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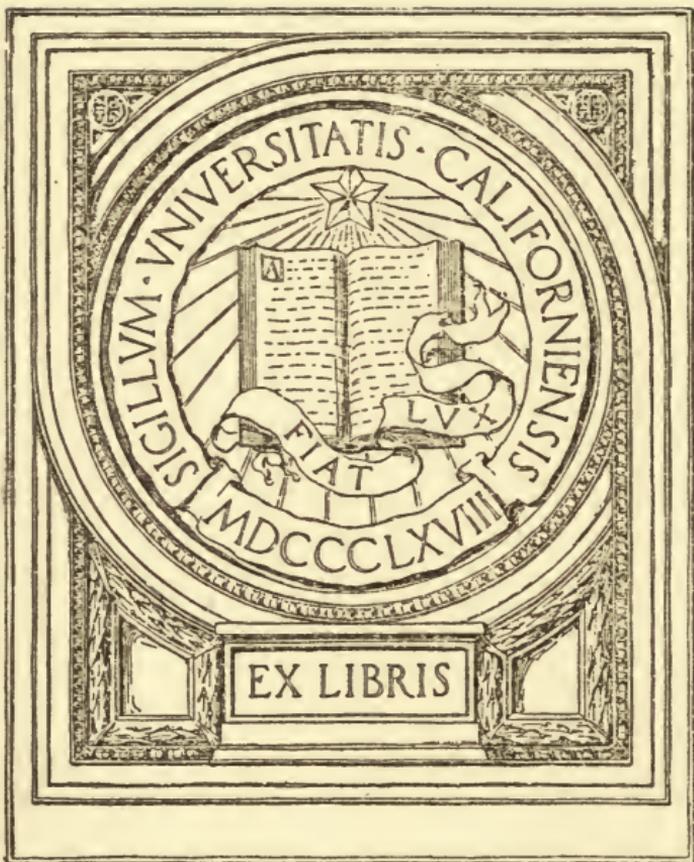


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THE LIFE OF EMERSON

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1.

EMERSON JUNIOR.

*Day, thou hast two faces,  
Making one place two places!  
O, Sun! I curse thy cruel ray:  
Back, back, to Chaos, harlot day:  
"Complaint."*

2.

EMERSON SENIOR.

*An Energy that searches thorough  
From Chaos till the dawning morrow;  
Into all our human plight,  
The soul's pilgrimage and flight;  
In city or in solitude,  
Step by step, lifts Bad to Good.  
"May-Day."*

A BIOGRAPHY  
OF  
RALPH WALDO EMERSON

SET FORTH AS HIS LIFE ESSAY

BY  
DENTON J. SNIDER



UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

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of Concord  
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# Ralph Waldo Emerson

## *INTRODUCTION.*

Emerson's total round of years does not quite run up to four score (1803-1882). A superficial view will trace in it many turns, tortuosities, even shrilling contradictions; so the first biographic problem emerges: how is this involved refractory mass to be set forth in some kind of transparent order, and its chaotic dispersion unified? A mere chronologic record of successive events in human life is not light-bringing, even if needful as the prime material foundation. Some way or other we must be led to see and to express the man's ultimate process as revealed in his character and stamped upon the whole of it and the parts. A very intricate piece of humanity is our Emerson, labyrinthine, and somewhat gnarled in spots perchance; but when seen and felt in the entirety of his existence, he integrates all its recalcitrant fragments, and attunes to one key-note its varied discords. His wholeness makes him whole in all his seeming deflections and his differences. Can a biography show this his order in its order?

Several lives of Emerson have appeared along the line of years since his passing; as we write to-day the last account of him is hardly a year old. A valuation of these works lies not in our purview; but we may make the general and colorless remark that they all have their special excellences in arranging their details after the ordinary way of biographical composition. But our purpose is to emphasize the process of the man's total achievement, and still further to behold in the one biography the inner movement of all biography. Such a process must be at last psychological, and thereby reveal the ultimate fact of human existence. The life of the one person, especially if he be representative, is to be shown bearing the impress of supreme personality. To use an Emersonian conception, man's biography is an efflux of God's biography; the finite Self, in its most intimate unitary act as well as in its diversified individual career must be seen reflecting the image of the universal Self. The events, doctrines, deeds of a man's life are a chaos till the biographer voicing the Supreme Orderer, turns them into a cosmos.

Accordingly, the first task of the life-writer is to catch the primordial stages of this highest activity, which thereby becomes creative of his theme, and clothes itself in the special details of a human career. That is, we seek at the start to mark the great sweeps, the pivotal turns, the grand crises of a life, which we shall here call its *Periods*. In other words, our first attempt is to periodize Emerson.

These larger arcs of his biographical cycle are, therefore, the beginning, middle, and end of our book, revealing the basic organization and meaning of his completed achievement.

Let it be emphasized, then, that the most deeply significant node of Emerson's career hovers about the years 1834-5 when he was passing through his thirty-second year. After a good deal of drifting, both inner and outer, he finally established his home at Concord, home spiritual as well as domestic. He had won his fundamental conception, he had thought out his world-view, and was ready, yea eager to set it down in writing and to promulgate it to the time despite all neglect and calumny. He was assured of his economic independence, the primal postulate of the other kinds of independence. He had both the leisure and the solitude to yield himself freely to the immediate impress of nature and deity, and to report the same as the true content of his life's work. In his own house at Concord, where he settled, he had taken a lofty position, from which he could swoop down upon the outlying earth, and especially upon adjacent un-receptive Boston, capital of Philistia, as we may infer from repeated allusions as well as assaults. Then he would return to his isolated perch for fresh meditation and writing. His abode becomes for him a Castle of Defiance, also a Fortress of Liberty, quite impregnable by any sort of hostile gunnery or hunger.

Thus we set down the chief landmark in Emer-

son's biography, the transition of the young man into his middle life, into the time of his originality and main achievement—his Second Period, as we shall name it, embracing quite three decades of his activity. Antecedent to this landmark and leading up to it rise Emerson's years of education at home and at college, his training to his transmitted vocation till his falling out with it and flight abroad. In general, this stage stresses his appropriation of the traditional Past, against which, however, there runs in him an ever-increasing protest all the way up to downright revolt. At the same time through this negative schooling he is slowly evolving into his positive world-view or ultimate Idea, which he is to proclaim to the ages from his perch of lofty independence on his Castle of Defiance.

There remains the final or Third Period of Emerson's life which he himself has indicated decisively in his poem named *Terminus*. Under this title the God of Metes and Bounds appears to him, commanding "No more! No farther shoot thy ambitious branches and root." This was read to his son in 1866; already the poet had felt he had reached the last great turn of his career and cried out

It is time to be old,  
To take in sail.  
Economize the failing river,  
Mature the unfallen fruit.

In such words Emerson takes a survey of his

time of life and declares what in general he is henceforth to perform during his remaining days. He states the character and content of his Third Period, or that of his old-age, as distinct from his middle or Second Period. He is to go back and gather up what of his harvest still lies scattered. The time of creative power is past: "Fancy departs, no more invent." Let there now be a return upon my former self, an era of collection and recollection, such as befits the graying hair of the sage.

Thus we glimpse the complete round of Emerson's youth, manhood, and age, the compartments of his life-cycle, with their corresponding pivotal activities. Remember that it is the man himself looking backward and feeling deeply the turning nodes of his spirit, who thus draws his own life-lines and marks his Periods. Herein we may well hear him giving a hint for his future biography. Moreover these three stages are to be seen finally as one process of Emerson's soul imprinted on his total achievement. Thus we may take up his last meaning into our own existence, which in its special way is passing through the same spiritual stages—we too are to have our measured and fulfilled allotment of days and their works.

And now before advancing to details, we shall seek to forecast in some general terms the pith of Emerson's total accomplishment, uprearing a kind of beacon to illumine our road to the end. Unto what did he aspire, and how much did he fulfill? If we catch the somewhat hidden but most intense

and persistent throb passing through all of Emerson's works, we cannot help feeling that the deepest, strongest, indestructible aspiration of his heart is to be poet, yea just the American poet, the singer of the new-born Occident, the bard of a rising world, which he glimpsed here in the seething West. In his most intimate confessions which we hear in an undertone through his earlier Journals and Poems, he breathes forth his hopes, doubts, and despairs. And when in his Essays he turns to tell of the high function of the poet and of poetry, to which he is often inclined to make a digression, he swells with an uplift and exuberance, which bespeak his keenest personal interest. As Homer was the herald intoning the outset of the European tide of the World's History, so Emerson longed to be the voice singing the advent of a new order and its æon on this side of the globe.

But this his supreme aspiration was destined not to be fulfilled, though we hearken sweet echoes of it tingling in shreds of music all along his life's meandering journey. Emerson was not architectonic in verse or in prose; many beautifully carved marbles were his, but somehow he never could build them into a temple. Herein his God of Metes and Bounds put upon him an impassable limit which diverted the flow of Genius into another channel whose manifold tortuosities are to be traced and mapped in this life-essay of his, outlining the man realized.

And yet the poetic fountain in Emerson's soul

was perennial, ever jetting its rainbowed spray in the sunshine of his days till their close, and tokening the many-hued moods of his spirit's wrestling in defeat and triumph. His poems are his most intimate commentary on himself; to us their chief worth is that they show Emerson at his confessional.

Undoubtedly this lofty poetic ambition was Emerson's profoundest response to his time and to his people. Such a strong spiritual aspiration of the Western Continent for a universal singer lay deep not only in him but in the New World, and especially in what may be deemed its most advanced part at that time, New England. The hidden push of the Time-spirit is what produced the brilliant outbursts of poetic melodies, which during the middle of the nineteenth century seemed to hover around Boston. It is true that this literary output was dispersed both in its creation and its creators; it could not concentrate itself into one overtowering personality, or into a single great world-poem. It never brought forth one of Time's eternally singing Bibles, of which Europe acclaims at least four. Still that scattered body of song both in its parts and as a whole is the best poetic utterance we Americans have had: so let not gratitude be stinted.

Here we may digress to note that Emerson has still another ambition of great authorship which streams through his whole life as a kind of ever-present undercurrent, and which often bubbles up suddenly to the surface, especially in the secret self-

communings of his Journal. He strove all his days at intervals to write out his *Prima Philosophia*, a philosophic scheme of the Universe. But this plan never came to fruition, for the same general reason that his poetic plan failed of fulfillment. He lacked the structural gift; he could gather and trim to beauty the separate native materials, but could never erect their edifice. So he became a great philosopher who never organized his philosophy, as he is a great poet without any complete poetic structure. How shall we designate him? The poet-philosopher he has been baptized, unique of kind and original in speech and spirit—at his highest only like unto himself.

So we have to confine his genius to being the seer, not the systematizer, discursively intuitional, not massively architectonic. His inborn aloofness has often been noted and censured; he was aware of it and made many a good resolution to overcome it; but he could not in nature associate either his thoughts or himself. Hence his literary as well as social manner, both of which he aspired to transcend. Greatest native glimser of the eternal verities, but the least organizer thereof—he has often called up the question which is the best way of their impartation. Each way has its fervent discipleship, but both belong to the complete expression. Do not disparage the unitary philosopher Hegel because you like the sentential philosopher Emerson, as the

latter sometimes unfortunately did; in the last synthesis both belong together, each is a side or a half of a greater whole than either by himself, which whole is or ought to be yours or indeed you. Far-outstretching suggestions, intimations, prophecies are sown all over the Emersonian seedfield; but the crop belongs to the future. Who will see it mature and gather it? Such is the splendid gift of our author, enduringly creative; but such are also his confining limits, against which we behold him chafing and breaking till we read his life's postscript.

If then this supreme national, we might say continental aspiration for a worthy utterance in poetry and philosophy was not fulfilled by Emerson, despite his intense longing and labor, and not by any other of our metering and metaphysical artificers, nor by all of them together, what then is his positive accomplishment in its essence? Can we turn our eye upon the very marrow of his achievement? We soon are brought not only to feel but to see that Emerson lived an all pervasive unity both of thought and purpose—a unity which he reproduces and reiterates hundredfold through every phasis of his career: the immediate efflux of the deity into the soul of man, which it imbreathees with its one God-sent spirit, endowing the same with a vast creative multiformity. Emerson would withdraw from the world of action and its struggles to his lonely perch in his Concord abode, which was his

Hermitage of Solitude as well as his Castle of Defiance. There he would watch and nourish the descent of the God into himself, carefully noting in words the direct inspirations from above. Then he would sheave and shock the choicest spears of his supernal harvest into some form of the Essay as his supreme utterance.

So we conceive Emerson, when he had gathered his divine crop of inspirations and wrought them into a shape which could be handled and imparted, to have descended into the world, and especially into Boston, somewhat as the Upper Power had descended into him with its sacred evangel. For to his mind Boston remained till the close of his days the chief looming fortress to be captured, the grand citadel of the hosts of the deniers who had first cast him off, and then had harried and outraged him, upbraiding his new Heaven-inspired message with a haughty malediction. Especially its learned University put him under ban, his Alma Mater thrust from her spiritual embrace for nearly a generation her greatest son. With time however there came about an approach from both sides, ending in a mutual reconciliation and acceptance—one of the healings of his remedial old-age, or Third Period.

Accordingly the genetic pulse-beat of Emerson's career is religious, and throbs itself out into two main lines: a militant negative strand, and an affirmative doctrinal principle. He assailed all forms, dogmas, institutions, which lay

between the soul universal (sometimes called by him the Oversoul) and the soul particular and human. A dislike he showed for any mediating influence, even for the Mediator himself, but laid all stress upon the immediate, spontaneous, inspirational activity. Such, then, is the unit of his thought, the central sun of his spirit, out of which radiate his chief distinctive writings. He would bring us back to man's original, intuitional, unobstructed communion with the divine fountain-head. The variations upon this theme wind through his entire career and mark the stages of its development. And let it be added that such a message was most needful for his time and people, and it is by no means yet superannuated.

At this point, then, it is in place to restate somewhat more explicitly the three salient Periods of Emerson's Biography—putting stress upon the Emersonian unit of thought as it unfolds through these different phases.

*The First Period* is his young manhood, during which the religious chiefly, but also in part the secular, tradition of his time is appropriated and accepted, yet with an ever-increasing protest and reaction against it till he breaks with it and asserts his independence of form while affirming the spirit. This we call the Apprenticeship of Emerson.

*The Second Period* is his middle-age when he becomes anti-traditional in religion with a strong

polemic tendency, and is borne forward to antagonism against all institutional forms—political, social, economic, even domestic. Thus he universalizes his negative attitude to the religious institution; but he emphasizes still the positive side of his doctrine—inspiration, spontaneity, the immediate God. This is the time of his productive Genius, crowning him with his permanent literary worth and imparting his remedial power—the tonic Emerson, whose grand stimulating energy now lies in his anti-traditional spirit.

*The Third. Period* is old-age (somewhat early with Emerson) during which he shows signs of reconciliation with tradition and its established institutions, even if this new harmony of his be not complete. Still he comes to think that the transmitted form, especially that of the State, may be the conduit of the down-flowing God, as well as the individual. But his creativity is at an end, he becomes largely a return upon his once productive self, a reminiscence of his former originality. So we may call him the reconciled Emerson, as he rounds out his life's drama.

Such we prefigure to be the evolutionary sweep of Emerson's innermost life-unit in its triple round, the soul of his soul in its ultimate form and fulfillment. It is getting to be generally conceded that Emerson is our greatest scribe, our literary Great Man, who as his distinctive vocation wrought the written word cre-

actively, in truth our supreme Occidental pen-wielder. As such he is not only a worthy, but a necessary object of study.

Emerson has often been designated not inaptly as the modern or American seer. He is, in accord with his deepest spiritual attribute, a prophet; and his prophecy at last turns back upon himself, and prophesies just *him*, becoming thus autobiographic at the very source of his Genius. Plainly the prophetic limit is drawn upon him, and he remains a forecast rather than a fulfillment. In his highest vision he scatters intimations of something beyond him, of a consummation greater than he is. The oracle he proclaims, not the performance; hence he is necessarily somewhat enigmatic, especially to those who do not know beforehand what he means. Not without a subtle self-foretelling did he poetize the Egyptian Sphinx, and place his riddlesome poem as the prelude to his first book of verse. Modern editors have removed the Oriental monster, half man, half beast, from the doorway of his temple of song, and tucked it off somewhere to one side. Still it is there in front, and will not away; not removable by a mere translocation.

