

SEERSHIP AND PROPHECY

BY

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POETRY AS A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE

“It is dislocation and detachment from the life of God that makes things ugly, and the poet re-attaches things to Nature and the whole.”—EMERSON.

IN his recently translated work “On Art and Artists” Dr. Max Nordau, the brilliant writer and critic, has once again set himself the task of attacking certain conventional opinions which yet contrive to obtain currency among the less thinking. One such opinion which he has ventured to challenge is the altogether unwarranted assumption that art can possibly be conceived of as existing for its own sake. And his book opens with a vigorous protest against any such view of the subject. Writes Dr. Nordau :

“I deem this theory false, and a hall-mark of crass ignorance : for psychology and the history of civilization and art, the history of all art, prove irrefutably the vanity and worthlessness of the concept that denies to art any other task and mission than that of being beautiful.”

Whilst he is prepared to allow that art is primarily a subjective activity, and that it is more especially allied to the sphere of psychology, Max Nordau is inclined to see in it the most powerful stimulus to emotion, and as it tends, therefore, to favour the excitation of certain physiological processes and to induce special pathological states, which are inevitably accompanied by neural, muscular and allied movements, so it becomes, to his mind, one of the most potent factors in the practical life of mankind—which fact, if it be established, goes to support the conclusion that art can, in reality, subserve no other end save that of utility, since it will be the means of promoting both mental, moral, and physical culture.

Any question such as this, it is almost superfluous to remark, is open to considerable controversy. Possibly no single subject, indeed, admits of such wide diversity of opinion as that of which we happen to be speaking. At the same time, recognizing as we may that the manifold functions of art must remain for many of us an open question, it must be exceedingly obvious that the whole matter forms an exceptionally vital subject to all who have the “higher side” of human life seriously at heart.

All too often it happens that the “mission” of art remains an unconsidered trifle. It is deemed to be sufficient that it should be a means of relaxation, a pastime for one’s leisure moments. It is in consequence of this, one may suppose, that those kings among mankind, the prophets and poets, and all who employ the creative faculty in the exercise of

their respective talents, are seldom appreciated at their true worth, excepting by the few. Yet so long as the cult of the beautiful is conceived of as an end in itself, and as totally unrelated to the truth-side of things, matters must remain much as they are.

Speaking for myself, however, and for many who share the opinions which it will be my endeavour to embody in the course of these remarks, art is neither suitable for high-days and holidays nor a matter which should be regarded as hopelessly out of touch with the ordinary affairs of life. Realizing, as we must if we are in the habit of thinking, that man is, by nature and the force of circumstance, an idealist at heart, we can well bring ourselves to see that the stuff of which his dreams are wrought is, after all, his staple article of diet. Not only must we, therefore, see that he is especially open to the exquisite influences which appeal to his sense of the beautiful, but we must regard these influences as the blessed means of imparting the very things whereon man may be said to subsist. Thus it is that, as the beautiful becomes illumined and transfigured by the spirit of truth within him, we are permitted to witness the celestial marriage, which has been so dramatically portrayed and prefigured in the myths and legends of the religious faiths the world over. And this lands us in the region of the moral order, wherein the good itself becomes the supreme object of contemplation and devotion.

What, now, I hold to be true of art in this, its widest sense, is especially so of poetic art. In poetry we have possibly the most purely intellectual mode

of æsthetic feeling. At the same time, the intrinsic value and purpose of poetry are to be discerned rather in its emotional appeal than in any other of its aspects.

If we would fully appreciate the position which the poetic art may properly be said to occupy, it becomes necessary for us to consider the place which the poet himself has held in human experience. This is to be gathered from the very signification of the term which we employ in order to designate him. On consulting the dictionary, it is found that the word itself means nothing more than *a maker*—a definition which, as we ponder the problem, becomes particularly luminous, since at all ages the poet has stood forth as one who has created and fashioned the thoughts which, as time has gone on, have fulfilled themselves in the ears of succeeding generations. Even to this day we find the poets anticipating the tendencies and discoveries of the age, which from the psychological standpoint possesses no little interest for the more philosophical inquirer.

