aberration by offering any explanations, one can perhaps only venture to do so by the method of rational speculating, if, indeed, speculation can always be called rational. He severed his connections with the church where he had been preaching; he broke loose from Unitarianism; and when he did this, it would seem that he became a distinct protestant against Protestantism. We shall, quite possibly and without much difficulty, demonstrate that from this startling divagation proceed literally hundreds of unexplainable wanderings

throughout his numerous writings. The ever recurring obscurations found in his writings suggest that he dwelled continually under a cloud of the unknowing; and it is our definite impression that Emerson purposely allowed himself to remain in this mystical atmosphere in an attempt to extract a rational scheme of the entire universe and of the Divine Being.

Has anyone ever painted a brilliant landscape scene -- guided solely by a flash or two of sharp lightning? Who, in one fleeting second, can summarize and completely analyse all the laws of life, justice, truth, love and freedom, religion and piety? Why place two souls in one body if the welfare of one is too great a task for the possessor? Scaling the universal heights is a dizzy performance. Intuition -- what is it but a slightly higher form of simple instinct? Emerson said of Hawthorne that he was greater than his works, his humanistic novels. We wish to say of Emerson that he is far less than his writings, that he attempts too much, notwithstanding his sincerity and honesty.

Truth and, above any other quality, practicality in writing should be, in our opinion, the two main requisites of any writer who aspires to instruct or to preach. What after all does such and such a literary specimen accomplish? There is, as anyone will readily admit, more than just a difference between a stimulant and something which really nourishes. Which is better to serve as manna for

the mind -- a classic containing honest and sincere thought, or some romantic fantasy that pours out colourful jets of elusive vapours? A romance may be capable of a certain measure of valuation, but the superiority of a sterling classic renders it possible always of transvaluation. Sainte-Beuve in his "What is a Classic" says:

"A true classic,... is an author who has enriched the human mind, increased its treasure, and caused it to advance a step; who has discovered some moral and not equivocal truth, or revealed some eternal passion in that heart where all seemed known and discovered; who has expressed his thought, observation, or invention -- in his own peculiar style, a style which is found to be that also of the whole world, a style new without neologism, new and old, easily contemporary with all time."

We shall be very glad if, during the course of this survey, our American author approaches closely, even if he does not quite touch, Sainte-Beuve's reasonable requirements. It may quite truly be granted that he wrote 'a primer for the American people', but the feeling persists in us that he wrote to produce novel impressions rather than from any inherent urge to 'enlighten a developing nation'. Candidly, we do not at all feel persuaded that there existed any actual need for Emerson to project, as it were, his heterodox personality in a land already -- and for some considerable time -- flowing with its own milk and honey. Candidly, we think that his ardent desire for a new country to 'express new ideas in its own way' was at bottom simply his own individual anxiety for self-assertion. He was, in

a real sense, a missionary -- self-appointed. We can, with some degree of confident assurance, state that: there is one Shakespeare, one Milton, one Dante, one Carlyle, -- and one Emerson. Of these, the least original and universal is the last name mentioned. He is likely to impress any careful reader with the thought that there persists in so many of the essays the backward quality of self-consciousness which prevents rather than encourages the perfect flow of spontaneous utterance. He has read more than he can fully interpret; too much and varied reading trammels his innate originality.

In chapter two, *Commodity*, in the second paragraph is found this statement: "The misery of man appears like childish petulance, when we explore the steady and prodigal provision that has been made for his support and delight on this green ball which floats him through the heavens." This is one of the writer's very numerous examples of where he takes that characteristic stand of his which is usually some distant vantage point far removed from the battlefield of conflict. It is a truth that runs away. A reporter on Mars might, with some measure of justice or rightness, make such a statement. The intention is, of course, sincere, but is hardly to be reconciled with practicability. Thus, in a sentence like this, there is nothing accomplished; the writer here is no better than an isolationist. The problem of evil and misery always requires close attention, and

will, for a long time to come. The magician has never appeared on earth who could 'wave evil away'.

Then at the end of the first part called Discipline, we encounter one of Emerson's 'surprises', one of his several irritating assertions without any attempt at explaining what is intended.

"One after another, his victorious thought comes up with and reduces all things, until the world becomes at last, only a realized will -- the double of the man."

If any visible truth is reached in this manner, then at best it is a truth of such an abstract nature, so absolutely removed from the ground of rational observation, that the power of reasoning dissolves itself in its own speculations. Enigmatical assertions may be very fascinating, but unless they demonstrate an undeniable or incontrovertible truth, what can be their value? Precisely what do they accomplish?

There is discoverable through the writings of the Sage of Concord an almost purposeful insensitiveness to actual conditions and experiences in civilization. There is a decided lack of personal and sincere interest in what any ordinary intelligent person can daily observe in human relationships. Father Damien worked 'within' the colony of lepers, he did not stand upon some eminent pinnacle and give aloof orders through a megaphone. David Livingstone went 'into' the heart of Africa to draw his map of the life of the inhabitants; in other words -- almost too obvious

to mention -- he acquired his human knowledge in the only possible way -- Submergence, a complete penetration into his object. But the honest, upright and always honourable Emerson goes off on a flight into the abstract realms of uncertainty, and he returns with, frequently, reckless conclusions. Apollo shooting golden darts at the sun might make a handsome picture -- just as Coleridge paints with splendid imagery a scene in the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner". Such a dead calm has descended that the vessel looks:

"As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."

It is better and safer to consider man as not having dominion over Nature but as holding a subordinate position. If we get caught in the clutches of our own ideas and theorizings,, the results are likely to become most unfortunate -- if not fatal. And to-day the world picture looks somewhat as though mankind 'must be born again'.

There is much in literature that is tautological. The essence of Wordsworth, when distilled, equals hardly more than one-tenth of his total works. Swinburne's almost endless series of poetic effusions make rapturous reading until, suddenly, the reader stops in a strange maze of lost wonder. What is the matter with Swinburne? Simply this: He is merely repeating himself, spinning the very same thread with a different colour; in other words, he is only saying the same thing by means of various phrases. Browning's "Ring and

the Book" is another celebrated instance of tautological writing. He accidentally in Florence picked up a yellow folio -- probably yellow with age -- made off with it, as so many bibliophiles are known to do, and then, from this small pamphlet presented literature with this interminable poem. It is not just indolence that makes a poet remembered from one of his short poems rather than from a longer work. Perhaps we have here one reason why a poet will occasionally pen a very short selection; for most of them are humans and would like to be remembered.

There may well be here an important point in favour of classicism as against romanticism. The former usually keeps itself within reasonable bounds with respect to subject matter and its presentation. Romanticism soars upward and onward on wings of song; vies with the rainbow for honours in glorification and splendour; or it attempts to capture shadows in order to array them in brilliant vestments. And, not infrequently, such is the sheer noise raised by romanticism that the still sad music of humanity is completely obliterated. What shall we discern of Nature -- whether she be not classic rather than romantic? Nature, being real, must per se be classic. There is no such thing as a needless repetition in Nature, but this glaring defect of needless repetition makes romanticism less acceptable and respectable, by far, than those saner manifestations of classicism.

We have a purpose in digressing. Since literature is an expression of civilization, performing, as it were, a kind of articulate function, it is proper to try to ascertain some of the results produced by literature in behalf of civilization. We would like very much to ask if literature is, in a strictly scientific sense, as representative of vox populi as it might be. Louis the Fourteenth encouraged writers and artists, he invited them to court. His long reign of approximately sixty-four years was provocative of some of the very best writing. Yet during all this time what was the real condition of the people? Perhaps we are straining the question slightly too much, getting lost in our speculations. But we wish to beg this question. If, during the reign of Louis, the state of the people had been better, could this reign have produced a greater Molière than the one we acknowledge? This question is applicable to other reigns, to other nations, and to other periods that have been recorded in literature. If history is at bottom little more than the biographies of exalted functionaries, then does it adequately portray the continuous sufferings of the teeming millions? Why did Molière write Tartuffe? What did he humanly accomplish when he was permitted to stage this polemic contra religion? Why? One answer or reason occurs to us. It may be the constant intruding intermingling of human functions. Many social struggles are due to unwarranted intrusions; and these intrusions have often been

none other than individual acts. Which outweigh the other, the merits of literature or the demerits? Is good literature a subject of national appreciation? Is the romanticist, to-day, accomplishing more for civilization than the classicist. One other question: When we classify a writer as classical, is he not romantic more than classical?

Emerson's reading and study covered a fairly wide range of subjects. He placed only a few authors in the highest rank. This might mean that his own preference was limited. Philosophy, science and the abstruse reasonings of men like Swedenborg interested him. The great majority of men of letters he considered second or third rate. It would appear that unless a book maintained itself on a fairly high intellectual plane, and had a generous seasoning of mysticism, Emerson could not get very enthusiastic over such a work. The aloofness here displayed is similar to his dwelling apart from the world about him. The poet, for him, is Nature's first announcer and ambassador; and Emerson will follow any poet who can mirror Nature to the very ends of the world, and the universe. One can agree with this exalted attitude up to a certain point beyond which one may reasonably become impatient. Poetry is, surely, one of the highest achievements of man. But does the world live exclusively on poetry? Is it the sole spiritual entity? Perhaps Emerson wished to consider all things, all objects spiritual poems. This is assuredly a high thought but practicality must have some consideration. The sanity of all art must have at least

one of its roots firmly embedded in practicality just as the sanity of representative religion resides in the heart and soul of humanity, bringing it closer to the Creator.

We have commented upon tautological literature and would express mild wonder as to its actual usefulness, whether it serves life extensively. What people read depends considerably on what they can get to read -- and perhaps, what may be of greater moment, what the general public reads is dependent upon its present condition or lot. And we have hinted, only by way of suggestion and not taking upon ourselves any definite pronouncement, that the period which produced Tartuffe was not extensively beneficial, socially considered. Emerson's amazing vagaries are not improbably the result of the vagaries of Protestantism, though perhaps not altogether. Unrestrained romanticism can be far more harmful than beneficial. Could such lives as Byron and Shelley be maintained on any social scale? The distress now rampant is unnatural; ghosts are mistaken for real people; the centaur is not an actual existence; and the realities of life are insufficiently valued. With these thoughts in mind, let us turn more directly to the writings of Emerson with a view to determining just what he tried to say, and its consequent value.

EMERSON SURVEYS NATURE

James Elliot Cabot is Emerson's chief and most reliable biographer. In his "Memoir", consisting of two volumes, he summarizes the first production "Nature" as follows:

"Nature, or the existing world, is the realization of the Divine Mind in time and space; the effect of the universal cause. Considered in itself, or as finality, it is opaque, brute, unspiritual. So looked at, nature means fate, the power of circumstance, the bondage of the spirit. Man regarded as part of nature is the victim of his environment; of race, temperament, sex, climate, organization. But man, potentially, shares the cause. His mind is open on one side to the Divine Mind, and, in virtue of that communication, he may detach himself from nature, and behold the world of facts aloof and as it were afloat. To thought and inspired will nature is transparent and plastic. Man, when he thinks, is placed at the centre of beings, where a ray of relation passes from every other being to him; every natural fact is seen as the symbol of a spiritual fact, the expression of a thought that does not stop there, but goes on endlessly to embody itself in higher and higher forms. When he submits his will to the divine inspiration, he becomes a creator in the finite. If he is disobedient, if he would be something of himself, he finds all things hostile and incomprehensible. As a man is, so he sees and so he does. When we persist in disobedience, the inward ruin is reflected in the world about us. When we yield to the remedial force of spirit, then evil is no more seen."¹

Our impression of this somewhat condensed summary would be something like this: Very clearly, man, both individual and taken together, needs guidance from birth till

1. James Elliot Cabot, Memoir, p. 260 of Vol. I.

his closing hour; and still more clearly and even more definitely, does man need constantly -- spiritual guidance. If we notice particularly the last sentence of this survey by Cabot, we shall notice what to us appears to be one of Emerson's main and insistent characteristics. He speaks of "the remedial force of the spirit" -- an excellent thing in itself as well as many another most excellent suggestion set down for our benefit by the American scholar and philosopher. But herein we think we can discover a possibly fundamental weakness. We repeatedly receive the impression that man is isolated, that he must isolate himself by some quite unknown -- even unknowable necessity. Man must do this and do that -- but seemingly all by himself. Yet Emerson surely knew that -- Man cannot live unto himself, alone, any more than he lives by bread alone. No single note of music produces harmony; at least two notes are required, and three are better. Man, to live in harmony 'with himself and with his spiritual self', requires the society of others. Man is placed at birth within the very midst of mankind. Considered from the global viewpoint, mankind is in a single boat, as compact as his planet streaming on its course. The spirit of mankind cannot, by any skilful flourish of philosophy or transcendental metaphysics, be divorced from social affairs and relationships.

In F.O. Matthiessen's scholarly book, "American Renaissance", there are several speculative chapters dealing with Emerson and his evident dependence upon some of the pro-

minent English metaphysical writers of the seventeenth century. The third part of Book One opens thus:

"We carry with us the wonders we seek without us: there is all Africa and her prodigies in us; we are that bold and adventurous piece of Nature, which he that studies wisely learns in a "compendium" what others labour at in a divided piece and endless volume."

(Religio Medici, by Sir Thomas Browne.)

We find a close resemblance to this kind of thinking and writing in that part of "Nature" entitled Beauty:

"The dawn is my Assyria; the sunset and moonrise my Paphos, and unimaginable realms of fearie; broad noon shall be my England of the senses and the understanding; the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams."

This is indeed, rapid travelling in a single sentence; while the flighty phrase, "unimaginable realms of fearie", indicates that Emerson is ready to step off this planet any instant and without any warning. At the threshold of his writing career, a fast pace has been set; and it would seem that his celestial omnibus has been geared to outstrip the comet.

Matthiessen gives an enlightening comment on a phase of Emerson's mental attitude in the opening part of his recent volume which reads:

"But when he swam away into generalizations about the ideal, he showed at once the devastating consequences of the split between his Reason and his

Understanding, between the two halves of his nature, which Lowell shrewdly epitomized in the seemingly offhand characterization of him as a 'Plotinus-Montaigne.'"

In the ninth chapter of Professor Michaud's sparkling and authentic biography, the first paragraph, there is a statement which for us is very illuminating in that it points to one of Emerson's main resourceful methods employed towards the realization of his writings. Thus Professor Michaud writes:

"Emerson confessed the simple truth when he admitted that his way of 'enjoying the Universe' was to look at it 'through the prism of a hundred different mentalities'."

"He made no alliances, but he made annexations... In a moment of enthusiasm he even dreamed of decorating his halls with portraits of Henry and Ellery, (Channing), beside those of Franklin and Washington, and he added Bronson Alcott's to theirs. This repaid a debt."

Repaying a debt by the very simple and costless manner of dreaming in order to denote recognition and appreciation is an observance made on the part of Michaud deserving of more than ordinary commendation. He has definitely caught a photographic glimpse of the innermost heart of his study. In the gallery of contemporaneous and dreaming notables who hovered around this philosopher dwelling at Concord, Bronson Alcott was, easily, the weirdest.

Some brief account of Bronson Alcott and his associations, his transcendental friends, becomes necessary

for any one wishing to arrive at any satisfactory degree of understanding Emerson's mind and thought. One may quite safely say that Alcott was a kind of theoretical shadow -- if there can be such a shadow -- while Thoreau was a concrete shadow -- again, if there is such, for Emerson. Thoreau was a man of the very earth compounded; Alcott was exactly the opposite; he was the indefinable and extremely tenuous embodiment of a wandering soul, an American Ariel, but lacking the common sense qualities of Shakespeare's famous character in "The Tempest". Alcott was everything that a practical idealist or philosopher, no matter how aristocratic, neither could or would allow himself to be. He had constant visions and dreams of 'the soul's existences' while his own family lived on the borderland of starvation. Even Nietzsche with his ardent and visionary gospel of the Superman, pales before Alcott's superlative dreamings of the Supersoul. To demonstrate that human nature is not only queerer than we suppose but even queerer than we can suppose, we would accept Bronson Alcott as our example. Mystical writings went to his head until he had none. In short, we would say, with only a few reservations, that Alcott represents, in his conduct and sayings, those banal uses of language embodying thoughts that have absolutely no substance either practical or theoretical. We do not think that an angel could properly understand much of this dreamer's soulful ravings.

After alluding to "George Herbert, the beautiful psalmist of the seventeenth century", towards the close of "Nature", Emerson refers directly to his "Orphic poet", and quotes him to the extent of four paragraphs. This Orphic poet can be identified as Alcott whose "Orphic Sayings" and golden verse had circulated in and around Concord. We shall offer the third paragraph since in this one, in particular, there are the clear traces of 'our Orphic poet.'

"A man is a god in ruins. When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal as gently as we awake from dreams. Now, the world would be insane and rabid, if these disorganizations should last for hundreds of years. It is kept in check by death and infancy. Infancy is the perpetual Messiah, which comes into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them to return to paradise."

Teaching children, very little children, was one of Alcott's doubtfully successful employments. He saw a Plato in each infant so much so that he actually regarded each one as already a living replica. Hence, this parallels his 'infancy is a perpetual Messiah', which, we think, is not unacceptable as an idea involving the potentiality of a little child; but we do not know of any other educator who could successfully use such superlunar methods in the direct instruction of kindergarten inhabitants. It might take far less than one hundred years for the world to become completely disorganized if man were to pattern his daily life solely after the manner of Alcott's way of thinking. We do not pretend even to grasp the nature of the first layer of the

moon, the earth, any star, and certainly not the entire Universe; but none of these is the result of a dream.

In Emerson's Journals, we find this recorded of Alcott:

"Alcott is a singular person, a natural Levite, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, where all good persons would readily combine, one would say, to maintain as a priest by voluntary contribution to live in his own cottage, literary, spiritual, and choosing his own methods of teaching and action. But for a founder of a family or institution, I would as soon exert myself to collect money for a madman."¹

This shows Emerson's ability to judge the idiosyncracies of his most intimate friends and acquaintances, for his judgment of Alcott agrees with those of many others.

In part seven of "Nature", entitled Spirit, exaltation of the all but infinite possibilities of man reaches those heights attainable only by a rather overzealous imagination. Consider this sentence:

"Once inhale the upper air, being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite."

This striving after effects that, as we think, outdistance personal experiences in any physical, mental, spiritual realm appears to be an example of the unwisdom of reaching beyond the empirical boundaries of finite wisdom.