Often we shall seek to raise to the light this dark subterranean treasure of presage and presentiment in Emerson, and even to suggest at times some outline or perchance order of what his dispersed vision is trying to foreshow. He

frequently hints that he is more prescience than science, more anticipation than realization, more the precursor than the accomplisher, more har-binger than harvester—in fine a John the Baptist, whom who is to come after?

Into one kind or form of writ he evolves at his culmination, the Essay, which is not merely Emersonian but Emerson, yea the sublimated, quintessential Emerson, distilled and concentrated from the less ripened or more diluted drops trickling from the writer's brain-pan along a line of many years. The Essay grew to be the most intimate and purest expression of Emerson's soul-world, acclaiming the supreme marriage of his Poetry and Philosophy in one happy household.

Emerson is, accordingly, in his spiritual sovereignty the Essayist; indeed we might call him as a whole the Essay, which thus rises the all-irradiating luminary over his entire Biography. So it comes that we have given to our book the name of *Essay*, after Emerson's cardinal work and excellence, which name may also hint his discursive and even his prophetic character, as he foreshortens in quick sketchy dashes things yet to be consummated. Moreover this attempt of ours seeks to embrace his whole career from start to finish, hence the added title *Emerson's Life-Essay*.

# Part First

## Emerson's Apprenticeship.

(1803-1835.)

Apprenticeship we designate the First Period of Emerson, whose function is now to get acquainted with the prescribed world into which he was born, and with which he is to build the fore-court of his life's temple. Apprenticed he now is to acquire the transmitted means of the culture of his time; he has to be reared and educated after the pattern handed down, and to be trained to an ancestral vocation; thus the present Period is essentially his Apprenticeship to Tradition. He must at first get hold of the educative instrumentalities of his own and his age's evolution, in order to transcend them and to rise into his unique individual fulfillment.

Somewhere about thirty-two years does this preliminary task occupy him, from his birth till

his second marriage, and settlement at Concord. Manifestly this is a time of outer preparation and inner discipline for his supreme work, which is to follow. Moreover he wins through this experience his distinctive world-view which he will afterwards apply to many subjects. It is also a movement from dependence on the past to independence in thought and conduct; from prescriptive observance he slowly stiffens to individual self-reliance, his favorite category. In general he unfolds from an outer commanded soul to an inner liberated spirit, and starts to express this new-won liberty both in its positive and negative aspect. And let us not forget—for he never forgot it—that God-sent gift of economic liberty, that primal enfranchisement from life's first needs, the free gift of freedom's very condition, which he received gratis at the close of his Apprenticeship. A reward of the past we may value it, and still more an earnest of the future.

We are, however, to note with due care that while he is traveling through this realm of prescription, there runs alongside it or rather underneath it an ever-increasing stream of protest and of denial quite parallel. Still this opposition is never boisterous, but rather secretive, at least in its earlier stages; such dissent seems a steady quiet growth of an original seed-corn, till it finally bursts its bud into the full flower. A deeply negative germ lurks in Emerson quite from the beginning; he was a born skeptic in certain di-

rections, hence his youthful love of Montaigne, who fed an inner native hunger. The challenger of the inherited beliefs must not be left out of his boyhood. Still Emerson never gets to be a fire-breathing world-stormer in frantic revolt, never a human volcano in his destructive eruption against the established order, never a maddened Byron, never a youthful Goethe or Marlow in mighty upheaval.

It is a peculiar trait of Emerson that he leaves the impression of classic placidity on the surface, even of a restful imperturbability when his agitation is most furious underneath. So it comes that he appears a rather smooth young Titan, venting his Titanic mood of rebellion against the old Gods in classic ease. Emerson was endowed by nature with a reposeful exterior and serenity in the midst of hottest battle. In his mother's household he seems never to have been subjected to any violent repression of his youthful effervescences, which often rouses the boy's outbreak; domestic tyranny was apparently quite absent from the home's authority. Perhaps the deeper and more internal was fermenting his opposition, which finally broke forth into the voice of denial and turned to a far-sounding clarion of war. "A trip-hammer with an Eolian attachment" has become one of his proverbs; still, in his case it was hardly the hammer which struck the strings of the harp, but the soft breath of the breeze. External manners remained to the

last a kind of sedative for the interior heat of a soul set on fire. Emerson's lawlessness was wonderfully placid, even lawful; the sweetest-tempered Anarch he would appear as his defiant words fell hissing-hot from his lips. But all this is the ripened fruit of his Second Period, into which his Apprenticeship is to unfold.

A life of drifting was this First Period for Emerson; the family moved a number of times, the home and its inmates changed frequently, the young man's employments varied considerably, finally he took a trip abroad. To these outer shiftings there corresponded inner fluctuations, and he found no anchorage till his Apprenticeship was over, when he settled at Concord, and his indenture to Tradition expired. But through all these mutations the cultural strand was never broken, he clung to his ideal, so often called by him through life "the Scholar," the creative master of the printed page and its manifold contents. He never sank himself into business or any special profession, though he tried several; even his traditional vocation he threw up after a brief experience. A tentative life this Period seems, circling over the earth till he settles down upon his perch at Concord.

Still this unanchored time, lasting quite a generation of years and overflowing with a diversity of experiences, has its salient crises constituting subordinate groups of events, which we shall call by the special name of Epochs. Accordingly we

intend to mark with decision the epochal turns in Emerson's career, as well as their large inclusive sweeps already entitled Periods. Thus we strive to keep before the reader's mind the capital joints in the organism of Emerson's life, which is verily universal, as is the human framework, and which, therefore, bears the impress of all biography, revealing the common structure of the same in its unitary process. Let us repeat this integrating thought: in the biographic revelation of the Emersonian one-self we are to see the image and the movement of the All-Self; thus is man approved the child of the Universe, bearing in his spirit its seal of creation.

In pursuance of such a plan we shall mark down in advance the three lesser turns or links of the chain which interlocks the First Period into one complete round of Emerson's evolution: these are its three Epochs.

I. His Traditional Schooling, which follows the scholastic precedents of the time; he runs in the old academic groove, and so passes his educational and professional novitiate which concludes with his ordination into a prescribed ministry. (1803-1829.)

II. His first grand Breach, which takes place against his transmitted calling; its sweep moves from his acceptance of to his alienation from his traditional world—a tremendous spiritual Explosion reverberating through his whole life. (1829-1832.)

III. His Flight and Return—his voyage of self-overcoming and the finding of his true vocation—

all of which may be summed up as his Recovery, in which he is also schooled to Tradition by his trip to the European Past. (1832-1835.)

Thus rounds out his Apprenticeship with the cessation of his drifting, with the stability of a home, and with the winning of his world-view. These decisive nodes of his First Period we shall emphasize in the three following Chapters.

I am well aware that this somewhat minute and purposed ordering of such a spontaneous and seemingly irregular growth as is a human life, will be regarded in certain quarters as too schematic and artificial, perchance as forced and fantastic. And Emerson following his native push for sudden separate glimpses, and putting chief stress upon immediate atomic inspirations, can be cited for many a fling at organized thought. Still in his deeper moments he was well aware of his own life's essential turning-points, and we shall take occasion to quote Emerson himself censuring his native lack of a pervasive order, and even suggesting his own stages. The more superficial conscious Emerson could be quite an ardent wooer of chaos, while the deeper unconscious Emerson was indwelt of the cosmos whose far-flashing imagery he often wields, and whose universal harmony was his constant longing.

As already indicated, for nearly a generation of years he was serving his Apprenticeship during which his task was to assimilate "the old carcass of tradition", as he afterward called it with a somewhat upturned nose at its ageing decay. Still

it was his germinal time of planting and nursing the seeds and indeed sprouts of all the fruit which the full-grown tree afterward bore. It was his baptism in the fount of past experience, the long testful search to find his true vocation, the winning of his basic viewpoint which he is to realize in word and deed, during the coming Second Period. Prospective, potential, acquisitional—but let us forward.

## CHAPTER FIRST

### Traditional Schooling

Emerson's prescriptive training may be conceived to last till the close of his academic and theological course; that is, till he was ordained with due ceremony as the regular minister of the Second Unitarian Church of Boston in 1829. This rather long First Epoch of Emerson's career, lasting as it does some twenty-six years, indicates the steadiness if not the slowness of his mental growth. He obtained the customary advantages of a Boston education, though his family was poor, even at times poverty-cursed to the point of lacking food and raiment. Probably no boy of his day had a better chance at learning, and it was no cause of harm that he had to give some effort of his own to his mind's garden, and to endure some privation.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on the 25th of May, 1803 in the old parish-house of the First Unitarian Church of Boston, of which his father had been minister at that date some four years. The latter, the Reverend William Emerson, was in turn the son of a minister also called William, who was located at Concord where he built the Old Manse, world-famous in letters and in war, for beside housing distinguished writers, it had

overlooked the battle-field of Concord on the memorable nineteenth day of April, 1775. And on the same day it saw the flash of that verily time-defying super-natural shot from an old squirrel gun which was "heard 'round the world," and has been shooting ever since, particularly in Yankeeland. The same Reverend William Emerson, the grandfather, was a fervid rebel in the cause of the American Revolution; so consuming was his revolt that he quit his pastorate at Concord the very next month after the Declaration of Independence—seemingly almost as soon as the news had arrived from Philadelphia—and hastened to join the army at Ticonderoga as chaplain, where he died shortly afterward of camp-fever. No wonder that young Waldo Emerson, after a good deal of wandering, will at last gravitate to that ancestral atmosphere of Concord for his abiding inspiration. It is sometimes said that the child inherits more from the grandfather than from his immediate parents; if so, Emerson was born a preacher, a scholar, and a revolutionist.

Nor must we forget another item in the mental outfit of this notable grandfather. He was a man of literary cultivation and creation; he not only read other people's poetry, but made some of his own, of which he failed not to have a good opinion. On his way to the battle-front he broke naturally into verse in which he saw "the outlines of a fine rhymester," possibly a foreshow in

himself of his distinguished grandson. He even indicates in a letter the fatal circumstance (not very clear to us now) but for which "I'm not sure I should have been a considerable poet." Such is the distant gleam of him preserv'd to the future by Mr. Cabot, Emerson's biographer.

Accordingly in the early Schooling of Emerson we are not to leave out the tradition of kinship which he breathed from his infancy. His Family, present and past, was his soul's first environment, and remained his most influential institution, though he often, revolter that he was, reacted against its influence, and could even deny its validity in extreme moments. Still the domestic tradition with its line of semi-heroic forbears kept the deepest hold upon him, when every other sort of tradition, religious, political, economic, social, educational, had been battered at in thought, and by him largely trampled underfoot. However, there was always left a loop-hole through which the institution might be at last rescued: that universal safety-valve variously called by him the Moral Sentiment, the Divine Efflux, the Soul's Inspiration, the Supernal Judge within, to whose dictatorship alone Emerson confessed obedience. No other autocracy or even authority he in his doctrine allowed.

## I.

## ANCESTRY

It is the theme which the students of Emerson must first grapple with: he is swathed round and round with ancestral memories reaching back six generations and confined practically to the one spot where the first progenitor settled. This was the Reverend Peter Bulkeley, of ancient family and considerable property in England, who was educated at the University of Cambridge, and, becoming a clergyman, was silenced for refusing to conform to the Anglican Church. Whereupon he quit the old country for New England in 1634 (hence he was not on board of the *Mayflower*) and pushed from the seacoast through the woods to Musketaquid, which savage rollicking Indian name he turned into docile Concord. There he, the first and greatest non-conformist of his blood, preached the primitive gospel undefiled by historic rites and dogmas, preluding the key-note of his illustrious descendant, Ralph Waldo, some two centuries later. Moreover he too employed the printed page, and wrote one of the earliest books of New England. A strong figure, gigantic though hazy of outline, he uprears in the dawn of a new civilization.

Such, then, was the family's first great ancestral break from native land and established religion, which indeed may be taken as a type of the time's movement. The life of the Puritan has

percolated through history in a line of daring conflicts—with England, with the Ocean, with the Indian, with the French, with the climate; at the same time especially raged the collision with himself and with his neighbor of a different conscience. But most deeply in him thrilled his political revolt from the mother-country with its consequent letting of kindred blood during the American Revolution. All this separative, rebellious history lay in the Emerson breed, was a part of the Emerson household, a strain of the Emerson consciousness. The boy Waldo from his infancy must have been suckled on the ancestral spirit of his family revealed at the recurring crises of its soul-testing experiences. The women of the house knew its story as well as the men, and told it more sympathetically to the listening youths who were chiefly under their care at home. Particularly his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, expert to the last atom on genealogical lore, Waldo Emerson has crowned with an evergreen garland of his fame-giving speech.

The attention to the ancestral past is characteristic of New England, and herein Emerson is the true child of his section. To be sure, all the old colonial territory, Northern as well Southern, is addicted to the same tendency. The family-tree is still the most highly cultivated vegetable in Yankee-land, and the Emersonian specimen of it is no exception. Doubtless offshoots have migrated to the West and thereby have relaxed if not lost their con-

nection with the old stock. But the main trunk of Emerson's family remained rooted in the soil of Concord and its environs for more than two hundred years, just while the vast stream of migration was swirling over the Alleghanies into the Mississippi Valley. But neither Emerson nor any of his direct forbears ever took part in that most considerable nation-evolving movement of American history. That one primordial deed of old Peter Bulkley in quitting his native sod and in grappling with the pioneer's life and its stalwart training, seems to have been enough for all his descendants in the line down to our Emerson, for they could not be brought to repeat it in spite of the tense allurements of an adventure similar to the heroic pattern, but not equal. Thus on the one traditional spot they kept up the long tradition of the family defiant of Tradition. For this reason we have to think that Emerson, though of course a born American, was never completely Americanized; he never went through the most characteristic and formative experience of his native country—not he, nor his father nor his father's fathers up to their apostle Peter, also bearing Heaven's keys, who was their first, and in truth their only pioneer, as well as their most daring denier of prescription. The result was Emerson never shared in the town-building and the state-making, which formed the supreme institutional discipline of the men who moved to the West. He received his nation, state, and distinctively his community as gifts from his

ancestors; he never had to create nor yet to re-create the social order around him and above him. Possibly it was for this reason that he felt somewhat averse to it, and hardly appreciated its significance in the new world's training. His socialistic and at times even anarchic bent was in part his reaction against political and economic as well as religious forms which had been imposed upon him from without by a centuries inheritance. To be sure he protested against Tradition, but he never would quit his traditional world.

It may be also added that Emerson during his entire life till the Civil War showed a singular aloofness from the governing powers and the development of the total country. He has nothing distinctive to say of the Constitution and the Union and their founders, nothing of the great Virginians who administered the republic in its infancy and made it a marching success. George Washington even is not one of his Representative Men, for all of whom he goes to Europe in his book. In fact New England, especially Emerson's Boston, was more active and whole-hearted in the destruction of the old order than in the construction of the new. She threw the tea overboard as her typical deed, good as far as it went, but not creative. She sulked after the Revolution over the Southern dominance and talked of another separation, with perchance a new cargo of tea thrown overboard. Herein Emerson was sympathetic with his section. In his Diary he has little but sneers

for the rulers of the land, seeing their weaknesses, but hardly appreciating their great positive work, its difficulties and its successes.

Hence we have to confess that Emerson, our greatest literary man, has not given expression to the Nation as such in its entirety; provincial he remained during his best years, a New Englander in his highest utterance, and it is from this view-point that we have to consider him in his supremacy, yea, in his universality, for he in his way has raised to universal import his limited New England. Still it should not be forgotten that Emerson was nationalized by the mighty upheaval of 1860, though he was then past his creative period, and was slowly sinking into the eclipse of his noontide powers. Hence he has left no adequate expression of this stage of his development; he no longer could bring to bloom the original flower of his Genius. To use his own image, the God Terminus had called his limit.