From the very earliest periods of human history poetry has invariably been associated with the spirit of prophecy ; and when it is remembered that this gift, so earnestly coveted by the Apostle of the Gentiles, is akin rather to seership than to the predictive art in the vulgar or popular sense, its exalted position may readily be accounted for. Like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos of old, the poet is one who is specially privileged to hold communion with the celestial hosts. Thus he becomes the mouthpiece and interpreter of the Most High, whose messenger he is

None among the greater poets but can claim to have held converse with the unseen spirit of things ; and they who have put on immortality in the heart of the race have ever been they who have uttered that which lay within the sphere of the unconscious, waiting but opportunity, in the shape of a mind of requisite sensibility and magnitude, to announce itself. Such a one was Shakespeare, and such also have been Homer, Dante, Goethe, Shelley, Browning, and Tennyson, all of whom have earned everlasting recognition and gratitude, for no other reason than that they have conducted mankind to the well-springs of life, to the source of truth and beauty, wherefrom the nations have from age to age renewed their strength.

Upon the several messages of these transcendent souls there is little occasion that I should dwell. That the declarations which they bequeathed us were inspired, in every sense and in the only sense, we may be perfectly certain. And the fact that these have stood for a species of "faith beyond the forms of faith" for many who may have lost touch with theological religion, points to the irresistible conclusion that poetry may indeed be regarded as bearing the closest affinity with the spiritual life of man. On this account alone we cannot but affirm that the most intimate connexion must exist between art and conduct.

To embark upon a lengthy disquisition in regard to what may be said to constitute the distinctively poetic quality is far removed from my intention. In truth, it may be doubted whether any precise or

adequate analysis of poetry is capable of being furnished ; for the instinct would appear to be nothing less than an innate faculty of the human intelligence whose presence is wellnigh universal. In order, however, that we may have before us something approaching a clear idea as to what composes its essential element, I would venture to suggest that poetry amounts simply to an attempt, or series of attempts, to reproduce and embody those rhythmic movements which accompany the excessive exhibition of emotion and that heightened sensibility which is the outcome of an elaborated psychic organism. From a certain point of view, the entire universe may be reduced to nothing but a number of scales of vibrations, of varying intensity, the human organism itself becoming in this way nothing but an instrument capable of initiating and responding to certain orders and ranges of vibratory movement. Thus the impassioned language of the poet—his metre, swell, cadences, rhymes, and rhythms—need only be conceived of as so many exquisite reactions to those higher laws and forces which are playing within him, and to which his soul is more or less consciously attuned. With most of us at best only an unconscious response is possible, but with the poet it is otherwise. Unlike the dwellers in the valley, his ear has caught the strains of celestial music from the summits.

But, exalted as is his position, his function differs only in degree from that of all other living things. Thus, whilst the flower, by absorbing the vital properties of the soil, the sunshine, and the atmo-

sphere, exhales a fragrant perfume and attires itself in the prismatic hues which entrance the eye of the beholder, or as the horse, by extracting nutriment from its provender and the breath of its nostrils, is enabled to perform its physical task, so, similarly, the poet receives and converts into higher rates of vibration the impacts which impinge upon his sensorium. As elsewhere, this is a purely spontaneous effort, and must be coexistent with the natural impulse whereby the poet is enabled to animate all the objects which exist in his imagination. Hence the saying, "the poet is born and not made."

"The primeval state of man," says William Blake, "is wisdom, art, and science." So affirms every true poet, who beholds in the union of knowledge and love, wisdom and feeling, the consummation and fullness of human endeavour, and the satisfaction of all desires, terrestrial and celestial. Since it thus becomes the means of reconciliation between the individual and the universal self, all true poetry may be viewed under an endless variety of aspects. Thus it must appeal at once to the senses, to the mind, and to the imagination. Both the eye, the ear, and the feelings must be engaged and captivated simultaneously, since only so will the subjugation of the personal self to the higher self be effected.

As I have already suggested, the exercise of the rhythmic impulse is peculiarly adapted to accomplish this transmutation of consciousness; and in the flight of fancy which it takes the poet's soul finds wings and passes beyond the plane of reason to the mount of vision, whereon are witnessed things unspeakable,

whereof none save he who realizes may know.
Well might Tennyson exclaim,

“The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above.