1. The Heart of Emerson's Journals; edited by Bliss Perry, p. 188.

The abode of justice and truth is not in any 'upper air', but it must always be discovered within humanity; and it must be displayed as advantageously as radium from pitchblende. We prefer to think rationally -- rather than to imagine so irrationally -- that the Creator has wisely endowed man with the moral faculty to attain the ends of justice and truth.

Near the close of Prospects, the final chapter of "Nature", we find a more acceptable statement, and one on which the writer might have expanded for the general and specific benefit of the reader. Emerson states:

"The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself."

This statement of truth is, however, so obvious, and seeing that Emerson, following his tantalizing custom, does not stay to offer explanatory expansions of man's disunity, it would appear that this has merely the force of a casual observation. Shall one state with the unwavering conviction of an absolute truth that Protestantism has effected 'unity of the human being' so long as its divisions outnumber those of ancient Babel? Is an organization, is a nation truly a Being if it is disunited? How is perpetual harmony to be maintained between the one and the many; or when shall be universally achieved E pluribus unum? If a farm, or any of thousand and one human enterprises, be considered a collection of unrelated objects, then wherein

lies any semblance of a unified whole? Emerson's "Nature" is, as we try rationally to unify its kaleidoscopic ramifications, considerably more heterogeneous than, homogeneous Nature designed and created by the Supreme Being. It seems that, at best, he succeeds chiefly in portraying his own disunited spirit. His occasional flashes of a close approach to the revelations of insight are somewhat eclipsed, if not entirely smothered, by the pyrotechnical displays that rocket into the infinitudes of a vivid imagination, there to dissipate themselves.

Inconsistency is a very conspicuous quality with Emerson as he reveals in "Nature". He complains, at the very beginning, about 'retrospection', yet he draws on all sorts and conditions of writers and thinkers; he uses numerous quotations - and with telling effect; he quotes the Bible; he takes very generous helpings from the discoveries of science and from the fascinations of philosophic speculations. Moreover, he uses exactly those same mental faculties that were usefully --in many cases --employed by Greek and Other Oriental thinkers; indeed, with these he re-oriens his own intellect. Parthians, Medes, and Persians we gladly listen to again -- for this time they are speaking, through Emerson, and glowingly manifesting the chiaroscuro eloquence of English speech.

But the great separation dividing the majority of writers, mentioned by the American philosophers, from himself resides mainly, as we view this topic, in what we

would call 'explanation'. Emerson does not stop to explain although very often his individualistic assertions shine with their own revealing light. Much of this light is polar, not tending to vitality. The ancients endeavoured to explain and were not without considerable success. It is debatable whether Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates have been surpassed; possibly in some particulars they have not been equalled. In any event, much of their intellectual achievements is still current in our day. The soul virtues which they extolled are an urgent necessity at this moment. Yes, Emerson saw the same sun that journeyed over Eden, the very same sun that Josuah commanded to stand still. The stars shining over his little acre at Concord guided the three Wise Men who were to make the greatest discovery vouchsafed to man -- a discovery which may require re-discovering. Emerson's attempt to re-discover "Nature" is successful only because he retrospected; what strength it contains is that derived from 'pondering on the past'. Its weakness consists in the writer's efforts to overexert his imagination and well-meaning enthusiasm where the simpler process of logical reasoning would better have served his purpose. Nature needs not to be rationalized; but man needs always to regard her with rational eyes. And when he does not understand with his physical eye, let him contemplate quietly with the eye of faith.

There is, in addition to the marvellous varieties of human speech, a far greater and far more transcendental language of Nature. There is a never-ending glory emanating from Mother Earth in all the ways and forms discovered and undiscovered. This all suggests pointedly to a profound truth that Nature, the universe, are most probably only a faint shadow of the Infinite Glory. Humbleness of spirit ~~contrition~~ of heart should more appropriately modify, as it were, the exuberance experienced whenever one views Nature's endless exhibitions. Her records are always accurate, requiring no assistance whatever from arithmetic or the differential calculus. Her accounts are never out of balance, there are no irregularities in her checking systems; she is always unified. Nothing is ever lost; the gain is manifested in the continuance of all phenomena. Why? Because there is the guiding Eternal Spirit, the creative mover of and controller and designer of all things that exist, that is, have being.

To cultivate a spiritual appreciation of the world and its partly understandable relationship with respect to the seen universe, is good for the strengthening, the ennobling, the maintainance of the human spirit provided, however, that such cultivation does not advance beyond rationalism. Perhaps it is possible even to indulge in some speculation aided by faith in order to remain rationalistic. There must be something more substantial than

a semblance of reason in the concept of spirit. Life is manifestly a vital phenomenon; the very humblest and, as some would have it, the meanest forms of life in the animal kingdom offer what might well be called the most recognizable differentiation wherefrom has arisen the distinction between the animate and the inanimate. This distinction is the key giving admittance into the field of consciousness. An insect has a degree of consciousness. The very highest extent or amount of prime faculty is clearly, on all counts, bestowed on man, this faculty of consciousness. In the early infant, we anxiously observe this quality until there branches forth the first tiny twig of intelligence. Colour and motion are every whit as fascinating to the infant, with its petals and wings folded yet almost imperceptibly unfolding, as to one such as Emerson whose wings are stretched full measure. Precious beyond words is Nature's consciousness which is imparted to and impressed upon the tabula rasa of infancy.

"Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man?" This question is asked in that part of "Nature" named Spirit. No matter how lofty the author's intentions were in posing such a question, in our opinion this type of interrogation can and does lead to reckless, not to say dangerous conclusions. This is exactly the example of hyperbolic musing seized by Nietzsche as texts for his "Superman". The great question of the present moment is very definitely how to keep a frenzied section of mankind perma-

nently 'within bounds'. If Emerson intended a spiritual meaning exclusively, then in our view this question of 'setting bounds' is absolutely unnecessary. We insist that such questions and, such irrational utterances contain the potency of evil in that they lead away from religion into irreligion. Thus the supposed idealism of Nietzsche has, in some measure, resulted in havoc, panic, confusion and destruction.

Again, in Prospects, we confront these speculative sallies:

"He -- the naturalist -- will perceive that there are far more excellent qualities in the student than preciseness and infallibility; that a guess is often more fruitful than an indisputable affirmation, and that a dream may let us deeper into the secret of nature than a hundred concrete experiments."

When from this hyperbolic sally we whirl around in "Circles" and finally come to a stop, if not a complete standstill, this is what we discover:

"I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no Past at my back."

This, evidently, is a philosopher who leaves all circles with drastic suddenness to 'unsettle all things' ostensibly in his errant pursuit of Truth. Pan warbles, sometimes delicately, sweetly, even delightfully; at other times rather harshly, petulantly, cacophonously. But the

music, however mixed, becomes dissipated in the silent regions of patient understanding nature -- like the disappearance of smoke into the air, or as light snow falling on the moving river, a moment white, then disappears forever.

Emerson's conclusions are not final. He admits this. He is contradictory, offers no satisfactory explanations to account for the constant inconsistencies scattered in his writings. Furthermore, one may safely affirm that the Sage of Concord does not in reality try to impress what to him are convictions on others. He desires to injure no person, no system, no religion; and malice cannot be imputed to him. He is, as we would say, incomplete, a speculative thinker instead of rational. Carlyle was dissatisfied when "Nature" appeared anonymously. This dissatisfaction remains.

"Emerson's doctrine throughout, whether in its reference to democracy or to the unity of nature, suffers from premature generalization. He guessed too soon. Three quarters of our valid additions to specific and indubitable knowledge of the nature of matter, animate and inanimate, would still be unknown if the scientist had controlled his investigations according to Emerson's own practice. "¹

If this comment is true, then Professor Canby has scored very high in making an accurate judgment. The authority of Dr. Canby, who belongs to the most representa-

1. Classical Americans, by Henry Seidel, Canby, p. 163.

tive group of American thinkers and men of letters, the group which includes such authoritative critics as Dr. William Lyon Phelps and Wilbur Cross, deserves the student's careful consideration. Dr. Canby here places the right accent on a most important phase in the general mental qualities of Emerson. This is the salient quality of the amateur as contrasted with the thorough professional, the savant, or the scholar. Now, one does not ordinarily place the same confidence in the amateur as one does in the professional. This suggests strongly another important feature, namely, the man of letters, such as the one we are discussing, may be literary to a high degree without, however, being an acknowledged savant. The all but impossible position in which Emerson places the 'poet' makes both of them, as it appears to us, unreliable; and, thus, the literature that ultimately proves itself to be unsubstantial in its observations while at the same time it glows with all the brilliance of transcendent 'Beauty' cannot rank with the first class group of world writers. The glory that once was Ruskin's, Carlyle's, Huxley's and Spencer's has greatly dimmed -- due to the cooling down of their 'purple patches'; in other words, it has been discovered that writers such as these just mentioned were 'merely stylish' in a considerable part of their works. Clearly, we have to be reconciled to all kinds and styles of literature just as this patient earth carries on its back all sorts and conditions of people.

We conclude this section of our study with a brief summary and comment. "Nature" is an experiment conducted by its author who, in this manner, declares the essence of his tenets. The experiment is only successful in part, the author's resources indicate a weakening as the end of his first trial approaches. The borrowing from other authors to the extent found in this effort shows some failure on the part of Emerson to stand firmly on his own feet. If these borrowings actually supported the principles announced, then there could not be much legitimate complaint or adverse comment. But they do not, they make these principles rather thin and pale; and the conspicuous note of 'dissent' carried to the point of an all-out protest makes complete acceptance of this Essay difficult. This experiment is heightened by the fact that the author published it anonymously; he was not certain of its acceptance by the public. After thirteen years, less than five hundred copies had been sold; certainly this is a bald comment requiring nothing further for statement. Carlyle failed to become enthusiastic; he got the idea that some occult process had lifted America from the ground about two or three thousand feet, say, and there was suspended. One must add a fair and honest comment. The essential elements, or some of them, of spiritual truth and literary excellence are plainly discernible in "Nature." Emerson, in this respect, has made a noteworthy beginning.

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-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-

C H A P T E R T W O

E M E R S O N I N R E L A T I O N T O T H E M I N I S T R Y

At the age of seventeen, in 1821, Emerson graduated from Harvard. No degree was awarded since Harvard conferred none until 1870. His first professional experiment took the form of teaching in a school established and conducted by a brother in Boston. It was a young ladies' school; they looked at him and he at them not unlike the way Columbus looked at the Indians and they at him on the occasion of that memorable historic landing. After two years, or so, both sides tacitly agreed that they could not gaze upon each other sempiternally. Emerson left. It is well to keep in mind his general health; a weak chest and weak eyes remained as rather stubborn obstacles. There being no other immediate avenue leading to gainful occupation, the ministry seemed to be Emerson's choice by compulsion, what might be considered the compulsion of necessitous circumstances. Possibly, the statement is a little out of order; we wish to add that the no small amount of money which he gained as teacher was handed over by him to his family, and naturally this reveals the young man's strong and devoted character. This is a sterling quality not to be darkened or clouded by any subse-

quent circumstance. Faithfulness of this kind was always an Emersonian quality.

He gained entrance into the Harvard Divinity School such as it was at this time. In a sense, he was in this school and he was not in it. The contradiction perhaps explains itself by the circumstance of his continued ill health. He was apparently allowed to try himself. But his eyes became too painfully weak. The first opportunity to preach occurred about 1826, the offer having been extended by the Middlesex Association. Owing to a backward physical health, this offer could not be accepted. Emerson took a trip south towards Florida in search for better health, a journey not entirely restorative yet sufficiently to buoy him up considerably. On his way, or while sightseeing, Emerson encountered a nephew of Napoleon's, whose name was Murat. One need hardly state that such a meeting was memorable enough to be historic. Each was different enough in his individualistic viewpoints to attract the other in a challenging manner, just like two intellectuals eager to measure the exact degree of superiority possessed and shown by each according to his kind. This memorable chance encounter was Emerson's first *mis en scène* where a foreign influence clothes itself in the flesh, or one of his book idols springs suddenly into life. When to this we add that Murat married a close relative of George Washington's, we have the essential elements for a pulsating dramatic situation.

Lafayette, Murat, the Statue of Liberty in New York -- they are all French.

For Murat was just this -- Dramatic. He, almost the only one, made Emerson dramatic at least for once in his life. Then comes this almost perfect paradox: Emerson stoutly defended Christianity, the very same which later he was formally to relinquish. We risk the digression in order to illustrate the contradictory elements that find a residence in a single person, and especially one that was to embark upon a most unique set purpose.

Improved in health and spirit, upon his return Emerson was offered a position as assistant pastor to the Rev. Henry Ware of the Second Church - Unitarian - of Boston. Mr. Ware resigned a year later thus leaving his assistant the sole spiritual incumbent. This event transpired in 1829. The following year he married Ellen Louisa Tucker. Within a year Emerson became a widower. As an objective fact, we relate that sudden death 'confused' Emerson to an extent where, as we contemplate the matter, only his inherited balancing characteristics pulled him through.

The career as minister lasted about four years. Duties were faithfully done; pastor and congregation enjoyed mutual respect and satisfaction. Yes all this time Emerson's other self was, probably, intensely active. The journal begun early in life was filling up, was even now becoming voluminous. This jotting is recorded, dated January 10, 1832, in the Journals:

"It is the best part of man, I sometimes think, that revolts most against his being a minister."

This points to an internal conflict. Emerson is not one with himself. Indefinable influences are operating within him. He perceives he is not doing his best although there is external satisfaction, mainly evinced by his congregation. But why is he not doing his best? Perhaps only his other self can answer. On one occasion he was called to the bedside of a dying man. Standing on the threshold of the door leading into the bedroom, Emerson stood and gazed stupidly. "Go home", whispered the departing soul, you do not know your business". The sick one had unfailingly penetrated the minister's innermost being, and had clearly seen a grievous defect. He was seen far better than he saw himself, hardly the best situation for a minister of a fairly large city church, or of any church for that matter. Glancing again at the Journals we discover another significant jotting:-

"I like man, but not men."¹

A pertinent question arises at this juncture. What kind of sermon did he preach? For most Protestant churches feature the sermon as the chief element of worship. The Church of England is not so strenuous in this particular. His sermons have not been preserved unless the point can be stretched that, under one disguise and another, there are

1. The Heart of Emerson's Journals, edited by Bliss Perry, p.217.

not unlikely visible traces all through the Journals. It would not be hard to deduce the strong probability that reappearances occur frequently in the Essays. We shall venture the suggestion that he delivered ethical preachments on an exalted spiritual plane; that he encircled the Bible with his own specially devised vocabulary; that he invariably appealed to the young people and --through-them-- acquired his peculiar, distant contact with parents. Dissenters there were, but the general acquiescence could absorb them without much difficulty. This situation is best summarized by declaring that the Emersonian sermons would scarcely have been countenanced in the Church of England; they found favour in the Unitarian. The difference is not without significance. Unitarian viewpoints exemplified, at times, the extremities of liberal latitudinarianism, a word whose length will illustrate its meaning. Listening to radical sermons in silence by a congregation does not, by any means, imply acceptance. Criticism breaks forth within the precincts of the family circle. Church elders and congregational elders might listen respectfully to an unknown wisdom proceeding from a pulpit in which stood a new sage and seer. They possibly honoured him in his self-appointed role of prophet, but his prophecies, if such they were, they did not understand. What did this sage inject into the church atmosphere, an essence defined by none, breathed by all, and especially inhaled by the younger generations? They would

soon find out in part. Emerson was preparing his last ministerial sermon whose title was to be "The Lord's Supper".

Before dealing with this sermon which is not properly so-called but is, in fact, an outspoken declaration of disbelief, let us take another glance at the Journals as compiled by Professor Bliss Perry, a Harvard authority.

"I see no reason why I should bow my head to man, or cringe in my demeanour."¹

Respect for Emerson makes one hesitate to lay upon him the outright charge of conceit. We content ourselves by calling this assertion an example of utmost self-esteem. We have read of no man before whom he was requested to bow his head. His general demeanour, while falling short of being thoroughly sociable, was tolerant. Then why indulge in this kind of comment bordering on conceit? The explanation remains speculative. Emerson is recording a hidden criticism. Any authority of whatsoever kind, no matter from what source, he refuses to acknowledge unless absolute truth shines therefrom to flood his being. He would remove all the coverings of seed, place it in the soil and expect it to grow merely, or solely, by the powers supposedly contained in the embryo. Seeds cannot grow if their husks are removed for the simple reason that these husks are themselves a partial result of a previous embryo. The prophet becomes very

1. The Heart of Emerson's Journals, p. 15.

impatient of important details; the sage looks at 'the whole idea', whatever it may be in his mind, and ignores the necessary parts. Thus it is with this sort of exclusive intellect Emerson delivered "The Lord's Supper" the dispensation of which he asked the congregation to discontinue. In brief, these are his main reasons as found in the Address as it should preferably be called.

"Having recently given particular attention to this subject, I was led to the conclusion that Jesus did not intend to establish an institution for perpetual observance when he ate the Passover with his disciples; and further, to the opinion that it is not expedient to celebrate it as we do."

In the elaborate argument that follows a reader meets some interesting highlights tending to bring out in bold relief the intellectual independence of this unique preacher whose method of saving souls in its simplest terms is a straight line leading direct to God -- without any intervention of any mediator, such as, according to Holy Writ, was the Saviour's only purpose when on this earth. Thus, Emerson banishes Jesus entirely from this pivotal capacity and simply accords Him a professional role of 'an instructor of man'. The defect, so serious that we feel not the slightest ability to discuss it, stands out as a most pitiable weakness. As in so many other instances, he attempts with his astonishing intellect and with his completely independent, stubborn manner of free-thinking to give his own inter-

pretation of a fundamental truth --once and for all. Thus,

"...the soul stands alone with God,"

The candles of Lutheranism and Calvinism must appear feeble when contrasted with this new strange polar incandescence. Transcendentalism is on fire, consuming itself.

Another highlight is the incessant harping on 'individual experience'. In the realm of nature --including Emerson's exclusive essay of the same title -- we can never see such an item as an individual experience save in a collective sense. There is such an individual to be observed in a single blade of grass. There is also, and far to be preferred with respect to benefits, a multitudinous congregation of waving grass. Nature abounds with a multitudinous variety of multitudinous congregations. So with our most patient earth. It is a thing in itself in addition to being an a priori something else in the minds of Kant, Pythagoras, Thales, Plato, Hegel, or Emerson. This is, we think, a very fortunate circumstance. And in addition to all this, Mother Earth, has other 'accomplishments'. For it is one individual -- very small yet at least one-- enjoying membership in a vast multitudinous congregation of ceaselessly whirling stars, suns, planets and comets, --the whole infinitude of glorious creations impelling the Psalmist to exclaim in song:-

"The Heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament showeth his handiwork."
(Psalm 19.)