Thus Emerson has a deep ever-flowing undercurrent, not exactly of ancestral worship, but of ancestral over-lordship, and perchance somewhat of the prejudice of the clan—very human and not unlovely in his case. He, the foremost foe of tradition, still remains traditional in his town-life and in his kin-life, to both of which we shall find him recurring with proud celebration at intervals all his days. One of his deeper life-lines is this, distinctly to be limned, but not to be blackened.

## II.

## THE PARENTAL HOME

It is recorded that William Emerson, the son of the Revolutionary William Emerson of Concord, already mentioned, and also minister, was married "to the pious and amiable Ruth Haskins" of Boston, in 1796. The young clergyman was transferred three years later from a poor living in the country to a wealthier church in Boston, where he remained till his death in 1811. It would seem that he was a man of good but not distinguished parts, doing his work acceptably to a somewhat critical constituency, hardly rising above the transmitted level, and not sinking below it. His name is dug up from the oblivion of old records and is spoken to-day, because he was father to an undying son, who reflected upon his parents a gleam of his own immortality.

Still for the sake of that son, the most striking fact in the father's life should be set down. He has left in writing that he intended to quit the rather close Boston life and move to Washington where he would establish what may be called a Free Church "in which there was to be no written expression of faith," quite without dogma, "and no subscription to articles"; then in such an enfranchised atmosphere he would "administer the rituals of Christianity to all who would observe them without any profession except such observance." A daring leap, which he did not and could not take

at that time and in that place; but later his son Waldo will take it even in Boston; with what epoch-turning consequences will hereafter be told. Just now we shall simply mark the prophetic thought of the young preacher William Emerson forecasting in purpose the deed which his heir, natural and spiritual, will realize.

The father in the midst of his ripest activity passed away at the age of forty-two, leaving to the mother the care and education as well as the physical maintenance of five boys, the eldest of whom was hardly ten years old. Friends gave help, still she had to keep boarders and largely did her own work, with the aid of her children. Thus Waldo Emerson as a boy had his training in kitchen practice, even in washing dishes. It is handed down that the family was sometimes actually without food, when Aunt Mary Moody Emerson would nerve up the boys by "stories of heroic endurance." Raiment too fell short, when Waldo and his brother Edward had but one great-coat between them for protection against the fierce New England winter. Still all the children went to school and gained a Boston education, probably then the best of the kind anywhere. This severe discipline of early poverty wove a telling strain of experience into Emerson's subsequent life. He knew the value of economic freedom to the man who wishes to follow his own supreme call. Precious frugality at the start taught him the lesson of true independence. When later he established his fortress at Concord, it could

never be starved into capitulation by any adverse stroke of fate.

Thus Emerson's early schooling was bravely fought for, and had to be won against the grip of hunger upon his throat. That furious wrestle with spare diet during his growing years would seem to have left its permanent mark upon his physical system. Did he not always have, like the thinker Cassius, a lean and hungry look? Whatever be the cause, all the rest of the children drooped gradually graveward, except Waldo and an elder brother. And Waldo during his young-manhood appears more or less of an invalid, who was at last forced to take an ocean voyage which not only rescued him to health but indurated him to exposure and labor, till at last all-releasing old-age covered him over with its No More.

When he had reached ten years, Waldo entered the Boston Latin School with a boy's eager look forward to Harvard College. But in 1814 Hunger's clutch pressed still tighter, the cause being the war with Great Britain whose cruisers cut off supplies by sea. Flour rose to seventeen dollars a barrel, and other provisions in proportion. The result was that the family had to flee to the country and was domiciled at Concord for a year with the kindred there. That straitened household produces in the reader an uncanny feeling of an ever-present shortcoming of life's necessities, which is planting the seeds of the family's looming tragedy. From such a fate, however, young Waldo, after much suffering

and anxiety through a good many clouded years, is happily ransomed. But amid the stress and distress of this strenuous life-battle rises the form of a stalwart woman, Aunt Mary, already mentioned, who brings much inspiration and some cash to those sinking hearts. To her let an appreciative word be consecrated.

### III.

#### MARY MOODY EMERSON

The aunt of Waldo Emerson, sister of his father, born in 1775, deserves to have her features chiseled and her bust set up in a prominent niche of her nephew's biography. Through his life-long diary, besown everywhere with his soul's seeds, he often bids us glimpse the all-coercive form of his aunt Mary, and hear her moulding thoughts as well as her pounding words. Out of dozens of similar sentences, let the following one from his later life be selected as typical: "She must always occupy a saint's place in my household; and I have no hour of poetry or philosophy, since I knew these things, into which she does not enter as a genius." Thus his chief spiritual realms are originally hers.

She is, accordingly, acclaimed the Muse of that peculiar Emersonian composite of religion, poetry and philosophy—the three interfused elements of his nature and of his achievement. To him she was the towering personality of the family present and past for two centuries. To be sure, the competition

before he came was not great; no ancestor ever rose much above the average level of local fame; a national reputation cannot be found uprearing along the line of worthy and learned ministers. She was the one genius of the entire kinship old and new. Thus the supremely inspired one of the blood, the best representative of the creative effluence from above was a woman.

She stood in close formative relation to Emerson and his brothers, when they all were young and in the process of being educated. Into their traditional schooling she injected an original strain, an elemental power of her own. She even wrote the boys' prayers, and these "still sound in my ear with their prophetic and apocalyptic ejaculations," confessed the prophet Emerson many years later. And the young preacher Emerson emphasizes that "when I came to write sermons for my church," the chief source drawn upon was "my remembrance of her conversation and letters." He had but to repeat the lofty dictations of her spirit. In 1837 he wrote of her: "The depth of the religious sentiment which I knew in my Aunt Mary, imbuing all her genius . . . was itself a culture, an education." Decidedly does he ascribe to her first discipline the divine descent and overflow permeating all his writings.

Still Emerson did not accept her doctrine in full. She was for him but an outlet tapping strait-coated ancient Puritanism and letting it flow into loose-zoned modern Liberalism. An intermediary he de-

scribes her (1837): "The genius of that woman, the key to her life is in the conflict of the old and new ideas in New England." She clung to both sides, overarching them and conjoining them even in their strife, and thus she became a bridge for her nephew, undoubtedly her spiritual son, who could thereby pass over into his appointed heritage. That turned out for the man also God's bridge from Heaven to Earth, across which he travels hundreds of times, telling then of his journey. Ultimately it is just this trip which he describes in his writings, and he first heard it told at Aunt Mary's knee in all the rapture of a poetic imagination.

However, the divine seeress had her devil, as usual. Hear again her reporter's record: She was "the heir of whatever was rich and profound in the old religion," yet with her passionate piety was coupled "the fatal gift of penetration," which landed her into denial, "and she was thus a religious skeptic"—a combination which we shall often note in her soul's child, Waldo. Listen to another of his repetitions: "She held on with both hands to the faith of the past generation . . . yet all the time she doubted and denied it"—she too being dragged hellward by the fiend Mephistopheles. Hence there runs an infernal streak through her diary, as when she cries out in despair: "I have given up, the last year or two, the hope of dying"—verily an echo of the thunder-borne Dantesque ejaculation of the doomed: *Leave ye all hope behind.* She persisted for years in having her bed

made in the form of a coffin, which haunted her also in daytime, since she would see its image cast on the sidewalk before her from a neighboring church steeple. Unique Calvinistic power of that religious structure, was it not? Even her shroud she made which grisly old Death refused to use, and so she took it for a night-gown or a day-gown or even a riding-gown on horseback, until it was worn out. "Then she had another made up," lectures her spirit's fosterling, Emerson, about her in his late life, and further caps his eulogy: "I believe she wore out a great many." In ghoulish glee for the grave's imagery she puts Heine to flight, invoking her own rotten corpse: "O dear worms, how they will some sure time take down this tedious tabernacle, most valuable companions, by gnawing away the meshes which have chained"—my mind! No wonder Emerson thought of Dante's *Inferno* in reading some of her grewsome outbursts. And we may here note a difference in manner and power of expression. Emerson never wrote in such a volcanic style, he was too measured and classic; but Aunt Mary often overflowed into a lava-stream of Carlylese before Carlyle. She could in the mood damn all creation, impartially including herself: "Folly follows me as the shadow does the form." Very unexpected is the reader's meeting with such a Titanic character in the Emersonian kinship. A more original elemental thrust of Nature lay in her than in Emerson himself. But it seems she could not bring into shape the outpour of her rule-

less energies; she began and ended with a sort of germinal chaos in writ and speech, void of any plastic gift. But such primordial manna appears to have been the best aliment for the growing talent of Emerson; indeed we may judge from his statements that he often went back to take fresh creative draughts from this first fountain of his Genius. She too kept a Diary, out of which he records himself sipping with Bacchic exaltation.

In spite of her courtship of Death's horrors—the only courtship she ever indulged in, for the wooing of a living man she would not tolerate, and so she remained a peripatetic nun of Puritanism—she persisted in clinging to hated life some eighty-eight years. But age could not wither her or stale her flamboyant powers, and hence Thoreau's exaltation: "Miss Mary Emerson is here, the youngest person in Concord, though about eighty." Albeit Emerson calls Death "the Muse of her genius," with whom was yoked an inspired Poverty, still both these friends knew how to slip from her eager clutch, and escaped for long from her loving hug. A female Prometheus affined to the old order yet defiant of it—she would allow nobody to abuse her dear New England Calvinism but herself. She quarreled with her budding nephew Waldo for his Transcendentalism, yet she was transcendental before him and really taught him. Most fantastical of human specimens, she would burn up in her scoffs Emerson's fantasticalities, "his high airy speculations," which were her own, though a good

deal trimmed. And so she roamed boarding around and falling out with her board over a good part of New England.

As her much-wooed suitor Death did not marry her and with her take the wedding-trip to dusky Dis, till 1863, she must have seen the rise and the culmination of her illustrious nephew's greatness. He has ennobled her with many lofty, even if inconsistent titles—Muse, Genius, Sybil, Saint, Prophetess, and the bodeful Cassandra. She was like him an insatiable Diarist, scribbling "endless diaries whose central theme is her relation to the Divine Being"—which is not far away from his central theme also. Moreover she was the depository of the family's sacred folk-lore, the store of "hoarded traditions," transmitted orally and piously recounting "so many godly lives and godly deaths of sainted kindred" from the earliest settlement of the savage land—the unprinted Lives of the Saints, a Book of Puritan Martyrology recalling with sympathy the miraculous interventions of Providence and the raptures of the expiring breath of the Blessed. All this sacred material of family tradition was hers—she being its special custodian and dispenser.

And here it should be added that Aunt Mary was a furious believer in war's fury, proclaiming herself Death's very Muse and disdaining the sentimental mushiness of the Lord's pacificism. Militant she was in her own right; her life seemed one long campaign of many pitched battles mid much

marching and counter-marching, while war's alarms resounded about her wherever she camped.

More than in any other personality was Emerson inclined to see in her his distinctive selfhood foreshowing his doctrine like a female John the Baptist. Rather gingerly he lets out his secret conviction, inasmuch as "I sometimes fancy I detect in her writings . . . her organic dislike to any interference, any mediation between her and the Author of her being"—she really rejects the divine Mediator, though she pays "courtly and polite homage to the name and dignity of Jesus." Verily she, though madly denying it, was the herald of Emersonianism in advance of Emerson, whom we shall find to the last the disliker, yea the antagonist of the Christian idea of Mediation—on this side a kind of Christian Antichrist. Her solitary individual life he celebrated as if quite like his own; as hers, so is his supreme relation that of "the alone to the Alone."

Emerson it would seem by his passing allusions, must have read a good deal in his Aunt Mary's Diary, of which he absorbed not a little into his own. A vast creative protoplasm it appears, quite formless but perchance formable; he took it and wrought it over after his own impress. We surmise that his Journals likewise were influenced by hers,—not imitated, but prompted. For his too are protoplasmic, showing the first gushes of his creative work, these being afterwards elaborated into

his higher literary forms, such as the Essay and the Address.

A demonic character we have to conceive her, with a strain of Promethean revolt ever seeking to burst her transmitted Puritanic fetters; yet ever finding herself chained to the adamant of the New England Caucasus. The most influential figure in Emerson's early environment we may regard her, and the most colossal in native power, if we dare look at her through his eyes. As I read him, he deemed her genius mightier than his own, though quite unbalanced, deeply disordered, and hence impossible of corresponding fruition. More Titanic, more elemental in cosmic energy than he could be, but he was gifted with order, with industry, with Yankee common-sense to sober his God-coercing idealism. But she was in her very magnitude an enormous grotesque—really a comic character. Hence Emerson with all his admiration could say of her end: "And when at last her release arrived, the event of her death had really such a comic tinge in the eyes of every one who knew her that her friends feared. they might at her funeral"—do what—laugh.

Emerson's Aunt Mary seems for a time to have been supplanted by another woman-character quite as towering but more efficacious—Margaret Fuller, also a right Titaness in revolt against Zeus and the established Olympian order. She became closely interwrought with Emerson's most creative Epoch (1835-1845), as he narrates the fact, and

did much, probably the most, for the propagation of his message. We are inclined to believe that the strongest personalities in Emerson's nearer environment were these two women. Name the man of his circle who was the equal of either in the gift of original, elemental genius. But both lacked the gift of formative expression, perchance through their revolt against transmitted form. Emerson has written biographies of both.

## IV.

## EMERSON AT COLLEGE

In those critically educative years of adolescence, between fourteen and eighteen, Emerson passed through his collegiate course—a time of life's changes physical and mental. It was a break from home with its dominant feminine influence into a purely masculine world, somewhat monastic, with its own goal and spirit. The object was to acquire the accepted training in the humanities—languages ancient and modern, including some science, literature and philosophy. Thus the youth was ushered into a strange communal life which he also had to learn about and to work in, this being by no means a negligible part of the curriculum. From 1817 till 1821 Emerson was a student of Harvard College, already venerable with nearly two hundred years of existence.

This institution of learning was not only hoary,

but somewhat mossy; it still clung largely to tradition in education, being chiefly patterned after the English High School of the Renaissance. Excellence it had, as far as it went. But already in Emerson's time new ideas and new methods had been slowly percolating through the old body, being introduced by two or three professors who had studied in German Universities. Emerson especially mentions Edward Everett as a coming light-bearer from abroad as well as a beacon in himself, through his native gift of expression. But the College as a whole plodded along in the ancient routine. Men of talent and erudition were certainly among his instructors, fulfilling well their prescribed duty, perchance overflowing it at times; but the young aspirer seems to have met in that faculty no man of over-mastering genius, no profoundly original character. I venture to think that Emerson on his graduation day, receiving his diploma and glancing down the line of professors, could not help musing to himself: Not one of you in creative potency, and in mind-building influence over me is the equal of my Aunt Mary.

Still the social and educational dominance of Harvard streams pro and con through Emerson's entire life, stimulating him especially to antagonism. Not a little of his best discipline lay in overcoming the economic difficulties on his path. He largely earned his way by hiring as messenger boy to the President, by tutoring backward stu-

dents, and even by waiting on the table at the College Commons. Later he taught school in vacation. He gained some money by prizes in composition and in declamation. Significant are the repeated donations of money which his mother received for his education and that of his brothers, showing the universal interest in schooling. Thus his college-course was also a battle with poverty, which left its marks, if not its scars upon him ever afterward. His main ambition at this time seems to lie in the direction of eloquence: like the majority of American boys he would become an orator. He had already apparently come under the spell of Daniel Webster, greatest of his kind in New England. Everett's rhetoric was honey to him, which he chased after at every opportunity. Very sweet, too, must have been the triumph felt in receiving the Boylston prize for declamation, thirty bright dollars, which, however, had to pay for, not his mother's new shawl as intended, but the family's bread already eaten. He had a hand in forming a club whose main object was to practice in extemporaneous speaking. Whether this oratory was to fulminate from the pulpit or the hustings, he probably did not then determine even to himself. The training made good later in the Emersonian Lyceum.