* * * *

His to see thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,
Through his own soul :
Before him the marvel of the Everlasting Will
Lies open as a scroll.”

Who is able to read the lines of the late Laureate, or the compositions of Wordsworth, Browning, Shelley, or Coleridge, without experiencing some sense of these thoughts which lie too deep for human emotion, or without attaining a point where hope, faith, and love become transfused, whereat we touch the Eternal?

Thus does it become the mission of the poet to transport us beyond our self-imposed limitations, which are the result of habit and routine ; thus, for an instant, does he raise the veil which divides the finite from infinitude ; thus is a fuller communion made possible and established between ourselves and the Oversoul.

“The poet,” says Emerson, “stands among partial men for the complete man.” Not for himself, at any season, would he speak. His life, of the ampler sort, is that for which the nations are seeking. On the other hand, it is from their “half reasons, faint aspirings, dim struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies, their prejudices, and fears, and cares, and doubts,” that he is permitted to construct his vision of immortality. These dim fragments, “scattered

o'er the visible world, waiting to be united in some wondrous whole," are what make for the poet and his circle the perfect image and likeness of the invisible reality—the point where all the scattered rays may meet, forming the fount whence such inspiration as his may proceed.

"Poetry," says the author of "Amiel's Journal," "represents to us Nature become consubstantial with the soul, because in it Nature is only a reminiscence touched with emotion: an image vibrating with our own life, a form without weight; in short, a mode of the soul."

Turn we for one moment to the poet's individuality. Not the least among the galaxy of his incomparable attributes is his courage. The poet is at no time ashamed to give utterance to the things of which the multitude fear to speak. Their love, their hate, their wrong, their right, he holds but as types and symbols of a love, a displeasure, a wrong, a right which lie far beyond their faintest conception. And for this reason: whilst he has that sympathy which would respond to the weakest aspiration at the heart of all things, and would hold "nothing in scorn," he contrives, by his very magnanimity, to insist upon the triviality of the average life. Nor is he anxious that he should receive praise, nor concerned if he incur blame. Such considerations as these may not seriously weigh with him who has proved himself to be capable of rising to the heights of human possibility. To his own self he must, at all hazards, be true. And his unceasing care is ever that he preserve at any cost the true import of his

message. Among the greatest poets have been they who have incurred the most bitter criticism and misrepresentation. To temperaments so exquisitely wrought such cannot have passed unheeded. Yet what has it signified? Though their visions may have appeared to conflict with the petty views of their would-be traducers, wherein were they affected? To destroy were they not called, but to fulfil; and woe betide him who remained unresponsive to their appeal! The poet is the inhabitant of a larger sphere; his the abode of light and liberty, whose only law is love. Above the shallow wit of the groundlings, shall he hesitate to declare the things which shall outlast the eternal hills? Not if he would remain a prophet.

Yet another characteristic of the poet is his pessimism; else how should it be that the "sweet, sad music of humanity" could find a responsive chord in his angelic breast? His aim, however, must be to do something more than to show that our "sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught." Rather must he be equal to the task of calling forth from human sadness something akin to Divine joy.

The power to summon by the magic wand of his unconquerable will the inward beauty of events is the means of endowing the poet with the secret of eternal youth. Perpetually plastic, able as he is at all times, amid all circumstances, to view anew the "vision splendid" in every created object—in the flower in the crannied wall, the solar system, the primrose by the river's brim, the little lamb, or the human soul herself—all is as one to him. Each

suggests infinity after its own particular fashion, and becomes the luminous medium through which he permits mankind to witness some operation of the indwelling intelligence. The poet it is who, as no other man, is able to bridge the gulf between appearance and reality. To the ordinary mortal the former alone has any significance but with the poet the order is reversed, the outer becoming a type or a shadow of the inner.

Nor can aught come amiss to him for this purpose. A Wordsworth idealizes Nature; a Tennyson the achievements of humanity; whilst a Whitman magnifies the surpassing splendours of the things which form the commonplaces of existence. Indifferently, they glorify in "one and all" the Eternal Presence whose will and wisdom they announce and celebrate.