Further to pursue our study, additional support of our survey comes through Woodberry's careful estimate. Referring to the ministry, Woodberry says:

"Emerson was scholastically ill prepared for his profession.... He was never grounded in theology or metaphysics."

"He began to look on Christianity, viewed in time as 'a piece of history'." ¹

If Protestantism, with its tendency to divide into numerous sections until the total exceeds two hundred plus Emerson, manifests a weakness through neglect of thorough scholarly training and spiritual discipline, then what of the spiritual condition whereby salvation and immortality should become an absolute certainty. A correct idea of immortality must, as we try to see it, involve one of two considerations. Immortality must be a future state granted unconditionally or else there are certain specified conditions --such as, a good, honest moral life based on a definite faith and belief. Whichever of the two main parts of Christianity better demonstrates these specified conditions by actual operation, in an universal sense, then that part is the more successful in leading humanity towards the ultimate goal, Immortality. Protestantism does not quite con-

1. G.E. Woodberry, R.W. Emerson, p. 30.

vince one that it keeps constantly in view the specified conditions mentioned. Let us concentrate this contention with single illustrations. In the Divinity School "Address" Emerson stated,

"The soul knows no persons."

When it is known that Harvard ostracized the speaker for thirty years for delivering such a presumptuous and highly offensive tirade, this result carries its own sufficient comment. The remark shows all too patently the reckless extremity of a free-thinking person bent on asserting individualism far beyond the vanishing point.

We contrast this by resorting to Cardinal Newman's first sentence from "The Soul's Eternity and Individuality."

"All those millions upon millions of human beings who ever trod the earth and saw the sun successively, are at this very moment in existence all together."

Which of these two statements --especially if there were no others-- would 'any Protestant chose?' Suffering humanity is now caught fast in the vicious traps of madcap, scatter-souled, individual libertinism. Which of these two statements will make humanity's voice arise from the consuming flames to sing a thanksgiving anthem that shall sound like a great Amen?

Othello loved not wisely, but too well. We shall state the case with respect to "The Lord's Supper" in this way. Emerson was at this time only twenty-nine years of age; he thought not wisely, not deeply, but altogether too superficially in his zeal for finalities. The "Address" at the Harvard Divinity School came six years later, in 1838. There was no visible improvement in his general temperament or outlook on religious affairs. The life of the spirit which he fondly advocated appears to have been extremely reluctant to forsake its highly charged intellectual progenitor. It looks as though Emerson's regard for society was heavily conditioned by the measure of favourable response which others could arouse in him. He would not shake hands, freely, with one of his very best friends, Henry David Thoreau. His second wife, would creep into his study, then steal out. He called her his little Asia, a very distant name. He might almost as well have called her Faraway. There are other ministers like this who do not minister to or mingle freely with their own families. If such a humanitarian task could be undertaken with real wisdom, a research study, in an effort to determine the effect of family life and closely allied relationships circumscribing a minister bearing directly upon his ministerial calling, might disclose new aspects on conditions long since taken for granted. In a word, the purpose of this study would concentrate on the 'distractions' that influence clericalism for

or against its devotional aims. This is merely an obiter dictum, an idea or a thought likely at times to enter the mind of any contemplative person. The digression is a brief breathing spell from our immediate discussion in behalf of the reader.

Returning to the context of "The Lord's Supper", interest of the reader is invited to consider.-

"3 ... I come to this, that the use of the elements, however suitable to the people and the modes of thought in the East, where it originated, is foreign and unsuited to affect us... To eat bread is one thing; to love the precepts of Christ... is quite another."

And once more to point out how emphatically this moralist allows his high-tensioned 'feeling' to permeate an audience or a congregation, examination of this sentence affords excellent illustration.

"If I believed it was enjoined by Jesus on his disciples, and that he even contemplated making permanent this mode of commemoration, every way agreeable to an Eastern mind, and yet on trial it was disagreeable to my own feelings, I would not adopt it."

Hence did Emerson cross the Rubicon. No one followed him. Ruth likewise stood alone, amid the 'alien' corn, as offhand we recall Wordsworth. Cluttering and bothering his mind --and others-- with what he may as well have termed 'the offals of a past forever dead', he missed the

transcendental, supra-eminence of the Ethos contained in the Christianity as moulded and firmly positioned by its sole Founder. Yet was he not, at bottom, searchingly criticizing the pale results of Christian practice visible around him? He is depressed by the plethora of opposite distractions. At the close of the "Sermon" he exclaims:

"...I shall rejoice in all the good it produces."

One understands by this an important key to Emerson's character. He meant well, only the best for everyone. John Henry Newman retained the highest respect of Oxford and England. Concord's distinguished citizen gained a hold on America which time has not loosened. The former grasped more firmly the most essential tenets of Christianity; the latter relaxed and, seemingly, assembled his own designed celestial omnibus on which one might have read the inscription: Destination Undetermined.

And have we not, perhaps, in these two influences of international scope, the indication of an unsettled Christendom because of the definite lack of a single unified pattern? The digression serves as a very brief resting ground before proceeding with our survey.

It is quite natural for Emerson, as well as for anyone else, not to admit with forthright outspokenness his complete inadequacy as a minister of the Christian gospel.

His varied reading, particularly of ancient doctrines which, we think, submerged most of his mental faculties including not a little of his intellect; and the result was his sheer unwillingness to go 'all the way my Saviour leads me'. No, Emerson wants, like thousands of others, to leave the green pastures of a Heaven-sent Christendom in order to explore the unknown regions of the wildest mythology. Too much wondering and speculation tends definitely towards a precipitous decline in worship. There are philosophies that miss the Creator altogether in their vain attempts to analyse, dissect and generalize. One can go even further than this to assert that a philosophy such as that so brazenly and recklessly propounded by Friedrich Nietzsche can be extremely destructive to say nothing about presumptions that are not based on the irrefutable logic of realities. Thus, the Positivism of Comte tends to draw one into a cul-de-sac, a complete negativism. From Positivism, the sceptic --no matter how sincere and honest he is-- may find himself abysmally immersed in an exclusive pragmatism that his position becomes inescapably materialistic and mammonish. But for millions the comforting, consoling, assuring answer to that great question: where is God? is still found in the first six words of the Lord's Prayer. It seems to us that Emerson paid little or no attention to these first six words.

Had Plato never lived, we would still have Platonism. If Newton or Harvey --or, indeed, hundreds of other leaders in progressive discoveries tabulated in all

the departments of humanistic effort-- if, we say, these two had not appeared, then inevitably others would have made similar achievements. There is no monopoly of attainment by any one individual in any single field. Belief in a Supreme Being coupled with a hopeful belief in Immortality forms a common element in the major systems of religions spread over the globe. But this point should be pre-eminently observed with respect to Christianity. There could have been no Christianity without Christ who was a divine revelation direct as it cannot be otherwise expressed, from God who has thus revealed his presence for all time. Faith transcends philosophy and is far greater than science. Indeed, faith is a basic factor, perhaps not always acknowledged, whereby science finally achieves one material truth after another. Philosophy seeks to comprehend; but faith trusts. Philosophy interrogates reasons and causes; faith believes and obeys. Faith may accept results obtained from philosophy only on the condition that there is substantial ground on which its trust gains a sure and firm footing. If there is, occasionally, a conflict between faith and philosophy, it is not unlikely that there is a conflict between faith and reason. In our necessarily limited viewpoint, faith should always precede reason since it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not actually seen.

Emerson's faith falters and becomes weak over the question of the divinity of Jesus. He is therefore a

sceptic and even joins the group of agnostics. His intellect has raced far ahead of his faith and has, as it appears, strayed from the realms of sensible ratiocination until, after whirling around rapidly in ever-widening circles, he suddenly breaks away from the bounds of faith, philosophy, science and reason --and just simply vanishes into his own imagined spiritual realms. Now this may be safe spiritual travelling for any one whose mind resembles Emerson's, but such hazardous travelling into the uncharted regions of contradictory speculations is definitely and clearly not the true Christian way. Not merely to play with words, but it seems both errant and arrant, as appears the manner of some pedantic philosophers, to detour throughout the universe seeking vicariously to discover the exact whereabouts of the golden portals, entrance to immortality. The sheet anchor of any rationalizing of probabilities beyond human ken, not simply must be, but can only be faith; and surely the most tangible faith was offered directly to the world at the advent of the Saviour.

Apostasy caused Emerson to leave the church and his praiseworthy honesty dictated his relinquishing the exalted position as a minister. He knew precisely because he felt deeply and thoroughly that scepticism had acquired a strong grip upon him with the result that honest doubts disqualified him as an effective representative in the great calling. There remained but one solution. His congregation

steadfastly refused to accept his personal pronouncements on the continued dispensation of the Sacrament. Therefore, Emerson resigned. He accepted the inevitable result of a situation created solely by himself, and this fact another hidden condition or circumstance. It is this. Emerson had already resolved not to devote his life to a ministry in which he, apparently, could not recognize an abiding faith. This being so, it is quite possible that he saw, or detected, aberrations in that branch of Christianity so faithfully upheld by his own immediate forbears. What, then, was it he shook off? Christianity? Perhaps not entirely. We think it was Calvinism. What did he retain? He retained a true spirit of sincerity, and he was strictly a moralist.

The outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace is best and most universally seen, with all its uplifting influence, from potentiality into immediate practice, in the soul-kernel of Christianity --and not in the heterogeneous confusions of contradictory philosophies, of strange mystical doctrines most, if not all, remain in a condition of static, indicating a dead weight moving never. On no platform to-day, or from no pulpit --and most certainly not on any battlefield-- could the sermon on "The Lord's Supper", or the "Address" at the Harvard Divinity School, offer any vestige of comfort or of hope. The fiddlings of Neros while twenty Romes burn will not extinguish the flames, while the lurid luminosity only intensifies the visible

darkness of the world. One of the most authoritative of American critics quotes, with a comment, from Newman's "Apologia ":

"To consider the world in its length and breadth," -- which faces the tragic mysteries of human life more squarely than any page of Emerson. ¹

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1. Bliss Perry, Emerson Today, p. 132.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

T R A N S C E N D E N T A L I S M :

P R O D U C T O F S U B J E C T I V E M I N D

"The Unitarians in the palmiest days, from 1825 to 1840, seemed to have formed not so much a church or caste as a small aristocratic class characterized by fluid theological views, classical literary tastes, somewhat formal in manner, and fine and social civic ideas."¹

"On September 19, 1836, Emerson, Hedge, Alcott, Freeman and Prof. Conners Francis formed the nucleus of a group addicted to speculative discussions which is generally known as the Transcendental Club."²

"If Alcott was the high priest of transcendentalism, Parker its militant advocate, Emerson was its ethical and Margaret Fuller its social and critical interpreter."³

A thinker may think his thoughts alone; this is a kind of nocturnal existence; and much good literature blossoms out in the full light of day because of innumerable contemplative sessions experienced all through the night.

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1. A History of American Literature, by W.P. Trent, Wm. Heinman, London, pp. 298.
 2. Ibid. p.304.
 3. Ibid. p.314.

Boston has been known as the intellectual centre of New England for several generations. It has managed to transcend New York, at least to the twentieth century; and it holds its own to-day. Cambridge, home of Harvard University, and Concord which fosters a School of Philosophy serve sufficiently to preserve the established claims to intellectual superiority. Indeed, it has been asserted that Boston is the abode where the Lowells speak only to the Cabots and the Cabots speak only to God. Such a statement contains a little world of philosophic comment and the possibility of truth without containing any stings of stigma. "The Atlantic Monthly", one of New England's most esteemed literary magazines, is published in Boston; its first appearance was in November, 1857; its first editor-in-chief was Professor James Russell Lowell. This justly famous publication presented its coterie of choice readers with Emerson's strange poem "Brahma". This quixotic flower, breathing a strong Oriental perfume, somewhat puzzled the Bostonian Brahmins. The only explanation offered by the author was an occult smile. The esoteric Emerson thought at night, smiled by day.

Boston, the Athens of New England and, especially during the major portion of the nineteenth century, of virtually all of America, became the staunch champion of a very broad liberalism --in education, the arts, science and religion. Expansive knowledge, transcendental enlighten-

ment, culture and refinement, from Europe and Asia, were eagerly absorbed. Only ethnically could Kipling be right in saying that East and West cannot meet. They did meet and most intimately. Strange doctrines and Hindu mysteries, Persian poetry with its perfumed phrases inoculated Bostonian and New England intellectuals. And one of the many thus to be inoculated was Mary Moody Emerson who had read Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and thought them venerable and 'organic' like Nature. We offer at this point parts of one of her letters to show the state of her mind not a little of which she transmitted directly to her nephew.

"Malden, 1807, September. -- The rapture of feeling I would part from for days devoted to higher discipline. But when Nature beams with such excess of beauty, when the heart thrills with hope in its Author,...

But in the dead of night, nearer morning, when the eastern stars glow,... with more indescribable lustre,... then, however awed, who can fear?¹

It is then, not very difficult to discover how Emerson is not only preparing, but also being prepared, to feel, think and write as he did. His aunt was an early, decisive, potent, and permanent influence on him. There were numerous other influences, personal and impersonal, books most particularly and vitally. No matter how he might decry about dependence on the past, all manner of substantial volumes 'fed his mind'. For these books exerted an 'organic' influence on him as well as on his friends, ac-

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, p. 17.

quaintances and some of his relatives. Everything considered, one must find it difficult to discern any dangerously harmful results proceeding from such influences. The acquisition of knowledge remains a most useful pursuit in New England, as elsewhere. He bathed and swam in a veritable ocean of books and became, in fine, an expert traveller over the highways of knowledge. But he travelled, as we consider it, rather too much. He should have tarried, not merely called, at several ports. Often he can make a very fine and penetrating observance.

"Luther would cut off his hand sooner than write theses against the pope if he suspected that he was bringing on with all his might the pale negations of Boston Unitarianism."¹

Here are the 'pale negations' which were greatly responsible for the lack of interest in the church, gradually getting more noticeable with the passing of time, and not adhering --except very weakly-- to the basic bedrock principles of Christianity. This retreat was noticed clearly by Emerson. Perhaps his own apostasy may be the result partly, of a feeling that he was not strong enough, as one individual, to remedy an aggravating situation. Further speculation on this point would serve no purpose. We can only wonder at his own statement concerning Luther. It shows much in little.

1. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 298.

If the pursuit of all kinds of culture makes those who are sedulously engaged in such pursuit sceptical of the ultimate efficacy of the church, then what is the nature of the culture which relegates religion back of the straggler's pew and what is its value? Why follow with never-ending amazement the labyrinthine orbits of millions of eternal stars when there was one that 'stopped' purposely to herald salvation and immortality --the Star of Bethlehem? How does one justify this statement in the essay on "Experience"?

"All writing comes by the grace of God."

The rationality of this inclusive assertion is not evident in all writing. Nietzsche's doctrine of the "Superman" is a flaming distorted mosaic of insanity mockingly exhibited in the guise of truth and cloaked in the robes of culture. It is called literature. Nothing should be properly termed cultural unless in some small way it becomes humanly beneficial. If we must include garish documents and gaudy ideologies on literary shelves, then, by all means let us most instructively 'label the volumes' as carefully as we label medicine.

There are 'traps' in literature, traps into which the weary pilgrim of culture unwarily falls. There is a tone of mind in numerous literary portions that is degradingly mechanistic, anti-religious and, perhaps more frequently than one cares to admit, written in the vein of ar-

rogant snobbishness. Only the balanced intellect can read such works and suffer no harm. Iago may pass as honest and honourable because he is so smooth-tongued and speaks with caution and correctness, but a careful reading of Shakespeare's "Othello" warns the reader that Iago is most dangerous. Then there is the hypnotic influence of fascinating fantastic expressionism in theosophical books from which a reader, if unwary, experiences an ecstasy bordering on madness. The road to spiritual wisdom is not thus paved and the sanity found in the forms of art is the product of rational genius as contradistinguished from the irrationalities of surrealism. There is no knowledge, not even in the kindergartens, that has permanent value unless some wisdom is obtainable.

One can find, in Emerson, all the right, proper and literary uses of language. One can also find the recklessness of a superficial reading that often comes from too much roaming. His paeans on Beauty amount pretty much to an exclusive diet of very thick honey. His discourse on "Persian Poetry" resembles a walk up a pathway of roses, roses all the way, until the observer pines for the sight of one prosaic dandelion or daisy. We would like to know just why the philosopher of Concord had to go to Persia for the only full dress display of poetry he offered in his twenty odd volumes. Homage is paid to Baron von Hammer Purgstall, who appears in the opening sentence of the "Persian" discourse, for having made possible "our best know-

ledge of the Persians", to borrow a direct phrase from this essay which might be regarded as still another transcendental excursion. The mesmerism of flowery diction woven around the imageries of a mystic mind serves as an escape from the humdrum of an unvaried existence; and it is not unlikely that many a New Englander found similar escapes from those pale negations of Unitarianism.

TRANSCENDENTALISM CONSIDERED

A sermon preached by William Ellery Channing in Baltimore in 1819 is generally regarded as the formulation of the Unitarian creed. To the time of his death, in 1842, Channing was the recognized leader of 'this new thing'. A representative Unitarian^{at} this time, as well as in the succeeding years, he passed as a tolerant individual, one who took a real interest in civic and private virtues, was emotional without being too much so, acquired a turn for philosophy, and cultivated a desire to become spiritual. Channing may be said to be, if not the first Transcendentalist, the forerunner of a movement which, apparently, transcended Channing's expectations or real intentions. Channing had the reputation of being a powerful preacher; he was very popular and was held in the highest esteem everywhere. He

tried hard and with great intensity of purpose to relate religion closely with life. Proof of this statement is clearly seen in his lecture, "On the Elevation of the Labouring Classes". It can truthfully be said of Channing that he was a practical idealist and sincere searcher after truth and its spiritual meaning.