Naturally reminiscences were eagerly sought in his aged days of greatness from his still living fellow-students concerning the most influential man of thought that Harvard ever produced. The re-

sult on the whole indicates that Emerson was hardly up to the average of studentship. A famous classmate of his, Josiah Quincy, declared that to him Emerson gave "no sign of the power that was fashioning itself for leadership in a new time." In a class of 59 he stood 30, hitting the middle as near as possible; but his son intimates that his scholarship by itself would have put him still lower, since he received ranking credit for his unblemished deportment. A good boy but a poor scholar—he quite failed in Mathematics, but did take a fancy to Greek, seemingly not with much violence, liking the teacher, Professor Everett, better than the subject. Still Emerson shows a strain of Greek serenity in writ and deed, native to him seemingly rather than acquired from deep study of the Hellenic spirit.

We see by his Journal that he was already choice of word and phrase, selecting the best examples of both from his desultory browsing of books. Poetical expressions he jotted down, striking passages were paraphrased and probably memorized; his sense of style was distinctly cultivated. In especial he copied often the idiomatic turns from the letters of his Aunt Mary, who must have been his ideal of lofty utterance. It is said that he knew Shakespeare almost by heart when he entered College, evidently attracted by the poet's word-power and grandiose expression. Really Montaigne gave his most palatable mental pabulum at this time, and he never got over his

dear skeptic. He neglected Locke and Paley in the prescribed course, and feasted on Plato and Plutarch outside of the oppressive routine. Reserved, isolated, introverted—he seemed, said an observer, “to dwell apart as if in a tower,” very like the later man ensconced in his Castle of Defiance at Concord, his defensive and offensive rampart.

So not only Harvard, but the world asks, how did this great man of ours get to be? Just now we probe into that transitional time which is coming to be known as the adolescent stage. In outward appearance he is following the transmitted curriculum of study, but inwardly he is starting his own way. Placid on the surface but in a protest underneath, he takes two courses, the prescribed and the self-chosen—a real regularity but an ideal vagabondage. The dullard was on top, but the genius was secretly at work.

The great national event of this time was the Missouri Compromise of 1820. But Emerson was not stirred by it nor was his environment. It concerned mainly the West, to whose hope there was little response in Boston; for the West was then looked upon with doubt if not dislike by New England. And the College was apathetic about the Nation, while in religion it led a more negative than constructive life, whereof Emerson is to cull no small experience for his future task.

So the ancestral youth goes to the ancestral College and acquires a fair modicum of ancestral

lore—a pretty heavy dose of Tradition. Still we can feel that Emerson already in his teens was secretly bent on being something more than the son of his fathers, than the offshoot of a pedigree. It would seem that his main push during collegiate years was toward public-speaking, and the external incentive thereto was very strong, for this time saw the supreme efflorescence in Massachusetts of American oratory culminating in Webster, who, as central was encircled by numerous brilliant, though lesser luminaries. Eloquence was then the most original, beautiful, and coveted utterance of human spirit, cultivated by the orator, preacher, lecturer, even by the professor. Herein Emerson at College partook of the special aspiration of the time: he would be a speaker, and such was he to the close of his active days. But ere this ambition could be fulfilled, he had to stem the ever-returning pressure of poverty by a more handy vocation—school-teaching.

## V.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER EMERSON

The graduate Emerson, stepping out of his academic hall into the world, finds himself and his next of kin hungry, or at least threatened with lack of bread. He seizes the first possible opening to make a few dollars by a kind of work in which he had already had some experience—that of teaching. Thus for nearly a quadrennium (1821-1825) Emerson

turns schoolmaster, with considerable financial profit, but with little pedagogical success, as he reports on his case.

During his entire college course Emerson had felt himself compelled at intervals to interrupt his regular task and to teach school. In the Freshman year we find by a letter that he is doing work of that kind at Waltham; already he looks forward to the day "when he, having graduated, will study divinity and keep school at the same time." Such were the two vocations which he had then in mind—one the underling of the other. And in his Senior year he again had to quit Cambridge and to ply his schoolcraft "in my log-house on the mountains" whose locality he kept so concealed that his intimate friend and biographer, Mr. Cabot, failed to identify it. But his Journal (dated December 15, 1820, and hence a few months before his graduation) speaks of his presence in "a hot, stinking, dirty A B spelling-school" out of which he has to run into the fresh air, with gratitude to God.

But when he had graduated, his elder brother William, who had built up a successful school for young ladies which occupied his mother's house in Boston, took him as assistant. In this work he remained somewhat less than four years. He celebrates his release under date of January 25, 1825: "I have locked up my school, and affect the scholar at home." He no longer needed to teach in order to fend off want: "Ambitious hopes have been engendered by the increase of value of the old prop-

erty on Main Street.” Then we hear of this height of pedagogical good-luck: “I have earned two or three thousand dollars, which have paid my debts” and brought other blessings of freedom. Some of the school’s funds were applied to sending his brother William to Germany for study. The grip of poverty no longer clutches the Emerson household, and Ralph Waldo can now start to take the next step in his career—preparation for his ancestral calling, the ministry.

Thus young Emerson will travel a new significant arc of his life’s round, undergoing nearly another quadrennial discipline, which now takes the form of imparting the traditional instruction he has received. From a wholly masculine environment at College, he is suddenly whelmed again into a purely feminine association, but very different from that of his home. At first he was the assistant, but during the last year in the absence of his brother he was the principal. That school gave him a new experience beside the pedagogical; in the presence of the other half of humanity, he could hardly help feeling his own halfness. Long afterwards when an old man, he dared broach a little of his ancient emotion: “I was nineteen, had grown up without sisters, and in my solitary and secluded way of living, had no acquaintance with girls,” and hence not much with himself. But listen: “I still recall my terrors at entering the school, my timidities at French, the infirmities of my cheek, and my occasional admiration of

some of my pupils"—O Emerson, go on, do not stop there, betray us not in such a wrench of expectancy!—But at the psychologic moment he breaks into Latin, very ambiguous Latin too—and quits the confessional of love for something indifferent, never again to pick up the lost thread in any direct confidential communication to his eager biographers. His writings give hardly more than an amatory lisp, now and then audible to an eavesdropping posterity.

Still we may find some remote hint of his feelings at this time in the lines headed Good-bye which at present stand in front of his poetical works as a kind of overture to the musical Emerson, if there be such. He has himself dated them as written while he kept "school in Boston," but had taken flight from the city, and was living in a rural suburb called Canterbury. He acknowledged in them his juvenile melancholy, but is silent as to its cause:

Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home!  
Thou art not my friend and I'm not thine. . . .  
Long have I been tossed like the driven foam:  
But now proud world! I'm going home.

What tossed him so stormily in that peaceful girls'-school, the reader queries. But such is his present attitude toward the world in general, and specially toward that cloistered abode, which contained a number of the well-conditioned young

ladies of the city, who strangely have inspired their youthful teacher with this awful fit of disgust at all mankind. The brief poem, however, has a universal worth as Emerson's prelude to challenge to society, and forecasts the man who about a dozen years later will erect his fortress of world-defiance at Concord where he, taking his Walden ramble, "in the bush with God may meet."

Moreover Emerson was probably not the complete teacher. In school-work he compares himself with his brother Edward, whose "mind was method, his constitution was order, and the tap of his pencil could easily enforce silence and attention. I confess to an utter want of this same virtue." Not wholly unjust self-disparagement is this; Emerson by nature could not drill, but would stimulate the pupil, who thus was likely to fall short in examination. Already when he was tutoring in his Freshman year, the President of Harvard relieved him, evidently because he talked too much poetry and too little paradigm. Repetition and routine, very needful for the average learner, were his horror, and he would spring to spontaneity and immediate overflow, also important for the class-room. Thus Emerson was but half of a teacher, doubtless the better half. The part of the drill-sergeant was left out, whose "duties were never congenial to my disposition." Hence he pathetically exclaims: "I am a hopeless schoolmaster."

Yet the strange fact recurs often that Emerson longed to be a teacher of the higher order, preferring this to any other vocation. And teach what specialty, think ye? Not philosophy, not poetry directly; Emerson's supreme ambition was to be Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard. Oratory was his first love in the practical, and when that could not be, in the pedagogical, domain, and this desire for a Professorship seems to have persisted quite to the end of his career. He said late in life that there never was a time in which he would not have accepted a chair of rhetoric at Cambridge. Speech-making Daniel Webster towered up before him the grand oratorical demigod, quite as this statesman did to the rapt vision of Carlyle, who, imaging him as the statuesque Parliamentary Hercules, has hewn out his mountainous features in craggy but memorable outlines (see one of Carlyle's letters to Emerson, I, p. 260.) Next to Webster followed Edward Everett in Emerson's admiration of the ideal speaker. But Nature denied to Emerson's word-organ the primal thunder of the transcendent orator, as it denied to him the ultimate native energy and constructive power of the poet. Still he made verses and spoke orations to the last, which have not failed to assert their place in the World's Literature. On the whole, the younger Emerson seemed to take Webster's form and utterance as the incarnation of the loftiest human presence. Time slowly disillusioned the youthful idealist, and at

last turned him to an opposite excess of depreciation.

Thus our verdant graduate, girl-shy Waldo Emerson, faced quite a new experience of life, his own as well as that of others, and took up the same into himself during these years. Women he had known chiefly in his mother and Aunt Mary, both over him in age and authority. But now he, the bashful young fellow, seated upon his chair of commanding perch, gets to see gay young femininity in a very testing way for him and them. This knowledge of Eve's Paradise will trace itself fitfully and secretively in his writ and in his action. But the trial has ended; schoolmastering was but a makeshift in his case as in that of his father and grandfather, both of whom taught on their way to the ministry. Emerson herein has followed the ancestral example; and now he is ready to take the next step, still keeping to the old highway.

Well may he be thankful as he crosses over the bound of his twenty-second year; from the doorstep of home he has driven the ever-present wolf so long snapping its hungry jaws at him and his dear ones even round the dinner table. But disease still lurks in his bodily frame; a sense of personal evanishment haunts and probably colors his spirit permanently. It is certain that a strain of physical insufficiency runs through his present writing, as if he forefelt that existence with him was already on the ebb. And now follows a spell

of wandering spatially and spiritually, during which he appears to be dissolving into his elements—a time of will-less vagrancy, which at least has its training in letting him experience quite fully the perilous state from which he must recover himself, not only now but forever.

## VI

## THE ITINERANT EMERSON

Still another and a new quadrennial course (1825-1829) of discipline in life's university must next be outlined in Emerson's biography. This phase of him we might designate as his spell of vagabondage, outer and inner; a kind of drifting adversity it is which he has to endure and to overcome in order to reach his permanent fastness.

Thus the most straggling, broken, shredded portion of Emerson's career was strewn up and down the next four years. He had just passed through a steady, rather monotonous quadrennium, for his school anchored him practically to one spot and to regular duties, as well as to a continuous flow of human experience. But now the taut line seems to snap, and he begins to drift, the sport of fortune and of caprice. It is true that one purpose threads waveringly this entire time: he was preparing for his ancestral vocation though not without some throbs of hesitancy. Early in 1825 he entered the Divinity School at Cambridge. He records: "I go to my College

chamber to-morrow (February 9, 1825) a little better or worse since I left it in 1821." He looks back over his pedagogical intervals rather downheartedly, reproaching himself for the small result, especially for "my cardinal vice of intellectual dissipation." Still the schoolmaster has learned more than any of his pupils, being the most capable one (as time has shown) of the entire lot. But within a month ill-luck began to hound him, his health broke down, especially his eyes weakened so that he had to quit his studies and do hard work out of doors on his uncle's farm. Then he tutored for a while, yet soon found himself a peripatetic schoolmaster again drifting rapidly through three schools. Whereupon he quit the business, but only escaped into a new ailment, rheumatism, to which was added the menace of lung-disease. Still on October 10, 1826, he succeeded in getting "approbrated to preach," and soon thereafter he delivered his first sermon. Now he has reached the apex of his family's tradition, he is an ordained minister. Of theological lore not much is his; he said afterwards if he had been examined, the license would have been refused him, so fragile was his underpinning of scholarship. But in the eyes of that committee of Middlesex ministers to whom he applied, his long ministerial ancestry was an apostolic descent irrefragable.

But just on this sunlit mountain top of happy fortune begins to lower the dark frown of fate;

his triple malady of eyes, joints and lungs overwhelm him completely, and he is compelled to quit the stern New England winter for a softer climate. Accordingly he sails for Charleston, South Carolina, and reaches that city. But it is still too chill for his sensitive frame, and so he ships again for the more southern St. Augustine, Florida, in which old Spanish town he stays till spring. Then he sets face Northward; passing through Charleston and Washington, he reaches home in June, after an absence of a little more than six months.

Emerson has left some pretty full notes of this journey. It is strange how little the political trend of the time attracts the young American of twenty-three years. He has some passing observations on St. Augustine, but the deeper historic meaning of the acquisition of Florida he did not probe for. In the midst of new semi-tropical scenery and a strange society, he chiefly occupied himself with his own internal problems, throwing off some snatches of verse by the way. At Charleston he does not seem to have felt the rising tide towards secession in South Carolina. Already it was more pronounced there in 1827, than anywhere else in the United States (with the possible exception of his own section), and it became married with slavery especially through the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Perhaps Emerson did not feel disunion strongly, since he during his boyhood had heard it often threatened in his own

New England, where the war of 1812 and the embargo were very unpopular. But through the persuasive eloquence of the new protective tariff, she banished the doctrine of secession, which thence migrated to the South in which it took up its permanent abode, till slain by the Civil War. Quite isolated he goes his way; he seems to have found only one man for deeper converse, Achille Murat, nephew of the great Napoleon and son of one of his Marshals, now a planter in Florida. And not a woman, no love! So he exclaims in his Journal: "Wo is me! I pass in cold selfishness from Maine to Florida, and tremble lest I be destined to be a monk." It would seem, then, that Emerson was already considering his life of celibacy with a sort of terror, and resolving to quit it on the first good chance, which, we may premise, will in time drop on his path, and bring to an end this misery of solitary vagabondage.

Emerson, however, kept up his migratory habit after his return home; he refused to settle down in one spot, but scattered his sermons through various towns not too far from Boston. Sometimes his excuse was his weak lungs, but again he would write: "I have lost all sense of the mouse in my chest, am at ease." But he could not yet bring himself to accept a fixed place: "I have just refused an invitation to preach as candidate at Brighton. It is the third No to which I have treated the Church applicant or vacant." He could not renounce his preaching itinerancy,

as if his ideal were the old Methodist circuit-rider. He records in his Journal (July 10, 1828) "It is a peculiarity of humor in me, my strong propensity for strolling." Delightful is his feeling of freedom from any anchorage in space and time, and, too, in spirit. What is to become of the shoreless drifter, the centrifugal scatterling?

So he seems to have pushed on to the extreme point of his wayward vagabondism. But destiny has him in hand, and one of his preaching excursions carries him to Concord, New Hampshire (New Concord), where he beholds a youthful maiden of radiant form whose glance seems to have given a strong shock to his unsettled nature, from whose bewitching memory he cannot so easily recover. At any rate we find that he is again going to that same Concord with the purpose of sermonizing for three Sundays in succession—a long stay for him in one place. But what turn his most effective discourse has taken may be inferred from the following letter dated December 24, 1828: "I have the happiness to inform you that I have been now for one week engaged to Ellen Louisa Tucker who is the fairest and best of her kind. . . seventeen years old, and very beautiful by universal consent." And the next thing we hear is that the ever-flitting minister is getting ready to settle down to a steady charge, and stands gazing into the last sunset of his itinerant bachelorhood.

Thus his uncertain ministerial wandering has

concluded. Moreover he has passed through his long preparatory training, through school, college, church seminary, till now he has landed in his traditional vocation, with an outlook upon its prescribed course lasting the rest of his life.

Still we must not forget the secret protest, the countercurrent opposite to the surface stream. The intimacies of his Journal have often proclaimed his independence of tradition. "I love to be my own master when my spirits are prompt"—Then he cannot follow in the old routine. And hear this sigh: "If I were richer, I should lead a better life than I do;" that is, he would somehow break loose. He longs for money, not for what it is but for what it buys. "The chief advantage I should propose myself in wealth would be the independence of manner and conversation it would bestow, and which I eagerly covet" (Journal, July 10, 1828). Economic independence is his heart's desire that thereby he win his spirit's liberty. Shrewd Yankee that he is, he has his eye upon a comfortable hoard of cash, not as end but as means.