It is sometimes inquired whether, in this rational, truth-seeking age, with its ever-increasing interest in matters which pertain to the mundane, the occupation of the poet is not gone for ever. On all sides one hears of the decline of the poetic spirit, and as often as not a positively contemptuous tone is affected towards verse as a vehicle of expression. With some poetry is considered but as a prelude to prose, which is extolled at the expense of the former; and perhaps the majority are disposed to consider verse-making at best nothing but an elegant accomplishment that should have no encouragement from sensible, serious-minded people.

Such an attitude, however, I would unhesitatingly maintain, betokens an altogether superficial acquaint

14 POETRY AS A MORAL INFLUENCE

ance with the needs and constitution of humanity. If the age have not exhausted itself, and unless it have arrived at the terminus of its career, it must still find a place for its bard ; for cannot he, and he alone, discover the route along which the multitude must advance? In spite of the prevailing opinion to the contrary, it is as Browning would have us believe :

“ A poet never dreams :
We prose folk do ; we miss the proper duct
For thought on things unseen.”

The poet, for all his visions, is no vague sentimentalist, who cherishes ideals which are impossible for man. Far from it. His mission it is to present life under the most luminous and exalted conditions ; and in that he would refer all things to a nobler order than the world has yet known, he becomes the revealer of the Highest. In his legends and epics, and dramas and lyrics, he immortalizes one perpetually recurring theme—that of Eternal Wisdom and Love ; and in so doing he rehearses before us the final issues of existence.

Believe me, until men cease to hope, to aspire, to reverence, the poet will yet be with them ; for with him, as with none other, lies the secret of human destiny, that for which all things that are were created and made—the invisible goodness, the indwelling necessity, whereunto the nations, and in them all that is, are for ever tending.

THE MASTER

EMERSON: THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

It is comparatively rarely that the personalities of those who have had the good fortune to achieve artistic or literary distinction are not disappointing. Measured by their attainments, only too often their individualities appear dwarfed and stunted, as though Nature had revenged herself upon them for displaying their exceptional abilities in such directions as they happened to excel. To this rule, however, an exception is encountered in the case of Emerson, whose character forms the worthy complement of his philosophy.

To deal with the writings of the great American prophet may, indeed, be held to be sufficient in itself to afford one a tolerably accurate insight into the nature and genius of their author. Lest, however, the necessarily brief résumé of some of the cardinal principles underlying his teaching, which I am about to submit in the present essay, be deemed of too slender a description to this end, it behoves us to

commence our survey with a bird's-eye view, so to speak, of the man's environment, physical and psychological, so as to enable us to form something approaching a definite impression as to the position which Emerson may properly be said to occupy in modern thought.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, then, was born on May 25, 1803, in Boston. He was one of a family of several children. It is interesting to observe that in one of his essays he has propounded the query "How shall a man escape from his ancestors?" Speaking for himself, at any rate, he had the best of reasons for believing that the hereditary law cannot count for nothing. And when he proceeds to tell us that a man may be said to be born with what he is pleased to call either the moral or the material bias, one can realize that—at least, as applied to his own case—such a generalization is peculiarly true. For no less than eight generations his ancestors had exhibited indications of pre-eminent intellectual and moral excellence, so that he who was destined to become the Buddha of the New World came into his inheritance under the most favourable auspices. Like so many men of extraordinary abilities, Emerson owed not a little to his mother, who, according to all accounts, was a woman of singular sensibility, taste, and spiritual devotion. These facts, added to those traits which descended to him from the paternal side of his family, and which included a remarkably vigorous intellect, an abundance of sound sense, and sterling moral worth, seem to emphasize the significance of the principle of breeding when applied to man, as showing

to what extent an individual is linked with the past as well as the present.

Besides being the debtor to his ancestry, however, Emerson unquestionably owed much to his early training, his upbringing and the home influences by which he was surrounded. His father having died when Waldo was little more than seven years of age, his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, sister of his paternal parent, a woman of the greatest originality and culture, assisted in forming his youthful mind, and, judging from what he has himself told us, she seems to have exercised a remarkable power over Emerson as a boy.

At eight years of age Emerson entered the public grammar school. Shortly afterwards he proceeded thence to the Latin school, and at fourteen he had prepared to enter Harvard, for which he passed a satisfactory entrance examination. At that time, however, Harvard was less a man's university than a boy's school. Hence it need not be inferred that young Waldo exhibited any exceptional precocity.