Our main reason for receding a little in point of time is to consider rather carefully, though by no means with any pretence of completeness, a very special characteristic of humanity, namely, temperament. In a writer, temperament sometimes reveals so markedly that we would like to call it a force. We think that Emerson was temperamental to a very high degree; his 'temperament' obtrudes in his writings to the extent that it becomes an obsession, frequently beyond control. By way of comparison, and the more effectively to demonstrate our contention, the works of Washington Irving or Nathaniel Hawthorne do not show this excessive tendency. What makes little children temperamental? One explanation might be that they receive so many 'impressions' before they 'go to school' where these impressions are presumably catalogued so that, as their intelligence develops, these impressions begin to group themselves into some kind of practicable order. And according as this is conducted successfully, the 'temperaments' of children are brought under control without necessarily sacrificing any special individuality, or aptitude.

Some special and marked temperaments will, with unguarded rapture, seize a term such as Transcendentalism solely because of its distinctive novelty. Beyond this many such terms have no real existence. Religion, for instance, is a very definite and concrete term; whereas a number of 'idealistic forms,' parading under one non-religious pretence or another, do not even possess the character of the most elementary common sense. Bronson Alcott had a dreamy, ephemeral temperament, Margaret Fuller had a gushing and excitable temperament, Emerson's aunt 'brooded' all through her life and was, as we recall Michaud, largely responsible for removing the religious foundations from Emerson's moorings. We could name others. Considering such personalities, we are tempted to re-name this Transcendental Club by calling it the Temperamental Club. Most of the literary value of this club has passed away. The magazine which they inaugurated, "The Dial", had a very brief existence and so few subscribers that this enterprise landed Emerson in debt. Emerson alone emerged, and with considerable splendour, to perpetuate a movement which, carefully reviewed from all sides, was very much more temperamental than transcendental.

In the seventh volume of the "Library of Literary Criticism", edited by Charles Wells Moulton, we discover a concise summary of Emerson's radical errancy recorded by a reputable and authoritative New Englander, John Quincy Adams: --1840.

"A young man named Ralph Waldo Emerson, after failing in the every-day avocations of a Unitarian preacher, starts a new doctrine of transcendentalism, declares all the old revelations superannuated and worn out, and announces the approach of new revelations and prophecies."

We expect, then, from the essays and poems, new wines pouring abundantly from new bottles. Is this what we get? The bottles are new in the sense that they are Emerson's productions, his volumes. But the wines are old as well as new, producing a mixture with several intermingling colours and a strange flavour. Remove from these volumes the hundreds of references dating back to past and sometimes obscure centuries; remove from these volumes the writer's 'personal influences and personal observations'; the reader is likely to be left in the uncomfortable company of speculative skeletons which Emerson, without succeeding, tried to clothe in entirely new raiments. The threads of originality are very noticeable, some of them are somewhat too noticeable, but there are not enough of them for the fashioning of wholly new patterns. Perhaps we should admit that he used his own needle.

Any one looking for new revelations or prophecies would do well to enquire thoroughly as to the real necessity for something new before ascertaining to what the old revelations have been used in any useful or permanent manner. The vague notion persists in us that Emerson did not fully reveal his thoughts. Vital questions occupying

us today are possibly the same that kept him communicating only with himself. Why, for instance, did he employ that hidden, yet highly suggestive, phrase -- 'the pale negations of Unitarianism'? He must have sensed a palpable insufficiency in the spiritual efficacy of his own church. Is the fault, or at least one fault, resident with the preacher? Was there too much or too little preaching, or was the substance of the sermon lacking in the substantiality of spiritual truth? Some people attend divine service solely to hear a particular 'orator' just as people have attended a dramatic performance because of some special, even famous, actor. Is this the right attitude to cultivate towards sacred worship -- simply the curious attitude of wanting to hear some special preacher? We heard the so-called famous Billy Sunday preach. What was our impression of him and of the 'crowds' that want to hear him? Our impression -- and we would prefer to think it wrong -- was that Billy Sunday was a distinctive novelty. Crowds feed greatly on novelty. But these are mere suggestions that come to mind in the endeavour to reach judgments that cannot be considered in any way as final. However, it is pertinent -- as much today as at any time, perhaps more so -- to seek local causes for the unparalleled state of affairs as we now find it. In any event, Emerson is hinting at new creeds, new revelations; but he is forever harking back to the past. What does this mean for us? It means that society has not

made full use of the past; it means that the vital lessons of history are not applied in any universal way; it means that religious meanings are not sufficiently appreciated and that, consequently, their values are dissipated in the constant confusions of stubborn and aimless arguments; and it means that, in very simple language, Christianity is forever being improperly judged because it is still waiting to be universally applied. Unity for humanity must come from: One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism.

"The Transcendentalist" is sciolistic, it resembles an exhibition of sciamachy. It lacks the ordered arrangement of clear thinking. "Shall we say then", asks the lecturer, looking superiorly at his anticipatory audience, "that Transcendentalism is the Saturnalia or excess of Faith; the presentiment of a faith proper to man in his integrity, excessive only when his imperfect obedience hinders the satisfaction of his wish?" This looks like Emerson floating his way serenely through the twilight of one faith, Unitarianism, then suddenly bursting forth, completely winged, into a glorious illumination of new faith, an excessive faith, a veritable Saturnalia of transformative feeling. With the magic of golden speech, a chimera is created, becomes a beautiful vision betokening a reality, and the lecturer has his audience enraptured. Short work is made of the 'origin' of transcendentalism which dates back to Kant, as we note in this lecture, but which any one knows is as ancient as

the first human who found himself possessed of the power to articulate the very crudest of intelligible sounds. We remember that Bronson Alcott as so excessive with his sursum corda warblings; we reflect that Margaret Fuller swelled into ebullient singing with her knowledge of 'foreign literature and foreign knowledge' that she became excessive even to the extent of occasionally annoying Emerson; and there were other characters who sang and danced out of tune with elementary decorum. Hence we have a very possible clue as to where this idea of a Saturnalian faith originated. Emerson appears to have discovered a way to make good use of what might be called his 'environmental knowledge' to which he most skilfully added the extensive 'notes' obtained from his wide reading. It all, as we think, amounts to a series of fantastic declamations in an effort to uplift and to ennoble. The intentions are very good, but what of the methods? No one will dispute the value of knowledge; it is the practical uses to which acquired knowledge is put that must count at any time for the greatest advantage. Deductions, inductions, idealisms, new faiths, new creeds, Superman and Supermen, oriental religions, mysticisms, --what are these but the chimerical spirallings of vapourous expressionism, unless, by the necessary process of thorough assimilation --that same process by which radium is finally gleaned from tons of pitchblende-- until, perhaps, there shall result a few grains of practical wisdom? There is a lurking anarchy that constantly invades what should

always be known as the 'realms of pure literature'. What, for instance, is the moral effect of Thomas De Quincey's "Murder as one of the Fine Arts", or his "Confessions of an English Opium Eater"? Coleridge consumed opium and admired German philosophy. He was also a runaway, left home. And yet, one cannot very well demote either of these brilliant writers from their place in literature. Do such writers, however, not illustrate a tendency, along with Emerson and other writers, to attach more importance to form than to substance? This question is worth careful consideration at the moment. The praise of grandiloquent literature, majestic and magnificent style, matchless form, high sounding diction should not eclipse the intrinsic worth of substantial ideas drawn from life conditions and situations. The extraordinary range of several literatures over which Emerson roamed suggests, we submit, that he tasted and swallowed many more books than he chewed and digested. This special essay which we have briefly surveyed is similar to not a few of his other essays. The landscape view from a fast moving train may appear to resolve itself into transcendental loveliness, but this is not the way to obtain a good knowledge of Geology, or to manage a farm.

"So many promising youths, and never a 'finished' man." We would answer this querulous comment in this way. If the promising youth is unable with the materials at hand -- materials such as education, family life and so on-- to use

these in such a manner that he cannot 'finish' himself, then why place the blame on an externality that is in itself innocent? Why, for example, blame a school or a university, these being strictly externalities with respect to the student, if what is offered by these trusted and experienced institutions cannot be fully assimilated by the student in question? Emerson, as we have learned, was not very efficient in mathematics, he had not the patience to study the necessary details and principles which every one must do in order to be a mathematical expert. On graduation, he ranked in the middle of the class. Let us consider a hypothetical situation. What if Harvard had given Emerson a high ranking in his studies when he was not entitled to after an examination of his papers? What, then, would have been his outlook, his attitude, or his philosophy? The question serves no purpose since universities are consistent in this important particular: to award the student a mark according to what that student has offered. So that the 'unfinished' man is in this situation, altogether as we should say, because of his own innate deficiencies; or such a person has not made the most of his opportunities. It appears to be another of Emerson's inconsistencies in his own created gospel of subjective independence. Consistency must demand that no responsibility for this 'never a finished man' can be rightly placed outside of this particular man. The fundamental error that one can detect in "The Transcendentalist" as in the related essays

is the author's repeated disregard for those elementary fundamentals whereby social institutions have maintained themselves mainly because they have, by the due and consistent practice of fundamentals, given progress, knowledge and security to human society. Furthermore, he uses titles as mere pretexts, not forgetting, however, the sterling kindness of his intentions. He tries to 'idealize' by means of complaints. This is not an ideal method; and it points to the incompleteness of the author. Objective complaints mixed with subjective idealisms are hardly the best ingredients for a contributory essay that shall definitely assist the reader to improve his own situation. Nor is the situation helped by resorting to exalted phraseology. If we ourselves miss the heart of Emerson's soulful meaning, still we blame him for this error. He does not exert proper or sufficient patience in giving adequate explanations. Suddenly, in the midst of a jubilant discourse, an extraneous comment becomes firmly lodged, the golden thread has taken a subterranean dive, the reader must wander without a compass before picking up again with this thread. Cavalier remarks such as "Nature, literature, history, are only subjective phenomena" --found in this same essay-- would tend to demonstrate that there is an immense 'future' for these paltry¹ items, and such an amazingly curt summary strongly suggests that the education of mankind has only just begun.

1. The word is underlined ironically.

C H A P T E R F O U R

E M E R S O N ' S

G E N E R A L E C L E C T I C I S M

What is literature? history? philosophy? culture? art? What has philosophy done for civilization, for mankind? What is seriously wanting in philosophy and literature, since from neither of these has the moral genius of society been able to extract a pattern with which to design an universal institute of human relationships? When one great expounder declares that matter does not exist, is it any great matter what he says? What has Spinoza's 'Thought-and-Extension' idea, or just pure theory, accomplished? Why so many ambiguities, complexities, perplexities, contradictions,--when so simple an event as the earth's axial rotation gives day and night, without perceptible irregularity, or apparently, more easily than breathing? Can thought emancipate the thinker, give him absolute freedom? What is absolute freedom? Is it in the universe, that is, does any infinitesimal particle, or Betelgeuse, possess absolute freedom thus rendering completely unnecessary adherence to

any Law? And if there is law where, then, is Authority?

It is necessary neither to give nor to expect answers to these commonplace questions. The general purpose in positing them is eclectic. Because such questions have so often been asked, let it remain that they are borrowed. Yet as long as opportunity exists, or conditions warrant, to discover more satisfactory answers to these and many other questions pertaining to life and society, repeated interrogations cannot be out of order. The need for determining truth and the great impelling 'urge' to derive better meanings from all available premises stand out to-day for thorough and persevering attention. Meaning is not, of itself, an actual existence; yet is it quite possible to raise the value of existence, life and human life, by interpretations significant for their accuracy which itself in turn guarantees better, richer and more endurable worth. The task of separating and at last gleaning wheat for life's nourishment and enrichment from the vast accumulated chaos of conjecture over man and his place --temporary, accidental or eternal-- in the universe, this task assumes momentous importance in a world split by schismatical opposites. At this moment, man as a thinking being inclines at a very critical angle. He might be suffering from the eclecticism of writers such as Emerson, considering some possible influences emanating from literature in general.

Professor Perry strikes a suggestive keynote when he writes:

"Like all the mystics of this group, and like many other idealists who would prefer not to be labelled as mystics, the youthful Emerson discovered that for him, at least, Intuition rather than the process of dialectics, was the most direct way of apprehending Reality.⁸ 1

To be a mystic, one need not be a great learner or a learner at all. Illiterate folk the world over have posed as mystics. Hypnotism, mesmerism, clairvoyance, with several practices such as psychic experiments, are more or less attractive due to mystical elements therein contained. The unknown, the unseen, attraction and repulsion, make many minds mystical because of the mystery enveloping all these. William Blake wrote mystical poetry. But perhaps a more submissive acceptance of some fundamentals would create a healthier outlook on life and being in general. A mystic can be simply queer and nothing more. Concordian and Bostonian neighbours often regarded the Emersons as queer people. In our opinion they were partly justified. Mystery combines with thaumaturgical trickery to produce the charlatan. Finally, there is a mystery that can only be acceptably believed through the transcendent triumph of faith over the highest human reason, perception, intuition, or over any new philosophical coinage minted a hundred years hence, and beyond.

1. Bliss Perry, Emerson To-Day, p.60

Specifically, we mean, by the general eclecticism of Emerson, the manner in which he allowed numerous influences, alien and environmental, to operate in his mind while he stoutly and boldly upheld independence in himself and for others. One example will suffice to present this particular argument. This example illustrates a personal influence. Sampson Reed, a Boston druggist, wrote a small book, in appreciation of Swedenborg, bearing the title, "The Growth of a Mind". Emerson was a friend of Reed's and read the book which, in this way, brought Swedenborg, the transcendent mystic, to his attention. An experience, or let us just call it an incident, such as this can be multiplied into innumerable cases. But this sort of influence, and several other kinds, are so noticeable throughout Emerson's writings that we think it reasonable to call them eclectic. We would say, for instance, that the "Biographia Literaria" of Coleridge is a better example of originality in sustained thought and expression than a number of Emerson's essays. Thus, when we read the essay on "Swedenborg", and when we remember how the first knowledge of this unique mystic was attained, we therefore sense the eclectic quality of Emersonianism. Interwoven with this tendency to overburden a discussion, in essay form, there is an admixture of borrowed ideas. This with another intrusion, mysticism, winds in and out without any apologies or explanations.

"Swedenborg" teems with hitherto unknown and

recognized names. Boston's Pandora lifts the lid and out they come: Abbul Khain, another mystic, confers with Abu Ali Seena, another philosopher. The Hindoos parade again. Brahmins favour us with another performance, Transmigration. Porphyry, Behmen, Bunyan, Guion, Fox, Pascal show us what it is to fall into a trance. Hippocrates, Leucippus, Lucretius, Malpighi with his "nature exists entire in beasts", Swammerdam, Leeuwenhock, Eustachius, Heister, Boerhaave are enough to suggest that the list is swelling into a catalogue, or a guide to unknowns. Swedenborg is Sweden's Leonardo da Vinci of the aurora borealis. What he accomplished writes its own encyclopaedia, thus would be Emerson's manner of a final summary.

His vast knowledge and circular understanding of the then known science became known --if not completely absorbed-- in 1716, in a heavy tome, "Dedalus Hyperboreus." Then at a later period, with all the accumulated force of experience, erudition, travel and observation, he "threw himself into theology"; and at the age of fifty-four his 'illumination' began. But we need not continue this summary to the point of boredom. This special essay is typical of Emerson's great fondness for whatever is 'extraordinary', of whatever goes beyond ordinary phenomenalism. This desire with him becomes, as one might say, an obsession, a surfeited appetite. The obsession carries over into several other works. The closing paragraph gives the same indication of uncertainty, as to ultimate truths with their results, as

that which terminates "Plato". Either a cloud or too great a light comes between Emerson and his object under scrutiny. What, after all, did Swedenborg represent? It was chiefly himself; he represents all similar characters, but such representation seldom branches out.

We are chary of old and new revolutionists. Their doctrines, so-called, are sybaritic rather than serviceably truthful. An itch for sensational demonstrations does not contribute to the sanity of life; and sometimes sanity is lacking in the spheres of art, literature and culture. Stated bluntly, we should discourage the mind that itches or craves for something that may only be a meaningless novelty bereft of substantial value. If Swedenborgianism has realized the New Jerusalem, gaudeamus igitur. But who can say that it has, and where is the authority? Chesterton cried 'Halt' nearly thirty years ago in his "What's Wrong with the World." He pleaded against the onrushing avalanche of inventions, racing ahead of man's ordinary intelligence to cope with these inventions. Was he right? The world testifies now. It is thus with much of Emerson. We can accept him in part provided we are well fortified against his contradictions and exaggerations, the negatives cancelling the positives in the same paragraph, and sometimes in the same sentence.

EMERSON'S INTUITIONALISM

The practical value of intuitionism depends upon the manner of its use and just what it produces, say for the individual who desires to apply extensively the good effects derived from the faculty of intuition. As a constant, reliable method for discovering incontrovertible 'truth' practicable for general use and benefits, intuitionism has yet to prove itself fully capable. Like other faculties, this one depends upon the particular individual who thus indulges. When it may be said that the intuitive person is one who pulls away 'from the world' merely to be alone with his thoughts, then perhaps the results from this kind of isolation are hardly worth assessing; the results resemble an intricate, somewhat intriguing algebraical equation equalling zero. Rightly used, it is able to make the mind aware of aspects of reality without having to call upon the difficult processes of logical reasoning. Yet it is most necessary that he who wishes to enjoy the intuitive faculty should know and 'fully understand' what he is occupying his mind with; he should determine for himself the precise nature of his contemplations, and more than this, such a contemplator should have a set purpose. The expert manipulator of intuitionism must possess, as we consider it, more than average skill in the art of accurate reasoning, theoretical and practical. Every 'humanistic philosophy'

worthy of this quality, the humanistic quality, would manifest 'trained and disciplined' intelligence by which theoretical contemplations are readily translated into beneficial uses. Every philosophy cannot be called humanistic so long as one conflicts with another --unless, as Thomas Aquinas achieved in conjunction with the permanent human values of Aristotle's conceptions, a reconciliation becomes possible by bringing forth whatever is best and lastingly useful from an impartial study of differing philosophies.

The very fact, however, that intuition seems to be mainly the faculty of apprehending 'something' without having to experience the labour of intricate and time-consuming reasoning is, immediately, a warning to be on guard. The 'jumping' of a mountain animal from one peak to another might very well astonish the observer so that he persuades himself that the mountain animal has jumped solely 'by intuition'. But, as any one obviously knows, this peak performance is the result of long practice, it is one of the thousands of examples of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Basically, this is how we regard many kinds of intuition that turns out to be correct. There is another kind of intuition, the kind by which, let it be supposed, a sudden discovery is made. A simple act done by a person informs us --without intricate reasoning-- that there is something about this person we either approve or disapprove. This is intuition, an elevated form of instinct. The most

primitive mind possesses the intuitive quality. An exaltation must surely have flooded the entire being of a cave dweller when, suddenly, he reached down for a stone, threw it unerringly at a savage animal about to extinguish him. Was this intuition? Is there a connection between necessity and intuition?