Here we conclude the First Epoch of Emerson's Life-Essay—that prolonged stretch of time which we have called his Traditional Schooling—the sown seedfield which is to grow and bear its crop in the future. The germs of the coming man we have sought to trace—hereafter some of them to ripen, but some of them to lie dormant, remaining mere unfulfilled aspirations.

Through all the turns of this Epoch can be heard the one dominant key-note: the struggle to appropriate the envioning world of prescription in character, in learning, and in vocation. His educational and professional novitiate he has passed, not without inner protest, let it be added for the sake of what is preparing.

In this place we should not forget to mention that the future great writer has begun to write small—to give wee prophetic gleams of his chief impending evolution. Deeper than his minister-ship starts to throb his mightier call, his master-ship in writ. The three primordial rudiments of his literary fulfillment are already astir and show their first push for utterance. He breaks forth into verse, he writes letters, and starts to keep a Journal which, as now printed begins with the year 1820, though “it had predecessors” which are at present lost, as we are told by its editors. Thus we may behold the microscopic atoms, or better, the original cells of Emerson the scribe in three quite distinct forms—the poetical, the epistolary, and the diarial. All three shapes, minute, separate, but elemental, keep bubbling up to the surface from his deepest underself till the cessation of his creative power. In this First Epoch they are tinged with its character of tradition and imitation; he has to learn to handle the weapons of his pency before attaining his own distinctive expression. From this point of view it may be said that the

spiritually molecular Emerson, his Genius in its protoplasmic formation, is better documented than any other great author, not excepting Goethe. And it would seem that all the Emersonian Archives are not yet in print.

Taking one more retrospect of this First Epoch, the last one for the present, we may look at it as a kind of Chinese wall of prescription which the aspiring youth has to build in and around his spirit, and then to surmount, leaving it behind as material transcended though ever present. From appropriation he is to rise to creation, re-making his own pre-suppositions, breaking with his own foregoneness. Thus we see that Emerson at his pastoral ordination faces a new turn of an Epoch with its new problem running thus: which is to be master of this pulpit, I or Tradition? Am I to prescribe to Prescription, or is Prescription to prescribe to me? Mounting to the sacred desk, he opens the battle which soon passes from within to without.

## CHAPTER SECOND

### THE EXPLOSION

Not too emphatic seems this titular word to designate the next Epoch of Emerson's life: the Explosion. He was established in the vocation to which during all the long time of toil and poverty he had looked forward as his chief goal—a vocation which appeared his not only by personal choice but by hereditary transmission. No longer a piece of driftwood he floated down the years; but firmly moored in one haven with its fixed round of duties, he might well cast a peaceful outlook upon the future. But it would seem that this stability was holding down the volcano within, condensing the fires which were at last to break forth into an epochal eruption. It looks as if his long and rather tristful wandering till he was twenty-six years old had been a safety-valve which allowed his hidden protests to blow off with little noise and no serious danger.

Significant of this Epoch in its brevity, since it lasts only a little more than three years (1829-1832), and culminates in the decisive and surprisingly sudden outburst which lands him over the border into a new stage. It thus stands in emphatic contrast to the preceding Epoch both in duration and character. It marks time with

a thunder-clap, and breaks loose from the long ministerial tradition, defying the prescribed family succession for six generations. To be sure, Emerson, as usual, showed few outer signs of violence in word or deed; he maintained his placid, stormless behavior, unwrathful and unvengeful. Still the earthquake shook him spiritually to the center of his being, and turned the stream of life into a new direction. Hence it was for him a grand act of separation, or at least the starting-point thereof—his first deliverance from the chilling hoar-frost of aged prescription.

Still we must not forget that Emerson during the greater part of this triennium, remained quiescent, fulfilling its prescribed duties, though slowly evolving and at times rumbling inwardly. He was fastened to his stake at the start, and only strayed within the length of his tether. Then he soon became tied even more firmly to another institution, the Family, through his marriage with Miss Tucker, though this bond was soon cleft by death. Thus the settled fixity of his environment continued to tighten about him for a couple of years till he felt ready to start the break for freedom. But when his new-formed tie of love had been shivered by a stronger hand than his own, he became more deeply moved to grapple with the transmitted fetters of his church.

We may note that this spontaneous overflow of a new idea and purpose into Emerson's soul

has its analogy to his fundamental doctrine, as he uttered it in many turns during his whole life. The present vibrant eruption becoming resistless in outpour, testifies its resemblance to the divine effluence which darted forth immediately from God and swept away all traditional landmarks from the spirit receiving its evangel. Such was now his coercive experience, which for him remained typical ever afterward. It illustrates the function of the Emersonian Oversoul streaming from upper unknown sources down into the individual soul and there inscribing its message.

Of the present Explosion we have already remarked low mutterings in Emerson's youth, premonitory, prophetic of what is coming. And hereafter we shall find many reverberations of this early spiritual shock echoing through his words spoken and written till old-age falters his voice. We should carefully note the recorded experiences of such an epochal overturn as the deepest heart-searching confessions of Emerson the autobiographer.

First is to be emphasized that the present breach has its source in religion, and continues to show itself religious as to feeling and garb. His protest against tradition is still traditional, being uttered by the traditional sermon. He preached against the transmitted content of preaching, after the transmitted form of the preacher. At present he is not able to create a new literary expression responsive to his subject-matter. That

will come later after a fuller and deeper experience, culminant especially in the Essay, of which both manner and content are defiant of the accepted way of writing, being wont-breaking in form as well as duly anti-prescriptive. This is the seal of the author's originality, which does not fully ripen till the Second Period, hereafter to be unfolded. Moreover the religious protest of the present Epoch is to widen out over many spiritual fields such as art, institutions, and specially literature. The religious breach is central in Emerson, as becomes the scion of the theocratic Puritan; and from the center spreads forth towards universality.

Such, then, is the purport and limit of this Second Epoch, still traditional in its declared war upon tradition, and thus belonging to Emerson's First Period, since it unfolds a fresh stage in the total sweep of his Traditional Schooling. A mighty convulsion of spirit, it is but half done as yet. The first transformation, that of fact, is now wrought; the second transformation, that of expression is to come, resulting from a still larger experience.

## I.

### PASTOR EMERSON

It is recorded that on the 11th of March, 1829, our peripatetic schoolmaster and student of theology brought his long novitiate of studying and

teaching and wandering to a close, and was ordained as colleague of the Reverend Henry Ware, minister of the Second Church (Unitarian) in Boston. This would seem to be the most deeply traditional act of his life, voluntary too; he drops into the ancestral line of Puritan clergymen, descended from hoary Peter Bulkley, and hovering about one spot since their first advent on American soil. Surely the young pastor may well deem himself now anchored safely in the old harbor. The forelook of duty is apparently one with the backlook of tradition: he will lead the level unambitious life of the cleric, acceptably moving in the ever-recurrent routine of preaching, praying, visiting the sick, burying the dead, and otherwise performing the transmitted rites of his church. He has, at least on the outside, found his calling, attained his goal. Also material abundance has banned his former penury. He writes to his Aunt Mary: "You know—in poverty and many troubles the seeds of our prosperity were sown. Now all these troubles appeared a fair counterbalance to the flatteries of fortune." No more hunger, plenty of clothes and good too; let the Giver be praised. Still Emerson has his strange foreboding which he cannot quite put down. His luck makes him glimpse the Goddess Nemesis, who of old "kept watch to overthrow the high," and leveled them earthward. Nor is he quite in tune with the prescribed limits of his profession: "Our usage of preaching is too straitened—it walks in

a narrow round, it harps on a few and ancient strings, it holds on to phrases when the lapse of time has changed their meaning." All of which would hint a reform if not a revolution meditated by him in the established order of sermonizing. He intends at the start to be rid of the old sanctimonious style and the scriptural speech of good venerable Ecclesiasticus. Even in the pulpit he threatens to employ for illustration "the facts of this age, the printing press and the loom, the phenomena of steam and gas" alongside of the ancient Hebrew environment, and even not wholly to eschew our "free institutions" in favor of the Mosaic theocracy, so dear to the older Puritanic consciousness. And there is abounding evidence that he put far more stress upon the efficacy of the moral sentiment than he did upon ceremonial and dogma, and showed more faith in direct personal inspiration than in that of the Scriptures. Really, however, he is the true outcome of Puritanism, whose general movement has been toward minimizing if not quite eliminating the act of divine mediation from the Christ.

Emerson was at first ordained as the colleague to the regular pastor, who, being taken ill, soon resigned, when his young associate became the sole incumbent after a few weeks. It is told how he helped local charities of all sorts, and favored the good works of other denominations. But there is evidence that he must have put the main

stress of his mind as well as spent his best moments upon the written word, which was also spoken from the pulpit, and so took the form of the sermon. May we not see herein Emerson the writer working through a stage of his Apprenticeship? Such would seem to have been his own opinion of it as he looked backward.

We learn that one hundred and seventy-one of his sermons still lie in manuscript, "and he expressed his desire that they should so remain," says Mr. Cabot, his trusted literary adviser and biographer, who evidently was so generous of patience and other faculty as to read this portentous mass of theology condemned, but not burned by its author. The total will average about one written discourse a week during the entire pastorate of Emerson, a large output even in its mechanical labor for a man frail physically and infirm of health, even if it contains also the gathered stores of his previous preaching. Besides those above mentioned, only two of Emerson's sermons have been printed, of which one is found in his *Collected Works*, unless some have been dragged from their grave in recent years. Evidently the author himself did not esteem them characteristic of his best. So many discourses could hardly have been composed in the full overflow of genius which always chooses its time and levies its tax. Largely they must have been scribbled off in a mechanical way from remembered doctrine and from Aunt Mary's theolog-

ical disquisitions. Mr. Cabot affirms of them that "in general all is within the conventions of the Unitarian pulpit," and more surprising is his dictum, that they "are presented in scriptural language, as if they belonged to the body of accepted doctrine." Emerson, however, seems to hint something different when he apologizes for "their want of sanctity in style," and in particular he reprobates "this straining to say what is unutterable, and vain retching with the imbecile use of great words," all of which "is nauseous to sound sense and good taste." Already Emerson was a classicist in his literary bent, and at present would seem to be the last man to take any liking for Carlylese. If we consider his forbears and his surroundings, the chief miracle is that he succeeded so completely in erasing the Hebraic grain from his writings which appeared later than the time of these sermons.

Still under this equable, doubtless lukewarm flow of outer conformity, the spirit was getting hot; yea had begun to boil. For listen to his Journal: "I hate goodness that preaches—goodness that preaches undoes itself. Goodies make us very bad. We will almost sin to spite them." Such speech sparkles scintillant of some personal friction with pietistic tradition. Then it reaches the point of downright defiance in the assertion: "I have sometimes thought that in order to be a good minister, it was necessary to leave the ministry. The profession is antiquated. In an al-

tered age we worship in the dead forms of our forefathers." Truly the ancestral fetters are chafing our pastor to the quick even in that very mild Unitarian prison, nearly but not yet quite untrammelled of creed and ritual. What is he going to do about it?

But before we can regard him at the final turn of this problem, we have to contemplate him held fast in another bond, the deepest and the strongest during his earlier pastorate, out of which bond Providence delivers him while smiting him to the heart in an agony of release. We allude to his first marriage, whence sprang circumstances which took a very formative part in shaping his coming career.

## II.

### MARRIAGE

The more inquisitive, open-eyed reader may have observed in scanning Emerson's Diary, that the young minister chanced to visit Concord, New Hampshire, December 1827, on one of his preaching peregrinations. There it was his good luck to look into the love-glinting eyes of a young lady, seeing her for the first time with a result destined to bear memorable fruit. At the start he evidently tried to hold aloof in accord with his doctrinal bachelorhood; still after a year's delay he went back to the same place, having a good excuse, nay having two or three good excuses for his return, but one best of all. He

wished to sermonize again in that appreciative locality "for three Sundays," and at the same time to give his convalescent brother a little outing. Still the real but then unspoken motive is probably unbosomed in the following extract from a letter which was written after the deed was done, and the joyful heart could no longer hide the clamoring secret. Date is December 21, 1828.

"I have now been engaged four days to Ellen Louisa Tucker, a young lady, who, if you will trust me, is the fairest and best of her kind. She is the youngest daughter of the late Beza Tucker, a merchant of Boston," who has left to this daughter, it may here be whispered in confidence, a considerable inheritance, which by the way is to perform a very substantial part in this Emersonian Life-Essay. The mother was then living at Concord with the second husband. But harken to the new confession of the lover: "It is now just a year since I became acquainted with Ellen. . . . but I thought I had got over my blushes and my wishes when now I determined to go into that dangerous neighborhood on Edward's account." So young Waldo claims, dancing before his fancy a brotherly pretext, and then he bashfully drops the first person of his story: "But the presumptuous man was overthrown by the eye and ear, and surrendered at discretion. He is now as happy as it is safe in life to be. She is seventeen years old, and very

beautiful by universal consent," with which popular judgment he in the present instance boisterously coincides to the dot.

But Emerson was still a wanderer without a fixed charge. He had been offered a steady position, yet he hovered in doubt, till a right turn of the tide might float him into port. His betrothal seems to have settled him, for we read that some three months after his engagement, he received the ordination already mentioned in the preceding section. Six months later he was married and brought his wife to Boston, establishing a home for himself and for his mother's family, the members of which were still in a very dispersed and distressed condition both as to health and finance. It is evident that the newly wedded young minister has won a fresh outlook upon the future; the economic cloud which kept lowering over him all his days, has begun to break away into a golden luminosity.

Of Emerson's love-life there is not much record. It was not his theme except in a very limited and shrinking way. Though he it was who said that all the world loves a lover, he was himself no ardent lover of love; indeed just that character was what he shunned. He would be no Phileros, like Goethe and many another poet. Therein he seems to have been true to the Puritanic element in all New England poetry, which has been reproached with never having produced a genuine love-song. This is doubtless an exces-

sive statement, still it hints a tendency and a limitation. Unquestionably Emerson often treats of love, but it is apt to etherialize into his ideal relation to the divine Oversoul. His love of God was so strong, so exclusive, possibly so jealous, that he had only a limited toleration of the love of woman.

Still it cannot be said that the humanly amatory theme is wholly absent from Emerson's writings. In certain Essays there are passages breathing the heart's passionate exuberances, though disguised and made impersonal by some abstract setting or symbol. Also several of his lyrics are instinct with individual emotion, but his tendency is to dream it away into its universal counterpart. In some lines of this time he implies that Miss Tucker was his first love, that he as teacher passed through the fiery ordeal of that Boston girls'-school without any serious singeing:

“Then eagerly I searched each circle round,  
I panted for my mate, but no mate found;  
I saw bright eyes, fair forms, complexions fine,  
But not a single soul that spoke to mine;  
At last the star broke through the hiding cloud,  
At last I found thee in the silken crowd.  
I found thee, Ellen—”

Happy man! We shall have to take the poetizing lover at his word, and respond with a fellow-feeling to his ardent imagery. At the same

time we must note the abiding significance of this matrimonial step throughout his whole career, bringing with it the greatest stroke of good-luck that ever befel him or any other poor penwright. For she is an heiress, and her considerable fortune drops or will drop into Emerson's lap, securing to him for life economic freedom, enfranchisement from the hamstringing worry about a livelihood, the freedom which bases every other kind of freedom not only of speech but of spirit. We dare question if foresightful Emerson had ventured to break the galling fetters of his ministerial vocation (as he will shortly do) unless he had felt himself financially independent, and thus defiant of those first fates of human existence—food, raiment, and shelter.

We must recall that actual want, even gaunt hunger threatened Emerson in his younger days. All through his novitiate, as heretofore described, he was in a desperate wrestle with poverty. But now the windfall descends upon him by gift of the Gods, munificent especially when tested by the Emerson household. Never did Providence do a better deed, divinely benignant, far-overlooking the future. It is hardly too much to say that the free, the great Emerson now becomes more than a possibility, even a certainty, with time. Often, in the course of our narrative, we shall have to take a glance back at this lasting foundation of his life's temple.

Pastor Emerson, henceforth economically inde-

pendent, has set his face toward making himself spiritually independent, whereof the first decisive step with its lasting outlook is next to be recorded.