From his earliest years he seems to have loved the gentle art of versification, which is scarcely to be wondered at, since the poet is ever born, and it is as a poet rather than as a philosopher that Emerson must be reckoned. In his younger days we find him to have been especially absorbed in works of history, whilst the progress which he made with his classical studies appears to have exceeded that which he made with philosophy. For mathematics he had little or no aptitude, Shakespeare being more to his taste. In after-years he writes : "He wrote airs for all our modern music ;

he wrote the text of modern life. . . . Shakespeare is as much out of the category of eminent authors as he is out of the crowd. He is inconceivably wise ; the others conceivably."

In 1829, when he was barely twenty-six, Emerson received an invitation to undertake the ministry at the Second Unitarian Church, Boston. As a preacher he acquitted himself most creditably. His declamatory powers had disclosed themselves comparatively early in life, and as a speaker he was at once direct, impressive, and eloquent. Doubtless his experience at this time was of the utmost service to him in after-years, when he was destined to become one of the most effective orators of his own or any other age. During the period of which we have just spoken Emerson devoted himself mainly to philanthropic work and social reform, directions in which his talents were employed to the end of his life. Later, owing to some modification of his religious views, he resigned his pastorate, and subsequently became a keen supporter of the anti-slavery movement.

Emerson married twice—first, Miss Ellen Louisa Tucker, in 1829, becoming a widower in 1832 ; and, second, the daughter of Charles Jackson, in 1835.

The remainder of his life was devoted principally to literary composition and lecturing. From time to time he travelled, as his health was none of the best, notwithstanding which his time was fully occupied with public work until the time of his death, which occurred at Concord in April, 1882.

The first series of his celebrated "Essays" was published in 1841, his poems first appearing in 1847.

In the same year he visited Great Britain, where he fulfilled several important lecturing engagements. His "English Traits," describing the impressions obtained by him on his first visit to Europe in 1833, was issued in 1856, and proved a highly successful venture on both sides of the Atlantic. This work was followed by the "Conduct of Life," which made its first appearance in print in 1860.

Ere we proceed, now, to discuss the work of the man, it will perhaps be as well that something be said as to Emerson's aims and methods. These, it must be remembered, are mainly ethical; at the same time, thinker and moralist that he is, Emerson must be regarded in the light of a poet and metaphysician rather than a philosopher. Pre-eminent among seers, his genius is a thing of sudden and unpremeditated flashes; his inspiration a momentary opening of the heavens. His wife, we are told, would awake in the middle of the night and hear him moving about the room; on inquiry, she would learn that he was merely jotting down some fugitive thought that had just occurred to him. All these thoughts would be entered by him in notebooks; then, whenever he desired to write any particular essay, he would refer to these books, copy from them, and, having done so, draw a perpendicular line through the original paragraphs. His friend Alcott relates that on a certain occasion, on betaking himself to Emerson's study, he discovered the floor littered with sheets of manuscript which their writer was anxiously endeavouring to arrange in something approaching a consecutive order. This want of system throughout his work cannot fail to arrest the attention

of the readers of Emerson. The obvious lack of arrangement is, however, almost necessitated in the development of the ideas which he sought to promulgate.

Slave to no man's creed or opinions, a born intuitionist, Emerson is invariably moved to declare the thought which strikes him on the spot; he cannot wait for the slow and cumbrous processes of logic to unfold the doctrines he would teach. And whilst emotional excess or sentimental extravagance is foreign to him, he is so far free from the trammels of orthodox thinkers that he can afford to become a law unto himself. As Dr. Garnett has so truly said of him, Emerson does not seek to demonstrate: he announces. He speaks his thoughts aloud, rather than he can be said to exemplify any special philosophical process. He is, in short, the revealer first and reasoner afterwards. He carries conviction, not because he attempts to adduce evidence in support of his assertions, but because he succeeds in transporting us instantaneously to a region wherein the inhabitant has direct vision. We feel that the seer has conscious access to sources of information that are beyond the reach of the average mortal. We feel instinctively that he is one who knows whereof he affirms. Seeing, therefore, must be believing: there is no choice in the matter. His statements compel immediate admiration; hence, whatever he may say wins our almost unquestioning assent. His is a realm beyond the ken of the inductive philosopher. His commonplaces are other intelligent men's sagest speculations. His most trivial observation is a prophecy, and comes to us with all

the force and authority which belong to an inspired teacher rather than the scribe. Whilst we hear him we believe him, simply because we cannot help ourselves. Nor, when we quit his company, can we deny, for then we return to our own limited sphere, wherein both the vision and the light in which it was beheld are alike denied us.