Those intuitions which amount to nothing more than a short cut to one conclusion or another produce incomplete and therefore imperfect results. It is by the intuitive principle rather than by the more studied process of rational and philosophical thought that Emerson attempted to establish his spiritual beliefs. Sometimes we think one-half of his philosophy so-called exactly cancels the other half. Let us go back a moment to one of his poems:

"And one to me are shame and fame." (Brahma)

What does one make of such a dusky fulmination? If fame is 'the last infirmity of a noble mind', how can this word be applied in the right spiritual sense to the Nazarene? Or is it that the Deity makes shame absolutely synonymous with fame? Is Emerson thinking of his contemporary, Daniel Webster, who would have sold his country into slavery, in the same terms as Abraham Lincoln who emancipated the same country? Both these men were famous. Emerson may be finally correct but it were better had he proffered sufficient explanations. The line must remain in its poetic oriental

setting. Let Brahma speak mysteriously from the mountain, while Fiat Lux illuminates the universe, and remains the daily text for the world.

To a great extent, it is apparent that Emerson's idealism proceeds from his personality more than from his intellectualism. Had his material circumstances been quite different, this would then have reflected in his lectures and essays. As a man living in a community, such as Concord, his life was in all respects exemplary. As a teacher and lay preacher, however, the views he propounded were strictly limited to the arc of his own experience, considering these views from the point of applicability. His truth is a very tiny fragment of the full circle of Truth. Just as the world is still replete with thousands of Hamlets, mortals of an indecisive nature, acting when it is too late, so there are, in very truth, thousands of persons of the same essential qualities as Emerson --the main difference lies in the fact that the American seer raised himself above these others by his globe-trotting reading and ethereal thinking. The lark, likewise sings-- at Heaven's gate. There is very little of what we should call 'coming to grips' with the struggles of mankind, or with the social weaknesses which he clearly saw but merely pointed at. To-day mankind is deep in the throes of lethal struggles; and it must surely seem that our most exclusively 'intellectual' philosophies have only 'pale negations' to offer by way of beneficial dividends.

So that the question which opens the essay on "Experience" becomes foremost now as Emerson thought in his day:

"Where do we find ourselves?"

Spirit, Power, the Universal Mind, the Great Presence, the Over-Soul are the names used in an effort to obtain an integral formula by this Yankee Ambassador of the Universe. Alice in Wonderland wonders not more than he but much less and, it need hardly be noted, on a greatly lower and humbler plane. Alice finds this and that 'curiouser and curiouser'. This is precisely the condition brought about when one considers a variety of very ordinary phenomena with such an overdose of subjectivity until it is little short of amazing how one mind can bear up with the heavy load projected upon it. We would quietly suggest, entirely by the way, that any one desiring to test the theory of the complete abstraction of the mind by reading all the way through from alpha to omega a complete edition of the encyclopaedia --then ascertain how much is retained. An exercise like this should serve well to exhibit the a priori possibilities of re-writing the encyclopaedia from memory. Certainly to say that the oak tree is already in the acorn sounds like splendid idealism. This idea is illusory since, actually, there is no oak tree in the acorn. External forces --the sun, air, soil, time and space are all required, and all these 'phenomena' must be supplied in gradual abundance, not all at once, say,

by some miraculous power of philosophical thought, but by slow and patient degrees, here a little, there a little; or another well known method is: First the blade, then the ear, then the full grown corn. Again, when the acorn gets into the ground, it repeats the history of all its ancestors. Emerson scoffed at the antiquities of ancestry --and, at the same time, constantly used them.

SCISSIONS CAUSED BY UNBALANCED TRANSCENDENTALISM

From "Self-Reliance we examine three iconoclastic statements:

"Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist."

"Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."

"No law can be sacred to me but that of my own nature."

The first statement shows the reason running away from itself. What does one rightly understand by this kind of assertion? Have we, then, no 'men' who are not fundamentally reliable if they are conformists? What about Nature --no conformities here? How are chemistry and physics made known and usefully employed, without some conformities? The author here remains on such an exalted prominence that he cannot be properly capable of judging society.

To understand society with any degree of completeness requires close observance. The shattering disintegration proceeding now in the world is, to no small extent, the result of extensive nonconformities. A successful reforming of all social ranks will not acquire permanence unless one at least of the reforming agents qualifies under the name of conformity. Babel was the result of all the conflicting parties declaring themselves Nonconformists. The exclusiveness of the other two statements re-emphasizes the vehement tendency on the part of Emerson to 'separate every one person from every other person'. Each person would be -- must be-- his own philosopher, his own scientist or naturalist, his own church, his own religion; in fine, his own creator. He does not, by any means, foresee the possible consequences of this libertarian individualism by which society would be inevitably and disastrously sundered. Not even in the extreme writings of quixotic authors does one encounter this impossible gospel of separatism, nor yet in the works of so many who have lived away from the general haunts of social mankind. The sequestration of lonely, isolated social groups is a recognized fact in history, and from such groups have come the best fruits of matured wisdom offered for the general welfare of mankind. There are, as we all know, hermits in the very heart of a large city. Emerson's dictum does not include these and similar persons. He wants in some hitherto unknown way to make a brand new

'conquest', and the chief obstacle in his pathway is a frustration caused by himself, internal rather than external. This is the way we see it in part. Two glaring aspects of nonconformity that have appeared in America within the past century are to be particularly noted; Mormonism and the Christian Science Church. Let it be said of the latter, immediately, that we do not identify it with Mormonism; but these two 'departures' are certainly characteristic of what is happening in a young and developing country. Strange growths are not the exclusive feature of the mystical East; they appear to be the results of repudiating the very sanity of established traditionalism. Upon what kind of foundations will the 'brave new world' arise -- the fundamental foundations of rational doctrines that have usually accompanied social progress, or those uncertain foundations that float with all the shifting tides of changing opinions?

There is a lot of granite in New England. In saying that Emerson had a granite-like character, it is intended to suggest that the influences, environments and convictions by which one's character is formed gave him a certain set manner and bearing. We say, for instance, that Milton ~~had the~~ Puritan mind; but by this we mean his main character was definitely Puritan. Yet one must remember that Milton severely criticized Puritan practices, so that it would be correct to state an important fact, namely, Milton evidently went beyond Puritanism in his own way; or,

more simply, he departed from the stern beliefs of Puritanism when his mind informed him of the extremities to which those same beliefs might go. Emerson represents a somewhat similar case; although he walked straight out of the church, it is not incorrect to claim that he was a very religious person, in the sense that one can live a religious life without being identified closely with a church. There is, in this New Englander, a catholic element, a universal sense of the 'oneness' of the commonalty of mankind. There is more than this universal sense; there is, with him, a genuine desire to 'make all mankind one'. Then, why does not this idealistic desire work out? The answer is palpably obvious. No one mortal has ever induced or can ever induce, every one to enter one single fold --by himself alone. *E pluribus unum* still remains an unfulfilled motto; Individualism, no matter how exalted will not fulfil this motto; the altogether too numerous divisions of Christianity are unable to bring this about; new creeds advocated by this or that 'new thought' can only serve to increase the schisms; Swedenborg's visions remain where he saw them; and it would seem that the One Great Light has, temporarily, receded.

While we do not aspire to any kind of intuitionism, something about Emerson keeps informing, knocking as it were at the rear door of the mind, that he sensed deeply the futility of religious observances. Those 'pale negations' are something more than a mere abstraction; they

have become a negative force in the concrete world. Did he, as one lonely individual, feel himself, naturally, utterly incapable of coping with a situation whose results could be seen without definition or without the necessity of reasoning? In "Self-Reliance" he asks this piercing question:

"...but in Christendom where is the Christian?"

With this question, so to speak, and repeated in a variety of ways in several of the Essays, he takes the deep plunge into mystical doctrines, he goes from Transcendence into Immanence, and into the far reaches of the Cosmic Consciousness. However, a realistic statement here and there indicates that Emerson does not intend to get entirely lost. Socrates has, as it were, become Americanized. Perhaps there is comfort in this thought.

"No thinker has more exalted the private soul.
It --Transcendentalism-- delivered into his hands
the entire universe."

"These three ideas --primacy of soul, sufficiency
of Nature, and the immediacy of God-- are the
triple root from which grows Emerson's entire
thought of the universe, in a philosophical
sense."

Thomas Carlyle weaves a considerable amount
of pragmatic wisdom in his musings. Hence, we shall draw

1. G.E. Woodberry, Ralph Waldo Emerson, pp. 46, 49.

upon him for the most trenchant and brief comment to these two quotations from Woodberry. Margaret Fuller said, in one of her characteristic, dramatic flourishes, "I accept the Universe." When Carlyle heard of this, he answered in two words: "She'd better". This utterance of Margaret Fuller's affords some evidence helping to summarize the case of the Bostonian and Concordian a priori ideas of cosmism. America has outdone Kant, and produced Benjamin Franklin whose plain, practical common sense serves as an effective counterpoise to the inert shibboleths of psychic sentimentalism.

Too much analysing by the mind concerning 'itself' leads frequently to a scission between the real and the unreal. In our time we have heard of the outpouring springs of the subconscious psyche to such an extent that sometimes the results resemble the madcap ravings of a surrealist artist. However, good may be the intentions of expounders like Freud and Jung, to mention two outstanding 'thinkers' of the subconscious, why not declare a vacation until further notice from the parrot discussions of the subconscious activities? A plague upon both their houses, as Shakespeare might have summarized it. There is in existence what should be styled the abysmal ignorance of the very foolish wise individual, wise in his own conceit, foolish in his activities. We can draw upon the wealth of Aristotle, Plato, Aquinas, Newman, and others, for a long time to come; we can possibly surpass Emerson by making names like these 'live' in the

world again for the good purposes of restoration. Rational observances of Nature as she creates legions of charming evolutions all point very definitely to a single purposive fact, namely, Nature adheres to fundamental principles, and 'never departs from them'. Nature always obeys her Creator. It would be better to say that Nature gives rather than insistently to claim that she yields to man, proud man.

Emerson's insistent practice to speak 'in opposites' detracts from the value of his promulgations. This indulgence reminds one of the child who will build with blocks, then suddenly, with one sweep of hand or foot, the structure topples. Examples are found in a great number of the Essays, they are likewise tucked away among the poems. In the essay on "Plato", we read: "Plato is philosophy, and philosophy, Plato." This is an extremely high compliment in the most compressed form possible. Bacon would have done no better. Further on we see this:

"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 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."

No more fitting comment can be found, we submit, to Emerson's works; this criticism of Plato contains the elements of self-criticism. The prosecuting attorney argues his own case for its defence. This is the evidence of a mind not all of one

piece composed. In "Compensation" occurs one of his astonishing discoveries:

"There is a 'crack' in everything God has made."

He looks at microcosm through a telescope, at macrocosm through a microscope. His instruments need fine adjustment. He is not a craftsman skilled enough to make the proper adjustments.

The algebraical equation again equals zero, and only the symbols remain for further effort. Our distinct impression seals a kind of conviction that one of Emerson's serious defects lies in his apparent effort to identify the ways of the Supreme Being with those of puny man. He does not appear to understand, or else we do not, that when the will of man turns into free will and free-thinking, the resultant responsibilities must evidently lie wholly within man. When man constructs a dam, Nature supplies the materials; when man destroys this dam, Nature receives these materials again, with great patience, to express it thus, and without any complaint.

Small wonder, therefore, arises from these and many other inconsistencies. So much of this sort of writing is too vaporous to be defined as philosophy, but rather an attractive patchwork of interwoven patterns, and no one special pattern being very clearly emphasized. The balanced movement of eternal forces, the flux of changing objects, Spirit and matter, time and its great reservoir --eternity,

the One and the many, the perpetual recurrence of all things, the Supreme Good-- these have all been noted, pondered, wondered, discussed and 'analysed' --as far as such data can ever be said to be ultimately explained-- by hundreds of seekers after ultimate Truths. Yet it is quite pertinent this moment again to ask the Emersonian question: Where do we find ourselves? Why not draw in a little of these wide-spread sails of hectic investigation, wait for the winds to calm down, pull in closer to the shore; and we may once more hear a patient Voice speaking through the storms: Be still, and know that I AM GOD.

The transcendental manner, then, somewhat in the same way as mysticism, returns to itself; or it gets lost by trying to encamp somewhere in the no man's land not to be located in the universal scheme of things. The fascination of flowery phrases, void of substantiality, strikes the eye and mind simultaneously so that the reaction immediately arises in the unstable form of a delectable emotionalism -- before the reason or understanding has actually grasped the true situation. A great deal of literature resembles a glorious display of fireworks -- brilliant displays, of ghostlike streams of coloured lights headed by multi-coloured stars, but everyone of them extinguishing in mid-air. Such writing has a place in the field of entertainment, and in this way it serves a useful purpose, --we would add, a necessary purpose. Idealistic literature is altogether

another matter. In this respect, one notices a rare paradox in the more idealistic qualities of Emerson. We find this rare quality in his capacity as super-critic. Of all the books he has read, he recommends a very small portion. Here is one representative opinion taken from "Books":

"I visit occasionally the Cambridge (Harvard) Library, and I can seldom go there without renewing the conviction that the best of it all is already within the four walls of my study at home."

Emerson is nothing if not a person with 'convictions'. There would surely be enough convictions in his twenty volumes of letters, journals, lectures and essays to make an interesting and instructive single volume. The essay on "Books" contains, with characteristic comments in the exalted vein, a compendium practically of Universal Literature. And it is, furthermore, in this same essay that an important 'key' to Emerson's reading and critical mind is obtainable. The advice here given is not to be overlooked, nor is it necessary to accept it in toto.

C H A P T E R F I V E

S O U R C E S O F E M E R S O N ' S I D E A S

Amiel's "Journal", as translated by Mrs. Humphrey Ward, is the very captivating, almost day by day, record of a strong soul in a body rather weakened by a gnawing illness. Amiel refers frequently to this consuming disability in a way, however, that in no wise detracts from the great splendour of his diction. His spirit rises above the bodily ailments which finally brought him down. One supassing feature of his "Journal" is seen to great advantage in the outdoor descriptions. As well as other writers who draw on the inexhaustible wealth of nature's infinite attractions, Amiel describes a single flower or a cluster of fruit with very telling effect. Then, in his inimitable manner, he creates a relationship between nature and man with results coming very close to perfection. In a word, the 'earth' instructed Amiel, and inspired the spirit within him. Thus did he conquer a great deal of his physical pain; nature called him with her requiescat in pace.

Emerson, at quite an early age, began to keep a diary which, by dint of persevering jottings, grew first

into one journal, then into two, and before he had finished these jottings, the number was extending to ten volumes. He wrote many letters to Carlyle, his aunt exchanged a number of progressive letters. These jottings were polished, and most probably, some idea that pleased Emerson more than ordinarily well, whether from his own mind, from a contemporary, from 'Montaigne or Plato', this particular item was given an extra polish. Like a collector of prized jewels who almost daily examines his secret store and gives this or that 'favourite' a special rub, so, we can imagine, did Emerson ruminate in secret among these jottings. His "Journals" became a potential reservoir containing rich materials for his essays, articles and lectures. It was Molière who wrote: "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve." Emerson did the same thing but here the comparison ends since the results of each are as opposite as the poles. America's aspiring philosopher drew literary deposits from intimate friends, from outdoor wanderings of limited mileage as far as the "Journals" are concerned, from Europe and Asia, from a large variety of books, and by very careful 'listening'. We do not see, even in his favourite theme, "Nature", the spontaneous outpourings of the singing soul that really and truly 'lives' outdoors. The earth teaches him only, as it appears, in a rather roundabout manner. He puts bookish ideas into his sentences and paragraphs. It is the scholar's studious tastes that affect his style and the constant mannerism whereby the personal feeling renders

this style more self-conscious than one would reasonably expect to find when reading a selection affecting to offer a pictorial transcription of nature. Emerson's incessant desire to 'interpret' this or that aspect of nature gives the impression that he wrote more by reflection than by patient observation; it almost seems that each object under survey must actually pass through his mind. We recall from one of his jottings that on one of his jaunts in the woods he continually looks for something 'that is not there'. This is something like a person gathering berries, a small handful from a heavily laden bush, then away to another bush, --then looking around for no special purpose except to look around. In "Nature" the reader encounters this remarkable discovery:--

"I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing;
I see all;"

Nature, therefore, as a source for ideas is, in our opinion, quite secondary. There is exceptionally good writing testifying to an intelligence of an admirable order seen in "Nature". But, the constantly interpolating interpretations give the effect of an anti-climax. Our attention is not on nature but on the writer. This is subjectivism out of place.

Public curiosity, being virtually the same in New England as anywhere else, was sufficiently aroused to enquiry over the authorship of "Nature" when it appeared

on the stalls of book shops. It had been published anonymously. 'Who is the author of "Nature?"' Nathaniel Hawthorne had the answer ready. He said: God and Ralph Waldo Emerson. This answer was very apt and most revealing.

It seems important to state again that Emerson listened and observed, although usually from an upper level of thought. This close listening, as we consider it, serves as another direct source wherewith to increase the Journals, to keep this increasing reservoir of general and useful information well stocked in order to have on hand an abundance of material for lecturing. Grist for the Emersonian mill was garnered from the literary clubs all around Boston and Concord, and probably Harvard was not overlooked. A small coterie of Intellectuals in a book shop or in some one's home might be discussing Carlyle, Coleridge --the main fountain source for transcendental and critical writing--, together with the popular philosophical eloquence proceeding from Germany represented largely by Schelling and Schlegel, all these rich and, at the time, abundant sources made their way into the Journals there to be pondered, classified, transformed and, finally, reappeared in a hundred and one ways under the skilful handling of Concord's sage. The vaunted independence and originality so ardently preached by him thus had all its roots securely 'fixed' in one way or another, somewhere in the local or long distant past. There was a living to be maintained, a family required support, health demanded very close nurturing, and the break-

fast table was not quite complete without apple pie. In every sense of the word, and with all its good meaning, Concord's prominent first citizen proved to be a husband. The evidence is ample that in his writings much fine gold resides, though not, by any means, in the pure state. Nevertheless, it is there. Like lovely fruit blossoms on an old tree, and a splendid new foliage-vesture, gift of nature's eternal resurrecting power in the springtime, this would be the glory of his coming and abiding in the regions of hopefulness and in the realms of sincere, eloquent speech and thought which this day honours and remembers.