### III.

#### THE BREAKING POINT

“The soul stands alone with God, and Jesus is no more present to your mind than your brother or your child.” Many passages to the same purport can be culled from Emerson’s writings during these pivotal years. He has come to question all forms of mediation between man and God, between the soul individual and the soul universal, challenging the position of the Mediator himself as centered in the heart of Christianity. The historic Church with its dogmas and rites has become to him a spiritual obstruction, yea an offense which he deems himself called upon to assail and to eradicate.

Perhaps if we had access to the mountainous mass of the unpublished sermons of his clerical triennium, we would find this new protest ever rising higher, increasing in strength and defining itself with greater clearness and resolution. His vocation in its transmitted form is continuously getting to be more distasteful to him, and indeed he as clergyman has undone himself by his doctrine. His Journal breaks out: “When people imagine that others can be their priests, they may

well fear hypocrisy." What then becomes of the minister Emerson? He is certainly not far from professional suicide. This jotting in his Diary is dated September 5th, 1832, and bears in it a secret thrust against himself as the shepherd of his flock. He is not far from calling himself a hypocrite, and we may hear the prelude resolve to free his soul from such a stinging stain of self-reproach.

Accordingly it is not surprising to learn that four days later he preached his last ministerial sermon, whose theme was the Lord's Supper, and enforced kindly but decisively his scruples about administering that rite. He states his belief that it was not a permanent institution, but a form which had been outgrown, and had become alien to the Spirit of Christ himself, whose true example is not that of an intermediary between me and my God, but that of an immediate communicant with the Divine Spirit quite like myself and yourself. Very significant is this not only of Emerson's present religious attitude, but of his universal world-view throughout his entire life.

Already in the preceding June (1832) he had proposed to his congregation that the use of the elements in the Lord's Supper be dropped, and also that the rite be made merely one of commemoration, and not regarded as a sacrament ordained by Christ to be kept up by his Church for all time. The committee to whom the proposition was referred reported against any change,

but wished to retain their pastor. Thus Emerson had to face the question alone: Shall I break with mine own? He flees to the White Mountains to interrogate his unfailing oracle, Nature's divine suggestion, ere he take the final step. We possess a brief diary of his spirit's ups and downs in this storm. After some days of mental seesawings, he returns resolved: he could not yield his conviction; he had already stigmatized himself as a hypocrite, if he dared administer that sacrament. He comes back to his congregation and preaches the before-mentioned last sermon of angelic defiance, sealing his emphatic words with his deed of resignation. Repeated attempts were made to compromise the scission, but Emerson could not be shaken from his main purpose. By a vote of thirty to twenty-four his resignation was accepted, and Emerson's one pastorate had evolved its own tragedy.

To this day the question is debated: Was his act justifiable? Could he not have trained his congregation to take his views without such a tie-tearing convulsion? And then that heart-touching Communion Service—could it not be interpreted as a symbol by the symbolizing Emerson? We are told by himself that these and similar questionings haunted the fugitive in his mountainous retreat. Impartially keen is his self-probing: "I know very well that it is a bad sign in a man to be too conscientious," especially a New Englander. He is aware that "the most

desperate scoundrels have been the over-refiners," sharpening the point of the argument till it gets pointless, and hence without any prick to the conscience.

It is evident that Emerson has pushed to that pass where he is fully aware that he must force the separation. Better now than later, for it is bound to come. This little particular rent might be patched up, but Emerson sees that he is on the march toward universality, that his new doctrine or world-view is going to embrace all religion, and then, transcending the religious sphere, to grapple with the whole spiritual dominion of the ages. Probably too he feels himself in the best situation just now to take up the coming conflict. An untrammelled free individual he beholds himself in life's mirror once more; fate without his consent has smitten the tender conjugal bond and given him a real even if unwilling release; also the fierce restraint of poverty has relaxed its grip upon his future so that he can rest unanxious in the sweet composure of economic liberty.

Emerson's young wife had died early in the same year, February, 1832. There can be little doubt that while she lived, she acted as an anchor to hold him fast to his calling. Already before their marriage, consumption had threatened her, but she rallied so as to seem out of danger. Yet the insidious disease returned, and Emerson for nearly two years was occupied and pre-occupied with an ever-welling worry over her gradual

evanishment before his eyes. The first winter after marriage he took her to the mild South out of the raw climate of New England, and was preparing for a similar journey the following year when she quite suddenly passed away.

Her character he designates "a bright revelation of the best nature of woman." During this time many a throe of his heart's anguish pulses out to utterance in prose and verse, most of which he confided to the intimacy of his Journal. Says a relative: "He was in the habit of walking out early in the morning to visit her new-made grave."

Thus Emerson has in early life to pass through the discipline of death in just about its most crushing infliction. The young wife's deeply loved presence is torn out of his bleeding heart, and he moves about dazed at this fresh problem of the mysterious Providential ordeal. Can he transform such suffering into a new insight and a higher reconciliation? But that is not all. His two brothers, of unusual talent and of the best education, are both stricken by a deep-seated malady which is slowly but inexorably bearing them toward dissolution. Then Emerson himself begins to droop in health and to sink utterly disheartened before what seems to him the impending doom of his family. In fact the whole Emersonian household appears during these days to have been haunted with a gloomy foreboding of its approaching disappearance. And the two

brothers of Emerson will at no long interval follow his wife to the grave. To be sure this sad presentiment of his tragic lot does hardly more than palpitate in a brief underbreath through certain fugitive words fleeting from their prison. But Emerson by an herculean act of resolution will escape from what he at times deems his prejudged domestic appointment with death.

We feel Emerson's dark struggle against the hidden powers over life repeatedly in his Journal. He writes: "When I consider the constitutional calamity of my family, . . . I have little apprehension of my own liability to the same evil." Yet his soul is wrestling with this same evil, this direful menace hanging over his nearest and dearest kindred and himself. Long, gloomy, and desperate is the battle for his mastery over Fate, but he wins it at last. Though his be the doomed house of Tantalus, as he in view of its fatalities would seem at dreadful moments to believe, he rallies and coerces his own very doom in the pinch of its victory. Thus Emerson rises to being a Fate-compeller.

Not otherwise can it be than that such a vital experience has written its fiery discipline into his character, and left its lasting imprint upon his mental constitution. Emerson has witnessed with a tragic interest and the warmest participation the evanescence of the Person, whereby such evanescence will be traced on his soul, and become a portion of his doctrine. Verily he has

served his apprenticeship to Destiny, and has learned the lasting lesson. We shall find that Personality itself, in the universe of man and God, turns ethereal, fragile, moribund to his vision, quite uncertain of its own existence. Repeatedly hereafter we shall have to note how oscillatingly Emerson hovered about the doctrine of the persistence of the individual self. One can hardly help thinking that such a condition sprang from the deepest and most formative experience of life, and thus became integrated with his whole spiritual existence. He accepted his mortal lot of finitude, and then transcended it by living immortally.

But the Breaking Point is passed, though it leaves Emerson broken. Owns he the remedial power of self-recovery? That is the question the reader must now ask of this Biography, also the question which Emerson must ask of himself.

#### IV.

#### WHAT NEXT?

Such, then, was the separative, devastating Explosion of the inner expansive forces which had long been gathering in Emerson's soul, really during all his previous years quite back to boyhood. And now he, still a young man under thirty, is suddenly and violently hurled out of his inherited calling and creed which the centuries have handed down to him through his own

blood. We may see him rise up from the stunning shock and look around with a thin pallid look of anxiety, sorrow, and disease, questioning with whispering lips his life's oracle: What next?

The startling concussion was preceded if not caused by a sermon which turned out to be his last in the prescribed course. It will be well to glance back and scan this final utterance of his separation. We can find it in the discourse already mentioned which he delivered to his congregation shortly after his return from his flight to the mountains (September 9th, 1832). Let us also remember that this is the only one of his parish sermons which, on account of its catastrophic import, has been deemed worthy of publication in his Works (Centenary Edition, Vol XI). It bears in its construction the double character of the present separative Epoch, with its two opposing parts. Then there is a decided cleavage, even antagonism between its form and content, between its ancient setting and its modern spirit. The bottle is old, but the wine is new and effervescent to the point of bursting its confine. An unconscious image of the present dualistic Emerson we may trace in its architecture.

First to be noted is the external division into its two colliding portions: for the authority and against the authority of the transmitted rite of the Lord's Supper. Thus the central word authority, in affirmation and in negation, is the axis of the discourse. The affirming first portion is

historical, scriptural, argumentative, with precedents bolstered by a mass of citations. It should be observed that Emerson is here formally logical and theological as never again afterwards; in fact the whole drift both in manner and meaning is decidedly anti-Emersonian, being contrary to his view of the soul's own direct inspiration above all authority, even biblical. So he concludes this portion with the admonition "against taking even the best ascertained opinions and practices of the primitive Church for our own." How he slams the door in the face of all ecclesiastical tradition, as it were turning upon himself as an ecclesiastic with denial, yea with a polite self-undoing contempt!

But the second part of the sermon flows with far greater congeniality; the theme no longer toils painfully up the steep, but turns and runs of itself down-hill. For the discourse now does away with the rite, though long established and hallowed by memory, and therein calls forth the coming Emerson, anti-traditional, anti-conventional, even anti-institutional. To him this rite or indeed any rite disturbs or rather perverts the immediate relation of the soul to God; what is due to the deity is not to be given to the intermediary. Moreover such a mediating ceremony and even the mediating person may suit the Oriental mind which originated them, but they belong not here, we have transcended that old alien world "full of forms, idols, and ordinances."

Thus the preacher in his own pulpit unfrocks himself into freedom, or what he deems such. He has advanced to the point of denying the rite of rites, the Eucharist of the Christian Communion, and the pun hits home: this rite is not a right but a wrong, even the highest, to God Himself. To be sure, Emerson does not use such language, his words carefully shy around within the traditional bounds of propriety, though their thought be revolutionary and Heaven-scaling. The clerical vestment he still wears though in the role of the destroyer of clericism. Significant in the same direction is the fact that Emerson composing this sermon retains the old rather beworn sermonic ordering into headings and sub-headings—a formalism which he will hotly fling away hereafter, even if he cools off in rare places. He still retains the shattered egg-shell on his wing, though he pecks at it till it drops down, and he springs forth free, soaring in untrammelled flight.

We must, however, keep in mind that Emerson by no means gets rid of all forms and formulas forever. Particularly he stops at the one great stepping-off place of his folk, he never breaks with the transmitted Puritanic moralism. Indeed he makes for clutching just that as the one secure anchorage in the drifting ocean of doubt. And there is still an authority very autocratic in his creed, that of the Oversoul's divine descent into man with its omnipotent behest. Even certain recognizable features of the traditional ser-

mon will peep out to the last, though transmuted from the pulpit through the lyceum to the ultimate form of the independent Essay. Nor will Emerson quit the church's rostrum, though he refuses its regular routine; he becomes a kind of sermonizing privateer, preaching his own gospel from any tribune sacred or profane; thus he shows himself the shifty sermoneer, if such a term, rather undignified but certainly not unfriendly, can be withstood by the shocked reader.

The foregoing tells Emerson's present experience, sudden, cataclysmic, evoking a new stage of his Apprenticeship. Quite broken and prostrate he comes before us, with a forefeeling of doom in his blood, and a Tantalian suspense at the recurring menace of Fate, one of whose mortal blows has already shattered his heart. So we may hear him anxiously querying: What next? Which way turn? Unconsciously he pulls himself up and starts a new Epoch.

## CHAPTER THIRD

### THE RECOVERY

Another decided turn in Emerson's career now takes place, distinct in character from the preceding one, indeed quite the opposite as to the essential matter. From a breaking away it curves about toward a getting back, from a separation it rounds to a return; so we have to call this a time of recovery and restoration out of a deep spiritual convulsion. Thus it is the stressful counter-stroke to what has just occurred, and drives forward to a new Epoch in the present Biography. The man is subjected to a fresh discipline in preparation for his life's great work; the old transmitted landmark being swept away, he must build another of his own more adequate, more characteristic of himself.

If the previous volcanic Epoch lasted three years in gathering secretly its explosive forces for the final upheaval and dissolution, the present Epoch will endure about the same length of time—the restoration rising through several stages till the patient is sound and himself again. In such fashion the current of life bends around, making toward a new and grander goal after a darksome passage through a fragment of Erebus. Accordingly Emerson we see undergoing another

triennial course of training, the last of this First Period, which is verily his Apprenticeship in preparation for his supreme coming vocation. The explosion which we have just recorded was the young revolt, the deeply separative stage of his first grand experience, which he is now to surmount, but only to take a still deeper, more universal plunge in opposition to his time and its institutional order. We are to see him rising from a whirl in one of the lesser eddies of life to his grand baptism in the ocean of his entire existence.

Let us then glimpse Emerson as he sets sail Christmas day, 1832, having not yet passed his third decade of years, on the small trading-brig *Jasper* from Boston, and as he looks out smilingly eastward over the indefinite Atlantic; then let us note him in December, 1835, three years afterward, as he sits before the fire in his own home at Concord. He has recovered health and family, both of which had been broken up in the previous upheaval; he has also regained vocation and community, though in new forms. But more significantly he has won his life's stronghold within and without, spiritually and physically, from which he can sally forth against the hosts of darkness, and to which he can return for recuperation and fresh plans of attack. He has taken position in his Castle of Defiance for the rest of his days.

Accordingly this triennial experience, having

in itself a flight from home and a return may be deemed one of his life's lesser yet well-marked nodes, and is therefore worthy of its own special exposition. This will portray his going forth and coming back to the same spot of earth, but will also, in such a spatial and temporal cycle, show him enacting a considerable phase of his spirit's evolution. He quits his city, country, and continent, and takes a trip to the World's background and also his own. A voyage of discovery, yea of self-discovery it is, but its main fact must be seized that it seeks and wins the Recovery both of body and mind, which has become the prime condition not only of advancing further but of living longer.

Note, then, again and keep the fact before the mind that in the organism of Emerson's total Life-Essay, that this is the third and concluding Epoch of his Apprenticeship to Tradition, during which he goes abroad to the great school of the Past, to Europe, from whence he is to bring home lasting spoils, really for his mastery of Tradition.

## I.

### HEALTH RECOVERED

The stress of Emerson's spiritual collision found its echo in his body never very robust; the result was he became a victim of recurrent illness and melancholy. He writes: "My malady has proved so obstinate and comes back as often as it goes away;"

so under advice he will seek to "prevent these ruinous relapses by a sea voyage." Another record from a different source sadly declares: "Waldo is sick; his spirits droop, I never saw him so disheartened." We catch fitfully a strange undertone that there lay in him a forecast of family fate, for thus we have to interpret a stray note in a letter of his brother Charles: "One does not like to feel that there is any doom upon him or his race; it seems to quench the fire and freedom of his hopes and purposes." So writes this brother to the family's seeress Aunt Mary, forefeeling some lurking fatality in the kinship, and doubtless in himself, who will glide over life's bourne in a few years.

But Waldo Emerson, hounded by malady and melancholy, is now inhaling the remedial breath of the salt sea, and at once starts the uplift toward health and mind's recovery. The overture of the voyage was a terrific storm, which consigned the five passengers to the stateroom "where was nausea, darkness, unrest," yet with "harpy appetite and harpy feeding." Discomfort enough, not excepting filth and even vomit: "yet I thank the sea and rough weather for a truckman's health and stomach—how connected with celestial gifts!" Thus the physical renovation of the voyage is getting manifest. Then the many new objects of vision call him out of himself, and the daring struggle of his ship and its crew with the mighty and often furious elements draws his attention away from his petty inner see-saw, as we may note in his Journal. He

reads a little, philosophizes quite a bit, and even poetizes somewhat. One rather liquid effusion of his sea-muse he has preserved under date of January 6, 1833, and strangely it runs to the tune of the Free Verse of 1918.

Finally on February 2, 1833, his staunch vessel has overpassed the Ocean, crept through the straits of Gibraltar, and reached Malta, striking "from Boston across three thousand miles of stormy water into a little gut of inland sea, nine miles wide." The art in the churches stirs his interest and he hopes "they will paint and carve and inscribe the walls" of similar edifices in New England—not a very Puritanic expectancy. Moreover he is "learning two languages," evidently pounding their idioms into his brain, that they drop fluently from his tongue when he gets to Italy and France, for he is looking backwards already, not forwards.