Emerson quickens our spiritual apprehension ; he makes more of us than we can make of ourselves, and when we leave his presence we feel that we are men and women of the lesser sort. The double portion of the Spirit which took possession of us as we stood with him before the Oversoul or the Infinite Beneficence has vanished. Yet what was it, we ask, which served to work the miracle? "Great minds," as he has told us, "are more distinguished by range and extent than by originality." Even so it is with himself. There is nothing positively unique—nothing even superordinarily novel—in his disclosures. His main contentions furnish the mass of philosophers, scientists, and theologians with their stock-in-trade. Still, his message loses nothing by this. It comes to us, through the channel of this spiritual giant, with a perennial freshness and an inexpressible charm all its own. Emerson is ever redolent of the open air, the blue sky, the fields ; the Infinite itself lies at his feet. The mere literary interest of what he has to say never for a single instant stands between us and the statement he would deliver. He quotes comparatively seldom. When he does so, he seems to have imbibed the spirit rather than the letter of his author. The law of spiritual correspondence is at his very

finger-tips, and at the word of command he has shown you that the greatest minds have all spoken one and the same language.

His pamphlet on Nature, published in 1836, which sold only to the extent of 500 copies in twelve years, upon its first publication, is perhaps his most characteristic and vigorous piece of work. And it may be said to afford us a tolerably faithful reflection of his philosophy. Nevertheless, remarkable as is the standpoint of the writer, the drift of the entire tract may be summed up in three axiomatic statements: that God is not remote, but the indwelling, lasting Essence and ever-present Principle in all things; that the universe is not dead, but alive and animated by the World-soul; and that Nature is not a mere mechanical contrivance, but is instinct with vital properties which are the means of relating her various parts with the whole, which Emerson identifies with the Absolute.

“In every work of genius,” he has written, “we recognize our own rejected thoughts.” This is true, amazingly true, of him. We are all discerners of spiritual truth, did we but know it—none but is in touch with a higher order. Hence it is that when we come to read and study Emerson we discover precisely what we already knew, or fancied we knew, but what we failed to express and communicate.

“Man,” he says, “is a stream whose source is hidden.” We are wiser than we are aware. We know better than we think. At the same time, practically speaking, the key to each one of us is the kind and quality of our thought.

In the Emersonian system the soul is not an organ ; neither is it a function nor a faculty ; nor may it be confounded with the will or the intellect. It is lord and master of all of these—"the background of our being in which they lie, an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed," which operates for the common good. The eating, drinking, planting, counting creature, does not faithfully represent, but misrepresents, man. The soul "knows neither pain nor deformity."

He is not at any great pains to define and distinguish between the human and the cosmic process. All things are of a piece : infinite gradations are everywhere. Evil is only a lesser good. The soul of the whole is not in the parts, the divisions, the particles, but in the Eternal One—the Ever-living Unity, omniscient and omnipotent. From that no escape can be effected.

The essay on the Oversoul is an incomparable example of Emerson's power to expound this doctrine of the God at once immanent and transcendent. The Divine Nature is not apart from but inherent in all that is. The world stands rooted in God. Nay, it is itself but an aspect, or as it were a symbol, of Him who uses it as a means to accomplish His eternal ends.

"The simplest person who in his integrity worships God becomes God." Aspiration, worship, and identity of being, are one and the same thing in the eyes of Emerson. It is because we can look up, and have within us somewhat that would make us more than we have been, that we can claim sonship

with the Eternal Nature. Thus man forms a link between the Parent Soul and Nature, its emblem.