One of the most important sources prospected by Emerson was his trips to England, the first one being undertaken in 1833, at the age of thirty. At this age, it is somewhat true to say that he was both young and old. Constant reflection makes a person, very often, older than his actual age. A severe childhood, a rather sober period of youth, especially if this period is largely occupied with numerous studies and more reading, tend to produce a maturity before the time which perhaps nature intends, speaking from an ordinary viewpoint. It is very significant in the case of Emerson to keep in mind factors such as these. His purpose is set; he has fully decided to pursue a definite road; he may talk and explain as he will about such conditions as 'spontaneous impulses', or he may advocate a very sudden course of action. He waited twenty-three years from the time of his first visit to England, before publishing

"English Traits". This shows great deliberation and, at least, a controlled patience. All this time he is gathering and preparing further data, and seeking fresh sources. Thus, the first visit to England had for its prime motive a personal interview with Carlyle and Coleridge in particular. Wordsworth was also visited. Walter Savage Landor also belonged to the small 'eclectic' group under observation,-- briefly, Emerson was intensely interested in Oracles. His great ambition was to be an American oracle, not, let it be properly understood, for vain glory. We shall say that he wished to establish a kind of literary Americanism to illustrate and perpetuate an American Spirit.

A casual glance backward in American life readily shows the existence of the very clear indications, signs, of such a spirit. One has but to refer briefly to earlier voices and actions expressed through such outstanding personalities, imbued deeply with a most thoroughgoing sense of practical life, such personalities, we repeat, as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Washington Irving whose several writings served to establish the beginnings of American Literature, --these with others not only write the preface but comprise the first chapters of American idealisms. Their writings and their lives are remembered as being filled with devotional ideas of duty towards humanity. The best that we can grant to Emerson is restricted to this particular section of New England where the new lights of a strange awakening spirit pretty much resemble small escaping flames,

tongues of fire as it were, from the general light of firmly implanted beliefs.

F.O. Matthiessen, in his "American Renaissance", gives some pointed hints with respect to the way in which the mind of Emerson derives and develops certain of his doctrines, using this word somewhat freely. The chapter entitled, 'The Metaphysical Strain,' offers suggestive information concerning possible sources:

"The bent of their thought and the divergences between them could be seen by tracing their relations to Oriental philosophy, by considering, for instance, the degree to which Emerson was accurate in identifying Brahma with his Over-Soul, Maya with Illusion, Karma with Compensation;.."

"In reading Herbert or Browne they were affected not only by ideas, or by form as an abstract pattern, but also by the qualities of their own language which the eighteenth century had allowed to decay, and which they were determined to renew." ¹

It has been said of the Romans that they made a cement stronger and more binding than the stones fixed into place by means of this cement. Perhaps this may serve to describe, in part, just what Emerson endeavoured, in his various proclamations and oracles, to achieve. His pantisocratic Parthenon in New England, if one may thus express his works, attracts to-day, chiefly, erudite intellectuals.

1. F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, Book One, III, p. 102.

This Parthenon might have, without attempting too much to create our own illusions, a counterpart in the one time League of Nations --the special idealism of Woodrow Wilson. This League, as far as it influenced America, or the United States, became something merely 'to look at.' To-day, we have the results of this kind of looking from a remote distance. In this sense, then, we consider Emerson's peculiar contribution to American literature; it is very good to look at, but it is not by any means valuable as a working hypothesis. Just as Woodrow Wilson did not sufficiently take into accurate account the pulse of his people, so likewise Emerson did not, either adequately or efficiently, probe into the life which was his immediate environment. Apparently, his interpretations of so many previous writers, a good many of whom possibly had a limited globular viewpoint, did not mix very well with his strictly national or sectional recorded observations. What he might have better accomplished, more permanently, has been left for others. Plato and Aristotle are still enjoying life at many universities in the western hemisphere; Montaigne, Pascal and Napoleon are not yet petrified in their literary monuments; but such questionable illusionists as Swedenborg and Behmen and Vishnu are probably floating around in a nethermost atmosphere in a vain endeavour again to contact Plotinus. From "Illusions" one finds abundant evidence of this habit of mixing various elements in a single sentence or two:

"Children, youths, adults, and old men, all are led by one bawble or another. Yoganidra, the goddess of illusion, Proteus or Momus, or Gylfi's mocking --for the Power has many names-- is stronger than the Titans, stronger than Apollo." 1

Apollo, in Homeric Mythology, is the embodiment of practical wisdom and foresight, of swift and far-reaching intelligence. In Virgil and Ovid we find the sun referred to as Titan. If the point of the sentences quoted aims to show that Yoganidra's influence overshadows that of Apollo or Titan, then perhaps the writer missed a good opportunity to develop this idea for the benefit of the audience or the reader. Instead of this, the audience emerges rather blindly from the Kentuckian Mammoth Cave to behold, -

"Every god is there sitting in his sphere."2

In such essays as "Illusions", it becomes necessary to undertake a great deal of searching in the thick foliage of Orientalism with its high seasoning of mysticism before even a very small nourishing fruit can be found. And though this fruit may at long last be found, is it too dry and wizened to pay for the labour of the search? The wisdom of ancient mythology is non-existent unless from there be derived practicable truths. In many lands ostensibly famed for their occult mythologies, there are recent occurrences of devastating famines, thus possibly indicating that useless illusions still hold sway. A fruitful substitute for obscure

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1. Illusions.
 2. Ibidem.

myths, using this word for the moment to express those unrealities of diverging faiths, reveals itself with the wider acceptance of vital symbols, that of the Cross for example. These present times are sadly out of joint because of an insincere observance for just such necessary symbols. The necessity to re-kindle Fiat Lux assumes paramount and imperative importance. All the evidence surrounds all of us --now.

Montaigne's chief question was: "Que sais-je?" His chief characterization was --himself. In the transition of this lamp from, say, Montaigne to Emerson, the light for some perhaps unknowable reason went out. For Emerson had an excellent chance to extend this question of Montaigne's into: What can I do with what I know. But there were far too many contrary winds blowing to keep the light steady. Emerson, we shall affirm calmly, carried this lamp across the vast spaces of unknowable regions checking to see if each god was in his proper sphere. He suffered from too much and too wide reading, so that hardly one of his essays or lectures can be said to illustrate a perfectly straight line. He does not, furthermore, follow the earth around the sun; his system of the universe is not nearly as useful as was Ptolemy's in a previous age. As a matter of probable fact Emerson seems to have attempted a resurrection of the Ptolemaic system making man the centre of all things in a manner far less rational. For he had the advantage of all the succeeding centuries. Hence, we conclude this part of our survey with this reflection: Emerson read too curiously

instead of reading wisely. He was not without the means for understanding what he read or what he observed. There are four simple words in "Illusions" which further illustrate Emerson's repeated habit of generalizing without sufficient study. He says: "Life is an ecstasy." We counter this with saying: Life has a purpose that has been already pre-arranged. We are now caught between death and life, the death of life ending in annihilation.

To-day arises the question with unusual force and violence: What makes moral and spiritual values moribund? If a person or a group insist on the exercise of free will under the guise of, suppose, some sort of religious pretension, what then is the social effect? Can a state be morally governed if its leaders are mental and intellectual giants and nothing else? What made Daniel Webster completely different in human outlook from Abraham Lincoln? Which of these two was really the greater personality and force, not in his country only but in the world at large? And having answered the question, supposing it can be finally answered, just what is the essential reason for these so-called individual differences? What is the one factor common to all humanity whereby moral cohesion shall permanently be maintained while at the same time all the manifestations springing from individual differences will not give rise to 'dangerous issues'? Where shall we find the one consistency that should be able to keep under control all other incon-

sistencies? If we are to credit particular writers with having been imbued with a definite mission, such as Emerson, how are we to determine the exact measure of their absolute sincerity? When are writers like these real, when they are unreal? When are they right, when they are wrong? Both of these opposites contribute to the superstructures of literature; it is necessary that one know how to determine or recognize the opposites in literature in some small measure and, as far as individually possible, to guide one's self accordingly. This is somewhat by the way, another obiter dictum, with special reference to the general content of literature.

Emerson's ambitions for his country, his region, were very largely his own personal ambitions. What 'he' did not like he expected everyone else not to agree to. What he thought with reference to this view or that he tried to universalize; he was quite honest in thinking in this manner that he had the best interests of humanity always at heart --and we believe this to be true. His most glaring defect appears to lie in this probability: No man can travel alone and at the same time be, to any appreciable extent, a social benefactor. To remain by one's self and to ponder about such lonely figures as an Oriental mystic, Hafiz ruminating on an oasis set in the middle of a desert, Orion painted or real, Swedenborg gathering clouds or Behmen calling the roll of ten thousand gods, or one hundred and one

other equally fatuous fata morganas, such luxurious and isolated indulgences help either literature or humanity not a great deal. If the world in general is reaping dividends from these and similar indulgences, then we can only say that the price is altogether too costly for any more encouragements along these lines. Franklin drew lightning from the clouds. He did better than this. He drew real wisdom from contact with the life about him. Washington helped to found a new nation, one whose progress is to-day one saving aspect, Irving wrote good literature. Emerson with his exclusive notions drawn from all the opposite points of the universe as well as on the earth, failed to take into any kind of practical consideration the contributions already progressing in his own country. Too many of his symbols are mere timbals; they ring and at times quite sweetly. But the melodies of past days are now fast becoming less than memories --due to lack of harmony. He constructed a kind of temple here and one there. It was within him to build a 'settlement'. Instead of this he spent far too much time carrying hods and stange bricks. The religion he preached is not at hand; the literature he advocated was in the making all about him; he exclaimed against vain imitations and his writings are replete with imitations and echoes. Yet, to be as fair as we can be in this circumstance, the justification which possibly applies effectively for Emerson as for other writers lies in the fact that a writer, no

C H A P T E R S I X

E M E R S O N A N D P O E T R Y

I - GENERAL ASPECTS

Robert Burns is a poet whose warbling, lilting songs have been spun from his heart and have touched the musical and poetic sensibilities of millions. For this reason Burns has become a poetical institution. His is the poetry of earth and heart; from mortal poverty he distilled immortal riches. Newman's "Lead Kindly Light" has exerted a more benign and sacred influence on more people of more ranks than, we feel like testifying, most of the poetic effusions of Byron, Swinburne, or Shelley even. Of these last three mentioned, we acknowledge sympathetic praise for Shelley. Nor would we forget the very human attributes of Byron. If we suppose religion to be a ladder leading from earth to heaven, we would suggest that genuine poetry could supply some of the motive power for the ascension. There is an intense kinship between the poetic eye and its object whose essence it penetrates. Milton's "Hymn to the Nativity" removes that austerity usually associated with him. When he

wrote this he must have experienced a sublimity of sacred joy and holy warmth that could not be experienced under the pale polar light of ascetic Puritanism. The ascendancy of the heart over the mind is thus displayed in true poetry, but whether this ascendancy has yet succeeded in any permanent universalization would constitute a research problem beset with numerous difficulties. The whole range of existence, or any portion, when imaginatively apprehended and grasped firmly on the side of its human interest may be transfigured into the poetic vein.

When we recall "To a Mouse" by Burns, "The Idiot Boy" among Wordsworth's lyrical Ballads, and Tennyson's "Break, Break, Break", we can properly and completely realize the extensive operations performed and the very spaciousness of the poets' travellings with their frequent stops, the calls at innumerable wayside stations; indeed, in many open spaces where there is no station. "Leaves of Grass" by that unique Trader Horn of American poetry, the one and only Walt Whitman, represents the absolute extremity to which poetic licence is allowable; and as far as recognizable form is concerned, "Leaves of Grass" has none. Its first appearance brought surprise and amazement that end in the dumbness caused by shock. The sensitive and aesthetic Emerson was caught off guard by this startling display of grim independence, the same independence he was so eloquently exhorting from his countrymen. Whitman had transcended Emer-

son, outstripped, outrun, outdistanced him --while all the world wondered, stupefied at this sheer audacity.

The great poets of every age have felt deeply the nobility of their calling. The voice of one makes eternally sublime the struggling life of a thousand years. This is Dante, a name always associated with Homer and Virgil, and perhaps surpassing them. The celebrated poet, such as Dante who remains pre-eminent, knows and feels that his function is to instruct as well as to entertain. He is a witness testifying on behalf of humanity's desire to cling to ideal and spiritual truths, the very same truths, we would particularly note, that Emerson finds necessary to promulgate. All the people, not just some of them, supply the ingredients, the original elements from which the utmost excellence and permanence are extracted and crystallized into poetry. The abiding background is Nature. The rough, primitive crowd of rhapsodists, who long, long ago crooned their love and battle songs, supplied the basic materials from which came those literary monuments of enduring fame. It would seem that, to overlook for the moment the individual poet, the first real poet is humanity, and it should also be the last. Every person a poet, every individual a philosopher, an honest and upright Christian, a student and admirer of nature, and every one a practical idealist --this is an ultimate realization still in the crucible of things to come. Emerson was only capable of stirring this crucible very slightly.

Examination of Emerson's fugitive poetry may be simplified by giving attention to his essays: "The Poet" and "Poetry" and "Imagination". Most of the Essays are introduced by short excerpts of verse, some of it Emerson's, the rest is borrowed. Here are two lines which help to comprise the 'text' for "The Poet".

"Olympian bards who sung
Divine ideas below,"

'Olympian' at once takes us back to Greece, golden light of the past. Yet Emerson wants his country to 'ignore the past', to act and live only in the present. Continually, in a hundred ways, he draws heavily on the past and shows, as it were, an inescapable dependence on it. For us, however, this inconsistency is pardonable; we would call it a fault but not an error. Jove, Pluto, Neptune, Orpheus, Heraclitus, Plutarch, and a number of other names whose mystical fascinations are not to be relinquished, parade once more in "The Poet". And now Proclus takes the stand:

"The mighty heaven exhibits, in its transfigurations, clear images of the splendor of intellectual perceptions; being moved in conjunction with the unapparent periods of intellectual natures."

If any outstanding group of philosophers, scientists or astronomers can claim the lofty distinctions suggested by Proclus in the foregoing majestic utterance, then the supreme power --or some of it-- is the control of

intellectualists should be removed from the glorified golden caskets of eloquent language and put to more practical and extensive use. We are not persuaded that the man of science or the transcendental intellectualist is on the same plane with 'transfigurations of heaven'. Statements such as that attributed to Proclus require pruning and modification. Newton did not write like this. He recognized an enduring governing principle by which the universe, as it is surveyed through human eyes, is controlled, and he remained humble. But there appears to be an ecstasy tending to make poetic emotionalism irrational. We doubt the ultimate accuracy of another Emersonian observance:

"The argument --of poetry-- is secondary, the finish is primary."

The best way, or perhaps the only way, to justify this statement, which in itself represents an argument, is to consider it under the aspect of music. People listening to any representative selection from Brahms, Bach or Bethoven offer enthusiastic appreciation. The structure of the selection, based very definitely on harmonic laws, and the thematic idea conceived in the mind of the composer, are not --except for authoritative critics-- consciously realized by a listening audience. Now, we would call this 'structure', based on a particular thematic idea, the argument. The important point to notice is that the argument must precede the finish or form although such argument need

not --necessarily-- be recognized by a listener, a reader, or an audience. Again, according to Matthew Arnold, poetry concerns itself with the application of profound ideas to life. Arnold does not stress the idea of 'finish' in poetry, but the substance or argument. When Wordsworth composed the "Idiot Boy" and "Lucy", the English critics grew angry. They vociferated: "This will never do". What sin had Wordsworth committed? He had 'elevated' a phase of life on a very low level; he elevated this phase by means of 'finish', exactly the kind mentioned by Emerson. It is very obvious, however, that there must be an argument or subject before Wordsworth, or anyone, could treat it whether by poetry, prose, or other communicable medium. Synthesis precedes analysis, unless some extreme analyst wishes to analyse an absolute vacuum. And preceding synthesis there must necessarily be something to be synthesized.

Further on the reader finds this:

"The poets are thus liberating gods."

This paganistic and rhapsodist mingling of men with gods and gods with men is doubtlessly entrancing. This looks very much like a conjuror magically drawing brightly coloured ribbons from any old hat, momentarily to charm a credulous audience, wonder-eyed; but who must return to their ordinary existence 'after the show'. The Boston Brahmin enraptures his audience; his symphonic phrases are a kind of dream

series; truly, for a little while, they are not of this world, but are transported thus to an Elysian region to commune with so-called liberating gods.

"The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven! "

This quatrain from "Brahma" shows Emerson's strong tendency to experiment with mystical doctrines. This short poem is possibly traceable to the "Bhagavad-Gîtâ", one of the highly-prized gems of Hindu literature with which, no doubt, Emerson had become acquainted, probably in some translated form. From Sir Edwin Arnold's translation we borrow some lines and phrases, all found in the Harvard Classics, volume 45, part two of the selected "Sacred Writings."

"One Essence in the Evil and the Good."¹

This seems to correspond to the line from Emerson's "Brahma":

"And one to me are shame and fame."

Brahma is God, the Soul of Souls, thus:

"I Brahma am! the One Eternal God, the Soul of Souls!"²

1. Harvard Classics, p. 829.
2. Ibidem, p. 835.

We find what is perhaps an original of:

"And pine in vain the sacred Seven;"

from the "Bhagavad-
Gītā"

"The Seven Chief Saints, the Elders Four,
the Lordly Manus set." ¹

The "red slayer" in the opening lines of
"Brahma" reads:

"If the red slayer thinks he slays."

This would correspond with the Hindu line:

"The Slayer Time, Ancient of Days, come hither
to consume;" ²

Also, we trace another possible parallelism in:

"To view me as thou didst, ... The Gods
Dread and desire continually to view!"

This runs closely with the line:

"The strong gods pine for my abode," (Brahma).

The essay known as "Poetry and Imagination" is
complementary to "The Poet". In it the writer continues his

1. Harvard Classics, p.842.

2. Ibid. p.852.

fascinating and fantastic wanderings, and one such wandering leads to Persia, dwelling place of Omar, Hafiz, Saadi and Zoroaster, otherwise called Zarathustra.