And just that halts us in a pause of surprise. Why did not Emerson push on to new-born Hellas, in whose independence America and specially his own Boston had taken such an interest only a few years since? He must have well remembered the whole excitement, and particularly the speech of his favorite orator Daniel Webster upon this theme. But somehow he took no pleasure in making the native words of his dearest Plato flow from his tongue in living speech or in seeing the vesture of nature for the body of the finest poetry in the world. Then not far off reposes the God-visioning Orient with whose spirit the genius of Emerson stood in

deep, even if as yet unconscious affinity. Yonder lies Palestine, Egypt is easily accessible—but no, he faces the other way.

Still we must put due stress upon the great advantage of this voyage. Emerson doubtless felt the reconstruction of his hitherto fragile organism, and longed to get back to work in realizing his urgent idea. He, the invalid, had bravely taken his long dose of sea-medicine, at a single gulp as it were, lasting about six weeks, and never once touching land: a swallow thousands of miles long, as if he were going down the throat of the old Hell-dog Cerberus. But he has come out the infernal voyage not only safe but renovated; thus he has circumvented that “doom of his family” which he sometimes gloomed to be impending over him. For mark! he lives till near fourscore; he endures all sorts of food, of bed, of conveyance, in many annual campaigns of lecturing over the raw country of the West—surely a tough-sided, much enduring Ulysses. Disease never again seriously caught him in the vitals till the last time, which always comes. Indeed his body was of sterner stuff than his mind, and outlasted it for years. But now Emerson sails through the sea, as it were from frail invalidism to rugged recuperation, having been apprenticed to ill-health also during his young-manhood. So he wins his first great prize—his health’s Recovery.

## II.

## BACK THROUGH THE ANTIQUE

Emerson, suddenly facing about, will float down the westward-flowing stream of old Time, and throw a hasty glance at some of the antiquities scattered along its bank. Still for him this is the back track—a return, not an advance; nevertheless he will move on the line of man's progress from the old Europe to the new, taking a short dip meanwhile into his race's cultural antecedents.

So it comes that our traveler, having gone forward to the border-land of the great Past, refuses to push further to the East, but wheels around and starts for the West, casting brief glimpses at things and men by the way, but not seriously stopping till he returns to his new Occident. Still we have to query why he shrank from a gaze into the two primeval sources, the Greek and the Semitic, of the supreme world-civilization, which we may call the Mediterranean, and which was the basis of his own culture, both secular and religious. The Hellenic and the Hebrew consciousness had been the original storehouse from which his spirit and that of his age had been fed, but he shows no desire to see the old homestead of the one or of the other, though both have the interest of antique historic ruins. This action, seemingly unconscious, indicates to our mind, Emerson's dominant mood: he is in decided reaction against the old, the transmitted, the transcended, and so his spirit calls a halt to penetrating

further into its own antiquity. Was not this very voyage caused by his breach with tradition? What he could not endure in Boston, he will not accept here; so, having won his prime Recovery, that of health, he turns about for home, where he is to find another form of Recovery, perchance two or three.

Accordingly on February 21, 1833, "we embarked for Syracuse in a Sicilian brigantine," and in sixteen unending hours the ancient city, which has such a famous place in classical history, was sighted and entered. Memories of antique poetry bubbled up as "I drank the waters of the fountain of Arethusa" and breakfasted on "the very fragrant Hyblæan honey." Especially the orator Cicero seems to have been the liveliest figure here present to his imagination, which was doubtless prompted by hints from his guide-book. From Syracuse he rapidly circles around to other Sicilian cities, flinging down by the way an observation here and there, and sometimes a criticism. But he has no word for the great historic phenomena before him in that unique island, around which the conflict of the Mediterranean races swirled for thousands of years—the Greek, the Carthaginian, the Latin, the Saracen—till from the North the Teuton also interwove himself into its history. Really Emerson stands in a kind of secret opposition to the oppressive Past, and suffers not its authority.

Soon Emerson finds himself sailing into the Bay of Naples and feels overawed at first by the scene of beauty and of ancient glory. The very names he

hears make it "hard to keep one's judgment upright and be pleased only after your own way." This deluge of greatness from the olden time causes him to show fight on the spot, and so he brandishes his pen with a shout: "I won't be imposed upon by a name." Yet the deluging cataract of some 2000 years and more of Naples, as he looks out over the city, pours down upon him, and he can hardly maintain himself upright "against what seems the human race." But if Waldo Emerson has one resolution, it is this: he will not let his selfhood be submerged in this maelstrom of the Past. So he exclaims defiantly to himself: "Who cares? Here's for the plain old Adam, the simple genuine Self against the whole world." Such is the armed soul which now wanders through Naples, recording sights and impressions here quite omissible. But again we have to remark that the grandest phenomenon, the deepest-searching symbol of the World's History in this locality the great symbolizer Emerson shuffles by with one meaningless sentence—Pompeii, which proclaims in death's awful presence the resurrection through destruction.

Let Naples pass, with its Greek substrate of speech and spirit which one can detect in it to-day. Next Emerson reaches a very different city, one which has wielded the greatest and most lasting urban influence on our globe. What will he do with the overwhelming appearance past and present of Rome? He is thirty years old, a highly educated man with classical training, and has read all his

life. What we have called his Apprenticeship is drawing to a close. Here is a marvelous opportunity for experiencing the past at its greatest and also in its limitation, for realizing its supreme achievement as well as the fate which lurks gnawing in its grandeur. Emerson still saw Papal Rome in all outer gorgeous ceremony and inner organized hold on the hearts, heads, and consciences of hundreds of millions. Then the Fine Arts, those sovereign forms of expression which in splendor reveal the spirit of bygone ages—sculpture, painting, architecture, music—were all concentrated in the Eternal City to make it beautiful and to keep it eternal.

Hardly more than a stupendous stare does he give to this mass of spiritual wealth; certainly he dares no serious mental grapple. He goes around dutifully and looks at all set down in the programme; external admiration he lisps ritually, but we can often feel the muffled protest. He is stepping now in the transmitted treadmill, and he cannot well turn back. Still once in a while a mutter breaks out, as when he sees the Pope washing the feet of thirteen pilgrims (one was from Kentucky): "Why should not he (His Holiness) leave one moment this service of fifty generations and speak out of his own heart—though it were but a single word?" This Emerson at Rome cannot help recalling his own conflict with a transmitted church ceremony at Boston—really the key-note of his present mood. Strangely for him the chief charm of old

Rome "is the name of Cicero," its greatest talker while its greatest doer, Caesar, is rather contemptuously unpedestaled: "A soul as great as his or any other's is your own." Verily the World's History lies not in the purview of Emerson right here at its chief center, nor does he recognize the supreme world-historical character in Rome's evolution. When he beholds the famous Torso of Hercules it recalls "some old revolutionary cripple," sight familiar to Emerson from boyhood as he was born only some twenty years after the war of Independence. Such does the ideal Greek statue famed by Winkelmann and Goethe become to the Yankee tourist. His crass Philistinism quite equals that of another American innocent, Mark Twain, on a similar journey.

So after a shortened month, hardly time enough to look around in such a wilderness of mighty things handed down, Emerson turns his back on Rome. Yet, as we shall see in his later works, he stored up much in these few days, not forgetting his disgust. From the very presence of Antiquity in her most beautiful and venerable shape he averts his face wearing one of his Sardonic smiles, which he will hereafter repeat more than once in his prose.

Winding out of Rome, through vales and round hill-sides, Emerson arrives at the second greatest of Italy's past cities—Florence, which belongs not to the Roman world, but to the distinctively Italian era. The community most creative of genius, not political or military, but poetic and artistic, in the

whole Peninsula; why should just that be? Two sons it brought forth, mightiest of their kind, Dante and Michael Angelo, both of whom, however, had to quit their native soil in order to produce their supreme works, not to speak of the man of science, Galileo. Emerson passes through the Florentine Gallery of Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture. but its most original structures, the Palazzos, seem hardly to have caught his attention. Michael Angelo overwhelms him, but Dante is a more hazy problem, never hereafter to become quite visible in spite many allusions. He sees the English poet Landor, evidently with no great reward. Far more suggestive is the fact of his little flirtation with the Florentine flower-girl: "I met the fair Erminia to-day." A unique record in Mr. Emerson's experience; never again will that happen to him in this life. He reads Goethe here, and has been reading him from Malta—I wonder what book of the master?

But mark the change creeping over him in the following: "We come out to Europe to learn what is the uttermost which social man has yet done." Does not that prognosticate a new attitude toward the Past? And then again as if talking with himself in a kind of reproof: "To make sincere good use of what he sees, he needs to put a double and treble guard upon the independence of his judgment." Who is he? None other than the diarist himself, now taking stock of himself. But it is a rather late repentance, for on the next page of the

Journal we read: "Sad I leave Florence, the pleasant city. I have not even seen it all"—and so with a feeling of just having started he has to quit, or thinks he has, after a stay of only one month. It would appear that the Tuscan city with its world-art was nearer to him than ancient Rome with its world-history. He seems to have gotten something very real at Florence—nothing less than a new consciousness of his limitation, a most valuable kind of knowledge, which every Westerner gets or ought to get in rambling over beautiful Italy.

Passing through a number of the lesser cities of Northern Italy and tagging a brief note on each, he enters the third Italian sovereign city, Venice, the bride of the sea. But in contrast with Florence, Venice repels him, disgusts him even with its magnificence born of so much cruelty. He swallows an overdose of its splendors with great haste, and greater disgust; the result is the following stomachic outburst: "I am speedily satisfied with Venice—a city for beavers, a most disagreeable residence. You feel always in prison, solitary." So after two days he turns to flight from this unique sea-shell of a world, which the English-speaking man easily loves, if not through itself, at least through Shakespeare, who must have seen it, we think, in order to build these two poetic cities after its model, such as we behold in *Othello* and in *Merchant of Venice*.

From Venice the overfull traveler skims dozingly along North Italy to the next great Italian city—Milan. Here he centers upon the Cathedral

with its hundreds of pinnacles and thousands of statues, all of white marble glistening like icied frost work. Thence again follows a brain-dizzying whirl through churches and galleries of art, and soon he whizzes past the grand ruined master-piece of Leonardo, the Last Supper, jotting tritely down, "The face of Christ is still very remarkable." Well, how could he like that picture, which must have vividly recalled his own last intended Eucharist at Boston, from which burst up the most furious explosion of his life? He, as Christian clergyman, had been reproached with betraying his Master, assuredly not according to justice; still the uncanny grimace of Leonardo's Judas knocking over the salt may have echoed an unpleasant whisper to him, though of course he records nothing of the kind.

But what he does set down with some vehemence is his deep disgust at Milan with its industry in copying rather than in creating. On this superb architectural spot his impatience bubbles out against all architecture, in which he can see only an imitation. No spontaneous upburst in this art, he thinks; forever and ever repetition on repetition repeated is this cathedral "with its 5000 marble people all over its towers." So the great churches of Italy "are poor far-behind imitations" of the soul's creative architecture. We feel like crying to him across the years: O Emerson, high time it is that thou quit this Italian world of art, against which thou hast in thy spirit reacted with such intensity.

Accordingly we read that after three days' stay

in the Lombard capital, he is pushing rapidly for the border, intent upon crossing the Alps into France. Evidently he has had a surfeit of art, the treasures of Venice and Milan have produced a satiety which puts him to flight. About three months and a half he has been trying to swallow all Italy past and present, in its artistic manifestation; the result is for the nonce a kind of mental dyspepsia. From dead Syracuse in the South to living Milan in the North he had raced through the six greatest, most typical Italian cities, with a good deal of the hurry-worry of the restless rover who will see everything in no time, but really sees nothing in all time.

What did Emerson get out of this journey for permanent use? He had seen the supreme modern art-world in its three visible manifestations—Sculpture, Painting, Architecture. He had looked his eye-sight and soul-sight blunt, and needed rest. Moreover his mood was not altogether sympathetic. Italy was a past world, it dominated in art as well as in religion through tradition, which was just now the Emersonian devil. We have to think that he was not in temper to grapple with the grandeur of the Italian phenomenon. Hence there was little or no spiritual appropriation of this art-world. Still he had seen much and gathered many facts, which we shall often see rise in his later works. And he will frequently recur to the problem of art, meditating and writing on it, with many a keen suggestion but with no fundamental mastery.

Still his Italian experience must be set down as

a noteworthy stage of what we call his Recovery inner and outer. The mild climate, his bodily activity, his turn outward to the object, his change from introspection to extrospection helped to restore his health, both mental and physical. It was also a voyage of discovery, and chiefly he discovered a good deal about himself. Antiquated Italy confirmed his protest against the antiquated forms of the new world. This transmitted art was but another example of the ill of tradition, and taught the same lesson as the transmitted religion of New England, against which he still stood in battle line. His relation to the Antique has been at least brought home by the Italian trip, and he turns his face toward his next European experience.

### III.

#### BACK THROUGH THE MODERN

“The whole of the day (June 12, 1833) was spent in crossing the mountain by the celebrated road of the Simplon, cut and built by Buonaparte.” Thus our symbol-seeing Emerson is surmounting the grand barrier between the old and the new through the passage made “by the great Hand of our age,” as he calls the mighty shape who towers the human Colossus striding from Italy to France both in his deed and his origin. The mountainous work impresses the coming writer with the huge outline of one of his “Representative Men.” Arriving at Geneva he ex-

claims: "Here I am in the stern old town, the resort of such various minds—of Calvin," the great believer, who is put first on the list by the Puritan, and who is then followed by those famous unbelievers—Rousseau, Gibbon, Voltaire. Emerson might well have queried: To which class will Fate assign me? Who will decide that for him to-day? But let us turn with him down the road for Paris.

Emerson, accordingly, flees across the Alps from the Past to the Present, from the Ancient to the Modern, from Italy to France, and at once all seems changed—"the cities, the language, the faces, the manners." After a continuous ride of ten days from Milan he arrived at Paris, June 20, 1833. Mid the whirl of the stage-coach he has had time to reflect on what he has passed through. After all he misses antique Italy: "I have seen so much in five months that the magnificence of Paris will not take my eye to-day." Melancholy is the transition: "I was sorry to find that in leaving Italy I had left forever that air of antiquity and history which her towns possess, and in coming hither had come to a loud, modern New York of a place" (Chicago having not yet attained its world-wide glory of being the unapproached example of vulgar modernity in Eastern eyes).

About a month Emerson loiters around Paris in much desultory sightseeing, for which the opportunity is enticing. Very little he says concern-

ing its art, having been sated with that subject in the South. His chief interest seems to have dropped back to Nature, as he found it gathered, ordered, and labeled in the famous Parisian garden of Plants. His delight is now "in the inexhaustible riches of Nature." We hear anticipations of his coming work. "I feel the centipede in me," and all life. "I am moved by strange sympathies; I say continually: I will be a naturalist." And we catch not a word about literature, of which a great new upburst was just then taking place in Paris, centering around Victor Hugo and the Romantic School. Rather does he brood in a curious presentiment of the rising animal evolution: "Not a form so grotesque, so savage, but is an expression of some property in man the observer—an occult relation between the very scorpions and man." Such is the Emersonian foreglow of Darwin's sunburst, a quarter of a century later. Here, then, our traveler has run upon a very significant item of his own selfhood—he must have become what he is, glimpsing dimly and from afar his own evolution. To Emerson Nature was always very natural, while Art was more or less artificial.

Remarkable, then, it seems that in scribbling Paris, more literary than any other city on our globe, literature hardly gets a glance from Emerson, the coming man of letters. The language could not have stood in his way; at least with a little effort the obstacle was removable, as he had

already some knowledge of French. Was he too much of a classicist to like the new movement? Nor does he seem to give any response to the intense political throbbings of France which at this time was still in the throes of the dynastic turn from Legitimist to Orleanist. Once indeed he does cry out in disgust: "Fie! Louis Philippe!" and flings a single sneer at "the whirligig politics of the city." Well, he was gifted with about the same political lukewarmth in his own country, as his Diary shows for many years. Still he had the taste for one little Parisian escapade which he records: "I went this evening to Frascati's, long the most noted of the gambling houses or hells of Paris," but he invested only one franc, and that went to the hat keeper. The rest he does not tell.