Emerson believes in eternity. The spiritual consists in the self-evident: the law which is self-executing, which works without means, and which cannot be conceived of as non-existent. With theological hair-splitting and such-like definitions he has but little patience, and less sympathy. "If a man claims to know and speak of God," he cries, "and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Is the acorn better than the soul which is its fullness and completion? Is the parent better than the child in whom he has cast its refined being?" The creeds are "not nothing" to us; but it is only when the gods of rhetoric and tradition have gone that God shall "fire the heart with His presence." Eternal progress is the theme of his meditations. The faith and the God our fathers knew shall not suffice for us. The doubts and uncertainties of the hour, if manfully met, shall stand us in better stead.

"Whence this worship of the past?" he exclaims. "The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul." Only

"When half gods go
The gods arrive."

The worship of magnitude, again, is a delusion, a snare of the senses, a superstition of the most deadly kind. For the soul there is no great and no small. Perfect proportion, adaptation, harmony, equilibrium, justice, are so many grades of spiritual

manifestation. Thus viewed, the universe is seen to be the interpretation of the Infinite.

Self-reliance is one of the cardinal principles of his creed. It is to prepare and make ready the way. Godliness is not superior to this; indeed, it is its very essence.

Our real power lies in our silent moments, as when we are moved to contemplate the majesty and splendour of those sublime facts which inspired the immortal Kant with admiration and awe: the heavens without and the moral order within man. Complete self-trust he deems to be the very essence of all heroism. Heroism has alone been the means of raising humanity to the level of the deities whom men have worshipped and served. God will not be made manifest to cowards—"polite bows to God" are altogether intolerable. Virtue must be spontaneous, or it will be absent.

"The ancestor of every act," he says in "Spiritual Laws," "is a thought. If we are to have great actions, let us make our own so."

"The soul has no dates, nor rites, nor persons, nor specialties, nor men." This statement appears to conflict somewhat with the view which he enunciates elsewhere to the effect that "all the religion we have is the ethics of one or another holy person." But it must not be forgotten that, to Emerson, the great personalities of history—Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed, Shakespeare, and the rest—are only so many fragments of the soul, and by affinity we incorporate these in our own consciousness. "We shall not always set so great a price on a few texts, or a few

lives." The only use of tradition is to perpetuate the everlasting remembrance of those lofty ideals which are to inspire us to *be*. They live in us, so far as we live in the unity of the whole.

Man, according to Emerson, is a bundle of relations. Complete in himself, could he but realize it, he is yet required to prove that nothing in heaven, upon earth, or under the earth, can avail him—"such as you are, the gods cannot help you." The difference between persons is not in wisdom—all are potentially perfect—but in art. Art he defines, very beautifully, as the path of the Creator to His work. "Man is fed, not that he may be fed, but that he may work." The supreme art, therefore, consists in the subordination of every motive and action to a conception of the general good. Good, however, is to be approached only by way of the beautiful, for beauty and good are inseparable. Beauty, like morality, forms a single aspect of the Eternal One. "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not." "Not in Nature, but in man, is all the beauty and worth he sees." Beauty, therefore, is an attribute of the perceiving soul: as such, we must dwell with it.

According to Lowell, Emerson's artistic range is somewhat circumscribed. Perhaps this is almost necessitated by his particular point of view. Possibly, in his endeavour to throw the truth-aspect into bold relief, he has sometimes sacrificed mere æsthetic considerations. In Theodore Parker's judgment, Emerson is a poet lacking the accomplishment of

verse. And certainly it must be allowed that his Muse is but indifferently attired. That he is no singer, at least, we may fully allow. In form, at any rate, his verse is in many respects less poetical than his prose.

But, in spite of this, his art is consummate. Little inclined, as he is, to indulge in the tricks of his trade, he is yet too modest, too direct, too spontaneous, to be the teacher merely. He never consciously strives to be improving. At no time does he dogmatize or seek to instruct. He counsels and advises; and he does this simply because he is able to throw one back upon oneself. His introspective method, combined with his unerring sense of human nature, must of necessity have the effect of making him an instructor. But he never assumes the rôle of school-master. If one would be wise, "one must greatly listen to oneself." In one of his essays he has said: "Forget your books and traditions, and obey your moral perceptions at this hour." These are not the words of a pedagogue. Text-books, precedents and such-like, no doubt, are well enough in their way; but to rely upon these implicitly is to fail to rise to the sublimity of the occasion.