"Therefore, when we speak of the Poet in any high sense, we are driven to such examples as Zoroaster and Plato, St. John and Menu."

Apparently Emerson allowed himself to be magnetized with many occult powers of ancient mysticism. As much as he admired Homer, Milton, Shakespeare, Dante and others, yet these did not completely satisfy him. Such an exalted attitude reminds one that Alexander wept because he could find no more worlds to conquer. There is much weeping to-day because this world is still unconquered, still undiscovered, let alone any others. In warning his own contemporaries, his own public, not to become slavish imitators, but bravely to 'declare themselves', it would appear that Emerson did not himself entirely escape entanglement or even enslavement. Let us examine his first poem, "Good-Bye".

"Good-Bye, proud world! I'm going home:
Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine."

At the very sunrise period of a life's career, he writes a sunset poem. He is scarcely of age. The world has been kind and generous. Harvard has given him a degree. The country he lives in is a land of promise. Young America is the earth's new, fresh Eden. Emerson, however, feels plainly at odds with everything. He is disappointed; more

than this, he is frustrated. Or, is this poem merely the manifestation of a pose, a flourish of rhetorical pride? Perhaps this young writer desires only to experiment, to test some of the licences ordinarily granted to poets --chiefly because such licences are usually taken without permission-- but not accorded to mere prose writers. What is the great impediment in a country calling for initiative for the promotion of progress in a hundred directions? Who stops the budding Brahmin from blossoming into the fullness of grandeur, and swelling finally into a transcending magnificence? Why admit, acknowledge this apparent defeatism?

One speculation, especially in a case like this, is worth any other. The patience of literature admits of any mood including the most contradictory and pessimistic. Literature accepts originality of any kind, written in any key. The theme or subject is but secondary, perhaps less important. Literature demands, and quite justly, that the form and technique be such as to survive criticism and, in general, the public gaze. No doubt Emerson is sufficiently aware of this and knows how to govern himself accordingly. Although "Good-Bye" has the appearance of a sudden spontaneous outburst, the author has probably meditated and premeditated this maiden performance. He has practised his literary scales all by himself, out in the woods, up in the attic, On the whole, the performance is a technical triumph, by which we obviously mean that it is very well written. Emerson has

fairly accurately gauged the general reaction resulting in most cases from the presentation of an unusual topic, unusual to the point of being nothing less than extraordinary. The public likes something unusual even though it be most contradictory. Emerson was ready for any adverse critic by the simplest of all methods, silence; he gained what he went after. He went after attention; his goal was fame. It is well to keep in mind at all times a salient characteristic of his rather sphynx-like nature. As well as being moral he was altruistic. Either Shelley or Byron, for example, is naturally considered a greater poet than Emerson, but of the three as men one has no difficulty in determining which one is the most moral. The tendency appears to praise poetic achievements, as well as many other human advances, far above the real level of the personalities whose genius has brought about such famous achievements. Southey and Coleridge were inclined to be reckless youths and both of them acquired fame as poets. Needless to remark that their fame was well deserved. Now, suppose we recall John Henry Newman and Matthew Arnold. These last two are representatives of the very best types of human beings. Emerson as a poet, not forgetting his unique aberrations, would be properly ranked with Newman and Arnold.

If one were permitted to use the term 'priest of literature', then one would think of these justly celebrated three as priests of literature, Newman being a high priest. These three were humanists and poets. They dealt

with intimate aspects of life and humanistic culture thoroughly, sympathetically, spiritually. Each one touched on the 'higher realities', and each was intellectual and individual. The individualism of Newman and Arnold was far more pervasive in national life and thought than that so strongly manifested in Emerson. Hence, it becomes necessary to distinguish the American man of letters from his English contemporaries; his influence is, we think, in direct proportion to his pervasiveness. This distinction is important in any adequate contemplation of Emerson, in his poetry and prose.

In his meditative verse, Emerson is not simple and spontaneous. He is trying to develop a theory rather than to speak the feelings of his own heart. "Astrea", "To Bacchus," "To Rhea," all such poems endeavour to crystallize certain doctrines which Emerson expounded to better advantage in his essays. Here for example is "Uriel" which makes scoffers of us or else detectives intent on discovering a mystery:

"Line in nature is not found;
Unit and universe are round;
In vain produced, all rays return;
Evil will bless and ice will burn."

This evidently anticipates the neo-physics of an Einstein. A solution of the enigma is outlined in the essay on "Circles", but not until we study the "Divinity School Address" do we learn what Emerson was trying to say; that evil is not real, but only apparent and illusory; that

it is temporary, not enduring and is part of the general plan which results finally in goodness. Further analysis of the meditative verse will show that "The Problem" is simply a condensation of the essay on "Art"; and that "Merlin" and "Saadi" are figurative expressions of Emerson's theory of poetry.

The life-process may be interpreted scientifically, philosophically and poetically. The poetic interpretation of human life reveals the profound mysteries of human existence, as in many of Emerson's poems, as likewise in many of the essays.

The genetic principle which creates these is the throbbing, pulsating life of the author. Literature is not only a spontaneous outgrowth of human interpreter known of the life process itself. The poet idealizes, life awakens within each literary student a longing for all that is truest best and noblest.

Poetry is an interesting and comprehensive textbook on many aspects of psychology. We may speculate concerning the real nature of the human soul; we philosophize concerning the origin and nature of human knowledge; we may observe and interpret the facts of human consciousness; we may make laboratory and physiological tests of mental life; but a genuine poem reveals the natural outgrowth of the human soul, it is, par excellence, the greater revealer, interpreter and translator of the life process.

In poetry Emerson gives utterance, at times, to the deepest expressions of his heart and soul and reveals his motives, thoughts, feelings and volitions and hence externalizes the inner workings of his spiritual nature. The poet is a soul-prophet and gives us in his productions the quintessence of his life. In literature we follow the actual movements of the inner, throbbing soul. In psychology we study man's mind by introspection, analysis, induction, dissection and experimentation. The poet is thought to have that penetrative insight, that keenness of thought, that inquiring attitude of mind which enables him to probe into the hidden recesses of the human heart and the human soul. He is a seer and has that divine vision which enables him to penetrate into the mysteries and complexities and subtleties of soul life. The poet opens the windows of the soul and endeavours to reveal the mystic forces of mind move hither and thither. He penetrates into the inner chamber of consciousness and discovers the man invisible which is made visible in literary form. He is a past master in picturing the motives, desires, aspirations and the whole machinery of human consciousness, but he is not always rational.

The poetical mind has that attribute which Wordsworth calls, 'the vision and faculty divine.' To understand Emerson is to study, to interpret, and to systematize his thoughts on God, Freedom, and Immortality. Emerson was intensely interested in the deeper problems of human life.

The only reality to Emerson is spirituality. Matter is merely an outer manifestation of Spirit,--Infinite Spirit.

Matthew Arnold defines poetry as a criticism of life. It criticizes the real life of the individual in contrast with the ideal life he hopes to attain. "The mute inglorious Milton" was one of the sublimest of all minds. He contemplated and described some of the grandest themes of human life. The multiplicity and variety of human life is expressed by the many-sidedness of the poetic mind. Dryden had the power of reasoning, Wordsworth taught the symbolism of nature. Coleridge was inspired by that divine breath which penetrates the hidden mysteries of life.

So long had the inner eye of Keats been fixed upon the beautiful, so long had he loved the visions splendid, that his soul took on the loveliness which he contemplated. Some one has said that the lines of the poet's face were chiseled into beauty by those sculptors called ideas and thoughts. Emerson makes the statement that we grow into likeness of others by thinking the same thoughts. His own spiritual features reflected this conception.

Let the spiritual grow up to perfection. When Arnold finds some one ready to graduate he whispers "One thing thou lackest. Let all thy life become one eager pursuit of knowledge." A parallel could be made out for Emerson and Arnold.

Homer's Iliad discusses the most sacred principle of the life process --the family. The poet fathoms the depths of human existence. It consists of a series of dualism, the most important of which is that between the human and divine but between the Occident and Orient. The purpose of this warfare was to restore Helen to her true institutional life.

This poem represents the heart-beat of humanity. The many conflicts, struggles and tensions in this poem once more emphasize the eternal law of the universe. The key-note to all existence, to all life, to all human life in particular is a tension between the possible and the actual and the final word of all existence is self-realization, freedom. The creative, architectonic principle of all literature is the soul trying to attain a perfect life. Throughout his essays, this principle of poetry as the interpreter of life is maintained by Emerson with numerous references to the contribution of the Greeks.

Dante teaches that the final purpose of man is to shuffle off animality and become a spirit. He unifies the temporal life process with the everlasting life process, the seen with the unseen. Out of this dual process in the poem arises a harmony. The theme of the Divine Comedy is universal and intensely human, and "tells the tale of how man makes himself eternal."

"Europe's sagest head" in commenting on "Faust" often spoke of the self-unfolding idea of the poem. It is

constructed according to a law that is found in the poem itself. In the first soliloquy, Faust is represented as a man who has spent years studying philosophy, jurisprudence, medicine and theology. He finally comes to the conclusion that man cannot know eschatological truth.

"The thousand-souled" poet was the prince of psychologists. He had that penetrative genius which enabled him to analyse and dissect the human soul. More can be learned concerning the intricacies and activities of man's spiritual nature by reading Shakespeare than by studying any ordinary treatise on psychology. Shakespeare in his "to be or not to be" strikes at a fundamental problem of human life.

There is nothing in the English language that excels Hamlet's description of man.

"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason!
How infinite in faculties! in form and moving how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the
world! the paragon of animals! " 1

Emerson joins with others in declaring that Shakespeare in his literary productions has portrayed every phase of human life, every emotion, every thought, and every life tendency.

The brief poem "Concord Hymn" shows conclusively the effort produced when dealing with a single con-

1. Shakespeare, Hamlet, edited by Verity, Act.II, Sc.2,
lines 294-298.

crete idea. This short piece deserves praise for the simplicity and force of expression. Like many other poems remembered frequently for a single line or a couplet, "Concord Hymn" has an abiding place in popular memory.

"Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world."

These lines make "Concord Hymn" memorable. Considered in connection with the major part of the other poems, this selection is not quite Emersonian, by which we mean that it is not in the author's usual vein. It might remind one of "How Sleep the Brave" by William Collins, or the "Ode on the Death of Dr. Thompson" by the same writer. Very often it happens that when reading some specimen of literature, prose or verse, one subconsciously reads another. Did not Shakespeare, Shelley and Wordsworth poetize on the lark, sweet warbler of the heavenly skies? Emerson's "Woodnotes" remind us of "Comus" by Milton. Quoting from "Woodnotes", these are the lines we would call Miltonic:

"All constellations of the sky
Shed their virtue through his eye.
Him Nature giveth for defence
His formidable innocence."

We may state, therefore, that poets and writers react on each other; and in this particular at least they resemble human beings. This applies especially to Emerson whose all but encyclopaedic use of references carries the

reader back to the remotest dawns of literature. At times, the Janus of Concord is entrancingly artless. To go forward he looks backward.

Is Emerson a poet? By the superior standards decreed in his own essays on the all absorbing, universally embracing subject of poetry, automatically he rules himself out. The literature of 'exclusive criticism' belongs, we think, to an exclusive, literary department, where, for instance, we would place most of the writings of Walter Pater, a large portion of Emersoniana, and the 'purple patches' of many other writers. Having done this, we should, with not too much difficulty, be able conservatively to honour Emerson with the title of 'poet'. Thomas Gray earned this title by means of a single poem, the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard."

All the known and unknown constellations that inhabit the infinite firmament, whether they shine brilliantly or dimly, whether they be immense or planetary in size, whether they be named or nameless, or what their speed -- they are all stars. It is thus with literature and the same with poetry, all of which is contributory and, not to overreach our argument, it is all complementary. Garlands of poetry stretch a terra ad astra. The first lyric was 'Oh', and Kipling wrote "L'Envoi". The genius of any language gains, perhaps, its greatest realization of perfect utterance in the poetic form. If the desert is prose, the oasis is poetry. The distinction between these dual literary forms,

as we regard them, lies chiefly in the emotional effect brought about by force of habit. Briefly, we have accustomed ourselves to react 'poetically' to poetry because of its plurality of forms whereas one form only is possible for prose. It would seem from this that poetry is the unique result arising from a universal desire for 'variety'. And very probably art in general can be traced to this same root desire.

Two of the world's most eminent poets were blind: Homer and Milton. But their physical blindness was adequately compensated by memory, knowledge, human experience and that very significant function or faculty known as reflection. Human life is the basic theme in the works of these, as in the exalted writings of Dante and Shakespeare. When Emerson, in "Poetry and Imagination", writes: "Perhaps Homer and Milton will be tin pans yet." --we may reasonably doubt the accuracy, if not the rationality of the suggestion he makes. Did he really understand the vital nature of the themes handled by Homer and Milton; or have we another instance of an intellect losing itself in the vapid wanderings of mystical visionaries? So much of his poetry reflects an oblique and distant, very distant, view of life which is the highest manifestation of both *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. Emerson simply would not 'sit down' at the table of humanity; he voluntarily preferred to flutter around and about this table. This tendency is repeatedly seen in his essays and poetry; both are closely related.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

E M E R S O N I A N V A L U E S T O - D A Y

L I T E R A R Y A N D C R I T I C A L

An oversight occurs in the general histories of literature. The first man of letters has been omitted, his name is not on literary records. This first man of letters takes chronological precedence over Homer, Praxiteles, Heraclitus or Herodotus. He was pre-eminent before the invention of the alphabet by the Phoenicians, far ahead of Assyrian or Persian cuneiforms, Egyptian hieroglyphics, or the ancient and venerable Sanscrit of Mother India, fountain-head of languages. Spontaneity of immediate expression, that would most certainly have enthused Emerson to his very core of responsive being, is this person's unique possession; and in him are the beginnings of natural philosophy and per-adventure science as well.

Our authority for this is in the second chapter of Genesis, verses 19 and 20.

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field;
... . .

From any period of recorded history or further back when man commenced to jot down some journalistic notes, Adam appears very primitive. Yet he named *Natura naturata* all by himself, he had no recourse to dictionary, thesaurus or encyclopaedia; nor did any one hand him a piece of paper with a written list. If the Creator were experimenting with his *chef-d'oeuvre*, Adam, the experiment is perfect because it was without error. Thus was Adam the very first intellectualist or intuitionist. Kant, Coleridge and Emerson must stand in line and wait patiently for their turn for evaluation of their literary effort. Whether Darwin or Bergson has given the final word that ends all subsequent discussion or guesswork about evolution, we shall make no commitments. We can be, however, quite positive about Adam.

The next intellectualist and philosopher briefly to review is Aristotle who organized, classified and, in general, catalogued a most generous portion of existing knowledge. He not only said: "Now, that object before me is a tree", but he advanced an acceptable interpretation of this tree. To put the matter simply and clearly, he discerned a vital creative force intimately related to the tree.

Adam named the animals. Aristotle divided the animal kingdom into classes. He founded a system of logic. If it is rational to say that man is in any particular a creator, then Aristotle is, without quibble or cavil, a creator. His Summum Bonum found in the "Ethics" is not excelled. His character was not tarnished like that of Francis Bacon. Civilization benefits enduringly from such minds as can claim true relationships with the Aristotelian method. Subject, object, thought and language combine with an exactness that hardly requires the consciousness of literary effort the value of which becomes already determined and assured in the totality of authorship. The artistry by which the writings of Aristotle have acquired universal fame is properly identified with the cathedrals of literature. Custom does not stale these structures; the passing of time makes no cracks on them as on the sphinx.

The mind grows by what it feeds on and so does literature. Value is rightly judged from a most careful, impartial consideration of the total effect produced. Literature is representative of all objects of all thoughts and what we would term its 'raiments' depends upon the manner of combining language with topics. When there is some difficulty in a precise award of literary values, we shall probably locate this difficulty, in some cases, within the treatment of subject matter. The nature of any particular topic should not undergo any radical change per se, when

it is subjected to the scrutiny of the observer whose direct purpose is faithfully to preserve his topic. A thoughtful writer will have a camera mind and, without desiring to overburden the point he must demonstrate ability to use his own mind as he would skilfully operate a camera. This, we hope, prepares a fair way to determine literary values in the works of Emerson.

The chief impression we have gained from "Nature" is a desire, on the part of the anonymous author, for some kind of fresh form. He wanted to transfer words and their ways from English into American speech. His success in original expression comes as the result of a conscious effort which indicates a strong desire to produce something new from something old. Emerson's great virtue consists in a strenuous effort to impart his enthusiasms for nature to all and sundry. But his eloquence is slightly freakish, inclined at an angle where the balance of practical reasoning can easily be upset.

Professor Trent offers a trenchant, critical note in his "History of American Literature."

"Worse still, he is prone to jargon, to bathos, to lapses of taste."¹

This terse sentence scores well in accurate criticism. Throughout the major portion of the "Essays", Trent's cri-

1. W.P.Trent, History of American Literature, 1903, p. 331.

tical shaft unerringly makes its way without necessarily causing the general patterns to disintegrate. To survey aliquid immensum infinitumque with no more reliable compass than a saltatory intuition is to demonstrate a combination of audacity and courage illustrating a rapid transit from the sublime to the ridiculous. Queen Victoria sang, once, and then, no more in public, Europe laughed, England shuddered. Sovereigns must stay within bounds. Even for such as these there are occasions when it is their's not to reason why. Similar impressions are produced from the "Essays". In "Nominalist and Realist" we read: "The sanity of society is a balance of a thousand insanities." After this oracular outpouring, we wish to join the ranks of Professor Trent. Wisdom, where art thou fled and under what literary disguises? Some of the amazing statements found in "Uses of Great Men", look as though a fast express was picking up a heterogeneous mass of mail while taking a run through an encyclopaedia.

"Each plant has its parasite, and each created thing its lover and poet."

"Shall we say that quartz mountains will pulverize into innumerable Werners, Von Buchs, and Beaumonts; and the laboratory of the atmosphere holds in solution I know not what Berzeliuses and Davys? "

"Sword and staff, or talents sword-like or staff-like, carry on the work of the world."

Here the train bursts through the omega of its encyclopaedic journey, mail clinging to and frenziedly clutching at any sticking point, inside or outside. Onward rushes the train, pieces of mail --quartz or Werner-- drop off, and into the infinite this train loses itself among floating clouds. Suddenly it stops. The first station of the journey --Representative Men-- is reached. It is Plato. This and the others included in the Representative series follow the patterns designed by Carlyle in his "Heroes and Hero-Worship" - 1841. But the actual substance contained in the American series is rather less pragmatic than Carlyle's and shows more of the superincumbent spirit of the visionary Swedenborg. The secretive Emerson thus achieves a number of literary tours de force, a feature maintained all through his works. We do not wish to draw distinctions so thin that they might become sundered in the process. We would offer the suggestion, in the case of Emerson, that the spirit of man can and ought to be more generally operative, by a study of past literary notables, than we can determine from Carlyle. More simply, of the two, Emerson is more democratic, even if his unique methods are less sensible.

In volume seven of the "Library of Literary Criticism", compiled by C.W. Moulton, an enquirer can discover at first hand opinions and criticisms of authoritative merit all serving to help formulate an assessment of Ralph Waldo Emerson. For our immediate purpose and reference, we

here give some guiding examples.

"Emerson's Essays I read with much interest, often with admiration, but they are mixed with clay and gold --deep and invigorating truth, dreary and depressing fallacy seem to me combined therein."

(Brontë, Charlotte, 1849)

"Very good scattered thoughts in it --Representative Men-- but scarcely leaving any large impression, or establishing a theory."

(Fitz Gerald, Edward, 1850)

"No finer things about the outward features and transient meanings of creation... But he has never pierced to the grand doctrine of the Divine Personality and Fatherhood."

(Gilfillan, George, 1855)

"It is a question if the world would have heard of Emerson had it not first heard of Carlyle."

(Smith, George Barnett, 1875)

"The most original and independent thinker and moral teacher America has produced..."

(Ireland, Alexander, 1882)

"The unparalleled non-sequaciousness of Emerson is as certain as the Corregiosity of Corregio. You never know what he will be at."

(Birrell, Augustine, 1892)

"We recognize his imperial genius as one of the greatest writers; at the same time, his life-work, as a whole, tested by its supreme ideal, shows a great wastage of power, verifying the saying of Jesus touching the harvest of human life: (He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad)."

(Hague, William, 1883)

These recognized writers and critics have, without prejudice, malice, or bias, probed to the very heart of Emersonianism, if this convenient term is allowable, and they have set down their meritorious opinions, --signed, sealed and stamped with the authority of knowledge and understanding. These writers are skilled literary surgeons; they examined the heart minutely, handled it with sagacious tenderness, then replaced it --still beating. This is a tribute to subject, object and observer. Modern authorities, American as well as British, have arrived independently at the same conclusions. The summary by Hague is, for us, especially valuable as a guiding principle of reliable and representative judgment. That Emerson should be discussed at such length testifies to high literary qualities per se; but the strictly intrinsic worth of his transcendental ore does not show the sterling character of that 'imperial genius' aptly described by William Hague, the penetrating analyst.

There is no complete human authority on the cosmic universe. The Boston Brahmin attempted altogether too much. In his devotional essays wherein he propounds all manner of inconceivable 'floating forces', he comes as close to being a rigid determinist as any that we recall. Idealism of this brand passes into rigid determinism. Another pleasant vagueness calls this determinism by such high-sounding terms as Immanent Will, or Over-Soul; and when anyone tries

to transfuse all human events into a confused and mixed conglomeration of transcendental phenomenalism --the entire world pageantry reduced to nothing but an endless series of subjectivism-- then it is high time to cry Halt. Nietzsche, the cosmic mugwump, has become a fire-brand; his oracles are burning the skies; his superman is an embodiment of Faust, Mephistopheles, Caliban, Frankenstein. This literature of uncontrolled power, saturated with demoniac passion and the frenzy of intellectual idiocy should have been caged when it appeared. But man's innocent and gullible curiosity took it all in. The oil in many of our literary lamps is too volatile, too vitriolic. The wicks are far too high. Aladdin's lamp is Satan's torch.

We offer at this point an illustration of the possibilities of literary influence. Henry David Thoreau lived with Emerson's household. He wrote a tract, "Civil Disobedience". Mahatma Gandhi read this literary product while he was a student at Oxford; he not only read it, he absorbed it completely until it became an integral motivating principle. We know the powerful influence of Gandhi, we know what has resulted in a single day as a result of his principle of passive resistance, we try to understand that he may be spiritually right in his thinking but radically wrong in the application. Hence it appears that from the very highest, even noblest, forms of literature come dilemmas most disturbing and reaching to startling conclusions.

What is needed at the moment is something that will maintain a more equalizing balance between the eloquence of literature, as we have partly examined it in Emerson and his transcendental associations, and what we desire now to stress --the eloquence of moral living and conduct. To suggest a compact remedy, Emerson needed a gyroscope. Errors, slips, gaps, obscurities, confusions, mistakes, contradictions, vagueness, --all these and other palpable insufficiencies pervade his works from alpha to omega. The *ars celare* of this amazing performance shows itself in a logical, persuasive use of language. It is no great wonder that an exclusive section of American or New England youth, always alert for some novelty to escape boredom, should gather under the banner of an intellectualism never before experienced, or perhaps one should consider intellectualism *per se* an experience. To listen to the Logos of Ultimate Nature and to feel an Immanent Presence thoroughly benevolent and emanating a smile never seen yet perpetually 'experienced' was, as any intelligent person can readily observe, a thrill, a most delicious shock of mental electricity well calculated to make every youthful member of an audience a *deus ex machina* in perpetuum.

All this attests a superficial quality making its nonchalant way, sometimes with serene insolence, always with supreme confidence, through the essays. The tone is oracular. In the kingdom of literature this superior critic

walks, as prophet, priest and king, monarch of all he surveys over an area without dimensions, terrestrial or astronomical. It is an exhibition of superlative optimism, nil desperandum, omne admirandum, America's Novum Organum. Francis Bacon, in this manner, might have done no better. For the sweep of his knowledge and the amazing audacity of his speculations must cause many readers to pause with increasing wonder. But what ultimately of the magnificent cataract leaping, tumbling, plunging into a desert? The infinitude of the private man, the unknown human automaton, the mighty vital atom all unpredictable, --there is just the faintest suggestion of futuristic fulfilment in the realized unfolding of this infinitude. But we know of no clock of the present hour that will chime this golden glorious noon. We can only grant the tremendous effort as a very brave, and risky, experiment. Too many spontaneous oracles have wasted their powers with no better effect than the perfect rendition of a philharmonic concert in a vast hall without an audience. Jusserand begins his captivating "Literary History of England" with a sentence finely suited for our purpose: "They were all speaking and no one listened." A single sentence like this takes a firm, very firm, hold on life better than a multitude of oracular echoes.

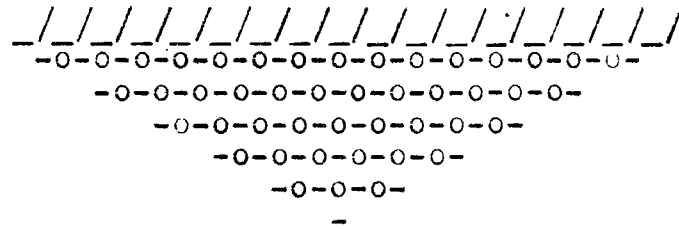
No matter how exalted, moral or noble the motive, a set of beliefs and practices removed from the common and natural relations of mankind must, according to its unnatural influence, weaken and sap the forces of all the possi-

bilities latent in such relations. The weakness of the spirit which, one may admit, Emerson observed would not be corrected by iconoclastic tirades hurled against spiritual institutions to the extent of a general exodus of congregations from their churches. This is a potential religious significance of profound importance not reckoned by the American prophet at Concord. He did not consider what a nation, society or community will inevitably do when immersed in a crisis, namely, to call upon a personal God. This tragic fault, by itself, reduces considerably the power of any person feigning an exclusive aloof righteousness existing in a state of utter separation. It does not come within the rational scope of elementary belief that anything, --organic, inorganic, essence, being or spirit-- exists by itself, alone. The stars move in unison; it requires no mathematical equation or Einsteinian theory to understand this non-subjective phenomenon. History authentically records human movements actuated, throughout the length and breadth of intimate relationships, with the faith and ardor of profound religious convictions. The results of movements such as these have been incalculably momentous. From what specific direction will a fresh élan arise when it is most needed? Emerson could not supply this élan, but we are sure that he would approve of its necessity in a critical time.

The griffins of a variety of moods and imaginations discoverable in the literature move over so noiselessly

through the Emersonian pages of prose and verse. Mixed with his inveterate habit of idealizing a zoological garden existing only in the minds of quixotic *littérateurs*, was the other habit of always attempting to teach moral values from objects having little or no connection whatever with actual human life or social conditions. Audubon, the famous American painter of birds, did not write a moral verse, or one from Hafiz, under each picture representing this type of art at its highest level. When Fabre described the praying mantis, it was not his intention to portray a preacher among insects. These connoisseurs knew how to handle their instruments so that they kept everything in its proper place. But with Emerson the materials are mixed and the results are incongruous if not altogether ridiculous. No one would reasonably question a person's right to wonder, marvel or remain astonished. Life and nature should remain open books. There is no necessity for removing the pages from one chapter to insert in another as different as north from south or white from black. Emerson's most unaccountable defect, if we have judged him accurately at all, is an indiscriminate intermingling of the sacred and the profane -- using this word in a broad sense-- so that neither is properly or completely identifiable. This curious consequence probably arises from his obstinate determination to judge omnes res by the sole authority of one mind, his own. A type of mind such as this one, eagerly receptive of all ex-

isting and non-existing opposites does not, we must insist, contribute substantially to the social unity of the human being. Emerson did achieve unity with himself, but not with society, generally considered. He illustrated very well the famous maxim: "Sauve qui peut."



C H A P T E R E I G H T

S U M M A R Y A N D C O N C L U S I O N

Nature needs no spokesman or special announcer for the very simple reason that she possesses all possible amplifications and amplitudes. This is an obvious, simple observation. The writer who desires to indulge in picturesque descriptions of any form of nature, animate or inanimate, though he record his minutest observations twenty miles above the stratospherical fringe, can only do so 'under and within' nature, never above. The tendency, as we see it, to assume a kind of supercilious ascendancy above nature simply because, say, a scientist apparently can regiment electrons has no reality, neither has such tendency, we must insist, any authenticity. Science or any other human achievement, follows nature; there is no reverse order, it is distinctly a one-way procedure regardless of a legion of variations.

Emerson's assertive pronouncements on nature have a bold tendency to become decrees so that the Brahmin assumes the role of self-appointed spokesman. It is just this tone which he adopts so frequently and this unwarranted arrogance exhibited repeatedly that point to an egotism

based on too much pride. Emerson's unique paradoxical position lies in the impressions imparted as one attempts to follow his zigzag, seesaw flights. His Utopia proceeds from the universe and endeavours, vainly and frantically, to hook a swaying dangling anchor onto some earthly phenomenon. Emerson's magnification of man's place in nature becomes a reckless loop-the-loop ride from the sublime past the ridiculous and rushing ever onward to the ultimate vanishing point of the absolutely impossible. He demonstrates the extremes of ungoverned and ungovernable speculations. No matter how elevated such goodwill intentions in behalf of mankind may be, no matter how lofty or noble these Emersonian declamations proceed with the majestic persuasiveness of sonorous diction, such a spirit manifests the wildness of unbalanced reasoning and we are tempted to say, may, not unlikely, be self-consuming. Already he has far outstripped the boldness of his Aunt Mary. One would like to ask what great and dire events result from similar spirits lacking the sterling morality of an Emerson.

Cake or bread.--which? Marie-Antoinette with aristocratic superciliousness wanted to know why the people did not eat cake if they had no bread. A question such as this is worse than useless; it is tragic. For such a question ignores widespread evil that turns itself into the grim reality of complete famine. Emerson resolutely ignored basic and persistent evils in his quixotic belief that man's divi-

nity reveals itself with such spiritual splendour and loveliness as to render evil puny and really of no significance. To-day, one need hardly dwell on the chaotic consequences of this kind of indifferent attitude amounting pretty much to a total apathy. Cake or bread,--which? Why should any writer offer the people only the semblance of cake when they have not the reality of plain, wholesome bread? When Brahmin rejects the Bread of Life, who then can benefit from his phantom cakes? And when we are reduced to such a problem as cake or bread, perhaps we end up by getting neither.

Two lines from Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" contain far more ballast and sanity than many pages chosen almost at random from Emerson.

"The heights of great men reached and kept
were not attained by sudden flight."

The fact that Harvard invited Longfellow to lecture and steadily refused the unreliable application of Emerson's scholarship and unpredictable attitude is eloquent testimony of the 'difference' between these two famous names as well as the still more important difference respecting the influence exerted by each. This essential difference affords a summary in itself since no doubt Harvard used a sensible amount of reasonableness in accepting the former and rejecting the latter.

Emerson practically turned thumbs down on at least three of the most popular and eminent names in English literature. By so doing, he most certainly exposed a fundamental defect by spurning those whom so many adore. He dismissed so great and illustrious a person as Scott by dubbing him a mere traveller's guide to Scotland. He said of Macaulay that good meant only 'good to eat' --a statement so ridiculous as not even entitled to any ridicule in return. Concerning the brilliant novels of Jane Austen, Emerson's criticism can only be classified as virulent and vitriolic, then at once dismissed for good from any further parades. Of Dickens and Hawthorne he asserted with his usually serene air of utmost confidence that neither could write dialogue. As far as we are concerned, this is the most positive way of saying that dialogue cannot possibly be written or spoken.

Small wonder is it, then, that under such devastating reductio ad absurdum principles which propelled his excessively acute critical faculty, Emerson produced several of his extraordinary essays with their contradictions, inconsistencies and determined negations. In them the air of reality is very tenuous because it is heavily saturated with an atmosphere of unknowables attempting to define themselves into recognizable forms. But these unknowables are still formless and thus they cannot be defined. We can grant credit slightly seasoned with praise to Emerson

for unsuccessfully endeavouring to extract wealth from the Dead Sea of his own created impossible conceptions. When he all but commands his age to have done with the past, he totally ignores the fundamental fact that society is a continuance of the past. Instead of considering nature as a kind of governor exercising disciplinary laws and making no allowances for a single infraction, our own preference is to regard nature as 'being governed' by a beneficent Creator who has decreed all the necessary laws whereby nature functions. If such laws appear to be automatic, this appearance is similar to that which informs us that the earth is flat. Denying the most revealing of trinities, namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the American Sage affects a pathetic substitution by adopting another trinity composed of: Creator, Man, Nature. Subversions such as these, parading under the alluring colours of literary diction, may produce harmful results. Faustus swayed and swooned under the irresistible influence of Mephistopheles.

Notwithstanding all we have here recorded contra the Transcendentalist of New England in the spirit of honest inquiry and without prejudice or malice, we find considerably more than a jot or a little calling forth of genuine admiration. The friendly yet somewhat distant sage contributed to world literature aesthetic qualities eminently meritorious. Emerson's universality is particularly attractive; and another paradox occurs in the fact that he

does not, by any means, break altogether from the Past. His acceptable universality results in great measure from his innumerable references receding far back to venerable ancient thinkers, and certainly by using such contributory indulgences, Emerson donated a quota of literary and thoughtful effort to keep glowing what might be termed the sun of literature. His 'revolt' merely whirled around himself; it is to his lasting credit that he made no attempt whatsoever to expand this revolt; nor did he desire or advocate any iconoclastic revolution. The revolt from Calvinism and finally from Unitarianism is testimony rather against the inadequacy of these and possibly other extraneous offshoots of the main trunk of religion. In this special manifestation of liberal thought, Emerson was but one among hundreds of Americans the majority of whom might have extended their thought too far ahead of their inherent capacity. The very wisest and most spiritual of religions finds it necessary to-day, to take carefully into account the incontrovertible fact that many more than just a few individuals insist grimly on doing a large part of their own thinking concerning the soul as well as the body. Emerson's penetrating insight saw clearly the vagaries arising from an indifference towards the observance of the Sabbath; he realized also that, as a sole individual, he could devise no formula *ut omnes unum sint*.

How, then, shall one classify him? What relationship have his writings to Rousseau or Voltaire? Has he

a kindred spirit with Montaigne, Pascal, Wordsworth and Coleridge? Are the "Essays" classic or romantic? They are, we think, both but not in equal proportion; they lean heavily on the side of romance, as do most of the writings of extreme individuals. The one outstanding defect of extreme individualism, such as that preached by Emerson, appears to be its almost entire incapability to bring into universal communion the separate soul resident in a single body. Although nature and the whole universe manifest legions of examples that everlastingly illustrate the perfect harmonious communion of individualistic entities all moving in concert, there are still many persons who stubbornly refuse to survey the universe in this manner. Emerson well understood the universality of all phenomena -- except man who has, perhaps oftener than he deserves, been represented as the nec plus ultra of existence in the boundless realm of nature.

Matthew Arnold said of Emerson that he was the friend and helper of those who would dwell in the spirit. Arnold, as we know, crossed the Atlantic to lecture in America. It would be very natural for him to pay all due respects to any contemporary writer produced in the western hemisphere. Charles Dickens also traversed the ocean and was quite ready to sign up, or with, the transcendentalists. Both Dickens and Arnold carried their note pads with them. American life would be well worth jotting down.

But let us rather more closely examine Arnold's polite statement about 'the friend and helper of those who would dwell in the spirit.' This claim can hardly be substantiated during the period of Emerson's ministry. Otherwise, why did he forsake this spiritual calling? Visitors who called 'on the Emersons' at Concord very frequently thought themselves positively rebuffed instead of being positively spiritualized. As often as not, Emerson's sole communication to many visitors was nothing more than an enigmatic smile. We do not imply that Concord's distinguished citizen was snobbish, but it must be very clear that he just would not mingle socially. Moreover, seeing that Emersonian readers belong chiefly to the intelligentsia, the circle of admirers must have possessed enough intelligence to arouse their own spirit, leaving a rather small remainder who required spiritual advice. Emerson did not offer spiritual advice on any public scale of any noticeable consequence. His public lectures were exclusively statements of his personal convictions, rational or otherwise. We are therefore not inclined to give Arnold's statement a First Class Proficiency Certificate of Authenticity. And this refusal in no way detracts from the praiseworthiness of the lectures.

We quite agree that Emerson was capable of intense spiritual force, and we readily admit that his fears for the consequences of gross crass materialism were very well founded. But he hardly ever displayed that

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