To think meanly of oneself is suicidal. The heart in each man is the Heart of All. As one blood rolls uninterruptedly through the veins of all members of the human family, so whatever falls to the lot of any one man is common property, the experience of the race as a whole.

To Emerson the moral order, as has already been said, is all-sufficing. Everything has a moral signifi-

cance and purpose behind it. Nay, could we but see it as it is, the moral law is all that *is*. Justice never tarries. Here and now, however blind we may be to the fact, it is immediately and unfailingly executed. With the heaven and the hell of a hereafter state he can claim no acquaintance. For his own part, he will not insult the moral law by thus isolating it, by relegating it to some remote sphere of the human fancy. It is a living fact. The "future" state of orthodoxy dogs our steps at this moment. It exists as truly as the "past." Both lie in the ever-present now. None can avoid the consequences of his actions, whether bad or good. At the very instant they are committed they ensure such penalties and rewards as their perpetrator merits. "Cause and effect" are "God's chancellors." If a man lie, or cheat, or murder, his punishment lies in the fact that, having temporally dislocated so to say the limbs of his moral being, he will be required to readjust himself to the scheme of things wherein he lives, which will entail remorse unspeakable, anguish unutterable. Whether they will or no, individuals cannot go from bad to worse. However it may appear to the eye of the beholder, it is providentially arranged otherwise. "The soul contradicts all experience." The Blessed Necessity will not permit us to follow our wayward and fantastic will beyond a given point. Man is predestined to better things. Is not man a fact? And is not the only fact he would have us see the moral law of his being? Unless man is a vain shadow, he must achieve *something*. What save holiness and perfection remain for him?

It is in the social relationship that Emerson finds man's greatest strength. His essay on Friendship is full of the profoundest and tenderest allusions to one of the most holy and sacred of life's blessings—that of true kinship of soul. Courage, fidelity, independence, and affection are all indispensable to one who would enjoy the privilege of true comradeship with another. Friendship, as he does not fail to point out, is possible apart from demonstrativeness. Indeed, demonstrativeness may become a profanation of friendship. "Let us be silent, so we may hear the whisper of the gods."

Emerson would treat his friends much as he would treat his books. He would have them where he could find them, but seldom use them, the essence of true friendship being entireness, total trust, and complete magnanimity. Anything less than this cannot be dignified by the name of friendship, as Emerson would have us understand it.

It has often been charged against him, as I think unjustly, that Emerson is reserved, distant, and cold. That there is something detached and even aloof about him may be allowed. Those, however, who have read him in the least degree sympathetically cannot fail to realize that this coolness is merely temperamental, and lies only on the surface, the exterior, of the man.

When he writes—

"Think me not unkind and rude
That I walk alone in grove and glen ;
I go to the God of the wood
To fetch His word to men,"

we seem to see that he was himself conscious of the charge to which he exposed himself, but that, shrinkingly sensitive as he was, the end before him was ever a human one. Who could read his essays on Domestic Life and Love, or hear his exquisitely beautiful thoughts upon children and the home, and remain untouched?

In some respects, doubtless, Emerson will be disappointing to the average man—as, for instance, when he extols plain living and high thinking beyond prescribed limits, and when he discourages the indiscriminate acceptance of doctrines which rest upon the sole authority of another. Very possibly, too, his comparative contempt for personalities, and his incessant insistence upon the triumph of principles, will come as a shock to many.

When he says that persons are supplementary to the primary teaching of the soul, and that childhood and youth see all the world in them, but that persons themselves acquaint us with the impersonal intelligence, he may appear to many to carry them to a region wherein only shadowy abstractions find a place. Those whose hearts are set upon the outward and visible merely, to the exclusion of the inward and spiritual, may be pardoned in their failing to follow the master, Emerson. Yet the fault is not his, but theirs.

With those, however, whose ear is attuned to the things of the Spirit it will be otherwise. For such, knowing of the things whereof the seer speaks, will find in Emerson a preacher whose like has not been

seen for ages, and whose prophetic utterances only the Eternal Truth can make clear and plain before their eyes. Truly of Emerson and his message may it be said, "of such is the kingdom of righteousness."

THE END.