But more surprising still is the fact that Emerson turned entirely aside from Germany, the spiritual fountain head of Transcendentalism which was to play such an important part in his career. Goethe indeed had just died, but the influence of the modern German Renaissance was in full swing. Moreover Boston had already for some years been tapping the Teutonic movement; already at Harvard Emerson had met it, in some of his teachers; he speaks especially of Edward Everett, the orator. Here undoubtedly the language confronted him terribly, but that obstacle too could have been surmounted. Already he was aware that Carlyle, the man whom he chiefly

wished to see in Europe, drew his chief inspiration from Teutonia. But somehow Emerson did not care to quench his thirst at first sources; in this at least he favored the mediator, even the translator.

Enough then of this continental confusion of tongues! Emerson feels "the extreme pleasure to hear English spoken in the streets, to understand all the children at play," when he gets put down in London (July 20, 1833). For some six weeks he spreads himself over England and Scotland rather superficially—he sees the poets Coleridge and Wordsworth, and other celebrities, with a soon satisfied curiosity. But as the chief object of his journey he has to hunt up at the last moment, Thomas Carlyle.

Thus the New Englander realizes that he has come back to his remote ancestral home, to the fountain-head of his transmitted speech, education, manners, institutions, blood and belief. One may well think that the ghost of old Peter Bulkley, the pioneer of his stock and its greatest character hitherto, haunted often his footsteps, and even whispered him: "This is the land, this the folk from which you get your essential soul—how can you ever be rid of that?" The whole visit must have been a stunning lesson in tradition to the anti-traditional Emerson; from all sides flowed in upon him the antecedents cultural and even physical, which went to his making. Very different was his experience in Latin

antique Italy, where everything was so strange, and where his advent seemed to him "like that of a being of another planet who invisibly visits the earth." But here he now finds his own, though hundreds of years old, and immemorially trickling down to him in his own blood.

Still I, for one, take it ill of him that he did not make a pious pilgrimage to the ancestral shrine of "a distinguished minister of Woodhill in Bedfordshire descended from a noble family," Peter Bulkley, forefather of Musketaquid nearly two centuries before this journey, but now world-famous as the heroic progenitor of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Or did he perform this act of traditional piety, and keep quiet about it? But there was a living prophet in the land to whose sequestered retreat he was seeking the way.

It would seem no great cause for wonder in the reader that Emerson's Diary becomes quite paralyzed during this English trip, being meagre to the last thinness both in quantity and quality, where we would expect it to be the most exuberant. At Rome he plays with the boys, seemingly for a little society; at Paris he "lives alone and seldom speaks." But in England he can talk his dialect, and feel quite at home. Whence comes it all? The inheritance of ages which he had resented and was intending to cast off, now plumps down upon him and stuns him to a kind of speechlessness. Quite a discipline was this English trip in Emerson's Apprenticeship—verily a new train-

ing into the old and hoarily transmitted Past. What will he do with it hereafter?

Let the answer pass for the present, for he will yet tell us. But listen to that note of longing heard back yonder in Paris already: "if he do not see Carlyle in Edinburgh"—. And who is this Carlyle whom inquiry shows to be almost unknown even among the literary world in London? What bond of sympathy so deep has he in common with Transatlantic Emerson? A voice very small, though not quite still is Carlyle's at present, but it has uttered its protest against the accepted, the transmitted, the ossified in religion, politics, and literature. Emerson has heard the wee note already in his home far across the ocean, and he must hunt up and see his prophet, whose living word he will hearken and carry back in his heart—else his journey will have no right ending, will in fact leave the last ripe fruit of it unplucked.

Still the ancestral land and folk have left a deep impression upon Emerson's unconscious life, which will keep welling up to the surface hereafter by way of praise and blame. Then some fourteen years later (in 1847) he will return thither in a kind of flight from his own New England back to the old, of which visit he will leave a full and enduring record. But behold! he has at last found his sequestered prophet.

## IV.

## EMERSON AND CARLYLE

That peculiar presentimental strain in Emerson which we shall often note hereafter, has felt out beforehand the man of all Europe whom he wishes to see face to face and to hear intone the living word. When Emerson first began to glimpse the auroral gleam of the as yet unrisen literary genius who was to be his spiritual yoke-fellow during life, we do not know. But it is possible to indicate what seems his earliest distinctive recognition in a joyous jotting of his Journal dated October 1, 1832: "I am cheered and instructed by this paper on Corn Law Rhymes in the Edinburgh (Review) by my Germanick new-light writer whoever he be. He gives us confidence in our principles. He assures the truth-lover every where of sympathy. Blessed art that makes books, and so joins me to this stranger by that perfect railroad." Said paper was by anonymous Carlyle.

Thus the forecasting Emerson with a sort of prayerful gratitude hails the new luminary of writ whose name even he does not yet know. The evangel drops suddenly upon him from the unseen Beyond, imparting to him fresh confidence in his principles, which have just been sorely put to the proof. At the same time Emerson detects that this writer draws from a source outside himself, designated here as Germanick, though the

subject be English and concerning an Englishman. The rhymer reviewed attracts our poet, but still more the reviewer.

In such words Emerson communes with himself not quite three months before he starts for Europe, and not quite eleven months before he tracks Carlyle to the latter's lair at Craigenputtock. It should also be emphasized that the foregoing insertion was written only a few days after Emerson's withdrawal from his pulpit, while the afterstrokes of that trying struggle were still pounding in his bosom, and when he most needed to be "cheered and instructed" by this strong-worded paper of Carlyle. In fact it just hits his mood by celebrating the courage and the defiance of the Corn Law Rhymer, who in all his poverty both of food and poetry "has abjured Hypocrisy and Servility," and refused to "bow the knee to Baal." Emerson, rejected and dejected, having read himself into the unknown writer as well as into the humble hero of that article, rose out of his blue despondency, to himself saying: I must know more of that nameless rescuer of mine who has thus descended into my life just at the Providential moment with his new Gospel.

Accordingly we have to think that Emerson started on the hunt through the British Reviews for other works of his benefactor. Soon he indicates in his Journal (October 19, 1832) that he has dug up back numbers of Fraser's Magazine and has read Carlyle's notice of Schiller, now

more than eighteen months old. Here too we find this fervent apostrophe which shows that he has by this time uncovered the name of his deliverer: "If Carlyle knew what an interest I have in his persistent goodness, would it not be worth one effort more, one prayer, one meditation!" Still Emerson betrays a throb of fear for the constancy of his new-found leader: "Will he resist the deluge of bad example in England?" And the convert almost beseeches his ghostly mediator "not to betray the love and trust which he has awakened." Does this note of anxiety spring from his recent experience of disappointment?

So we have to conceive Emerson at this time occupied for dear life with one supreme fate-coercing task: he must delve for and devour the writings of Thomas Carlyle not yet collected, but scattered at random through various English periodicals. He also tells where he wrought: "I go to the Atheneum (Boston) and read," setting doubtless the librarians on the scent after more articles. We may infer that he had pretty well finished in about six weeks the most if not all of the Essays of Thomas Carlyle up to date, possibly from the first one printed in 1827 on Richter. For we find this indication in his Journal seemingly about mid November, 1832: "I read that man is not a clothes-horse, and come out and meet my young friend. . . . who little imagines that he points a paragraph for Thomas Carlyle." Here Emerson appears to have somehow gotten the

clew of Sartor quite a year before its first publication in *Fraser* (November, 1833). Of course the idea delighted him immensely, since he had just thrown up his vocation, that he might not be a clothes-horse, the depository of Time's old garments, especially of the clerical pattern.

However this may be, it is certain that Emerson up to the end of 1832 when he starts for Europe, could have found access to some two dozen or more of Carlyle's magazine articles which had been written during the five preceding years, from 1827. Moreover these productions form the most influential and universally readable portion of Carlyle's works. To-day they are perused by many who will accept none of his later writings. In his life's history they likewise reveal a very characteristic stage of his development. But especially did they appeal to Emerson whom they picked up just at this nodal psychologic crisis. It may be doubted if Carlyle ever wrote anything afterwards which so decisively took hold of his present disciple. In the coming years Emerson will show his gratitude for his rescue by rescuing in turn Carlyle from downright hunger, and probably saving him to literature. Nevertheless the pupil will later strike into his own independent road, refusing to wear any other man's ready-made clothes, even his aforesaid master's.

## V.

## THE VISIT

Accordingly Emerson with all the zeal of young discipleship sets out to find the master, obscure and almost hidden in his lonely lair, and after considerable enterprise succeeds in reaching the shrine of his present devotion. Small and fortuitous though it seems, it was a germinal deed of Emerson's life, done with his prophetic instinct of some future fulfilment. Thus the two sons of Zeus are brought together to start their spirit's flight, and they begin to circle about each other for their own time, and we may think, for all time. Moreover their bond will leave to the future a new beautiful image of literary friendship, perhaps the most enduring and inspiring of its kind.

Emerson, hastening northward from London and bearing letters of introduction to Carlyle at Edinburgh, failed to find him there, and nobody could quite tell where he was, so complete had been his social withdrawal from the Scottish capital. Finally the secretary at the University of Edinburgh dug up his address—*Craigenputtock* on the moors, fifteen miles from *Dumfries*, accessible only by private conveyance, a farm in *Nithdale*. Hardly a beaten track to that eagle's eyrie; but Emerson, the spirit's hunter, was not to be deterred by such obstacles, for Carlyle was just then the supreme goal of his European Journey. Says he: "I found the house amid desolate heathery hills where the

lonely scholar nourished his mighty heart," though "unknown and exiled on that hill-farm, and not a person to speak to within sixteen miles except the minister of Dunscore," who also got shy of him at last, doubtless on account of his heresies.

What was the attraction? We have already noted how Emerson's attention for some time had been drawn to the series of articles in the *Edinburgh* and other British Reviews, wherein he saw a new star blaze across the literary firmament. So unique were they in style and matter that he began to seek after the author. The result is he has reached the solitary farmhouse from which these Essays were sent forth, and is knocking at the door, where he is received with warm hospitality by Thomas and Jane Carlyle.

But let us first premise that the author's main object in these Essays was to tap the new German Literature and make it flow over into English. It was manifest that Carlyle deemed himself an interpreter of the supreme literary phenomenon of the time. Now the curious fact has already turned up that Emerson did not care to sip of this original fountain at first hand, but partook of it through Carlyle. He had previously called his author Germanick, indicating manner and thought. We have noted the item that already in Boston this influence had been transplanted from Germany. Emerson has indeed said that the primordial source of his own world-view lay in Teutonic philosophy, though he at times discounted the statement.

It is of import to mark that Emerson was now thirty years old and had not yet begun his literary career; in fact, he was just passing out of his Apprenticeship. Carlyle was seven years older and more, and had nearly completed one stage of his total authorship; he was beginning to transcend his purely German epoch, and was getting ready to flee from his solitary farm-house to its opposite, densely peopled London. On the other hand Emerson was meditating the reverse way in his new life, intending to escape from a populous city to his own farm-house near a small town. Hence he questions the step of Carlyle. Indeed the two have already started to go apart in tendency; as before said, no future work of Carlyle will ever mean as much to Emerson as did the *Essays*, including *Sartor Resartus*, which in composition and spirit belongs to the author's Craigenputtock era.

The common element twinning most deeply these Dioscuri of letters, Emerson has declared to be the moral Sentiment, the immediate effluence of the spirit, which each of them sometimes but not always identified with God. But as to the recipient of this power, Emerson believed it might overflow quite any human being, and thus show a democratic equality; but Carlyle believed or came to believe that it descended upon the hero only, who was thus the divinely gifted ruler, the inspired autocrat over the uninspired masses. Hence Emerson expressed his new friend's deficiency: "My own feeling was that I had met with men of far less power

who had got greater insight into religious truth," namely into its universality as belonging to all men. In this remark we may also observe a passing flash of the real attraction which Carlyle exerted over Emerson: Power. That was the unique gift of the Scotchman: the elemental energy which poured itself out into his English word. No writer has given utterance to more absurdities, trivialities, common-places, but the demonic Power of the man! Hopelessly wrong in thought, the soul of self-contradiction, where can we find his equal in cosmic energy of speech? No such mighty hurler of the thunderous word since Shakespeare—but he simply lacks Shakespeare's all-piercing, all-ordering intellect. Here lay Carlyle's chief fascination for Emerson, as the latter has repeatedly hinted. And this was and still remains Carlyle's hold on literature, certainly not his doctrine. With the same meaning Emerson declares: the greater power of Carlyle lies in his form, not in his content.

Emerson, leaving Carlyle, is impressed that the latter can give nothing to him of creative thought, of positive constructive import. But the fascination remained. So he exclaims, ruminating a few days later at Liverpool while tediously awaiting good weather for sailing: "Ah me! Mr. Thomas Carlyle, I would give a gold pound for your wise company this gloomy evening!" He had felt that demonic Power in the talk of the man—and Carlyle manifested his peculiar force quite as much in conversation as in writing. His elemental character

showed itself in more ways than speech—in look, grimace, in roar of passion, in explosive horse-laughs. Emerson had his own style, his own unique color and rhythm of the word, but not this power. Still he loved it, hence his delight in rude but forceful Whitman, which has caused surprise to many of his admirers.

While delaying at Liverpool for his vessel, Emerson takes a glance backward “through this European scene, this last schoolroom,” so he calls it, of his Apprenticeship. While he is getting ready to step on “the ship that steers westward,” not to Italy does he recur or to the famous lands and works; but to the eminent men he has seen—especially Landor, Coleridge, Carlyle, Wordsworth. With what result? I have been “thereby comforted and confirmed in my convictions.” A stronger, deeper assurance of his world-view he has received. More certain of himself than before he stands on his own footing; indeed that much-stressed virtue of his, called self-reliance, obtains now, if not birth, at least baptism and consecration. He summons the great ones before his tribunal: “Not one of these is a mind of the first class.” No, not one, not even my favorite Carlyle; so saith the Emersonian world-judge now adjudicating their claims. This final test they do not stand: “especially are they all deficient—all these four in different degrees, but all deficient—in insight into religious truth.” Such is the decision on retrospect: “they have no idea of that species of moral truth

which I call the first philosophy." Note the last two words for the future, since they let us glimpse a life-long aspiration of Emerson. Still further, he here feels and plainly utters that this journey is for him the closing of an Epoch. "I am very glad my traveling is done—too old to be a vagabond," though certainly not yet aged. So he forecasts that he must now settle down, and take position for the coming fight. Is it not evident that he has won his viewpoint, has recovered himself and knows where he stands? "This is my charge, plain and clear, to act faithfully upon my own faith, to live by it," let come what may. Thus he has internally won his citadel of freedom; can he next make it an external reality?

Again hear the strong stress of his self-reliance: "a man contains all that is needful to his government within himself," he is his own final and absolute lawgiver, "he is made a law unto himself." The outward order, the world of institutions, the associated life of man has quite sunk out of his vision. Such is the limit now placed upon him, the final fruit of his Apprenticeship. Still it is just this limit which gives him his message and makes him the supreme apostle of the moral spirit to his time and country, both of which have need of it. Still it is not the whole of thought or of conduct; it must be transcended, Emerson will transcend it at last, though the task will take him a life-time and stir him to his grandest achievement.

But for the nonce let us ponder that divinely

freighted aphorism of his, struck off at sea (Journal, September 9, 1833) as the present utterance of his permanent world-view: "The highest revelation is that God is in everyman;" thus even deity he now democratizes.

## VI.

## HOME AGAIN

In October 1833 Emerson reached New York, and soon was in Boston, his native locality, from which he had started forth nearly ten months ago. With great rapidity he has skipped over seas and lands, and has drawn a circle upon the earth and upon his life, into which he has crammed much outward experience whereon he can henceforth ruminate and write at leisure. Restored in health, confirmed in his basic world-view, renovated in spirit, he is ready to take a fresh plunge into his life's work.

But after such a dizzying whirl of external activities, he must pull himself together inwardly. The next two years he will occupy in kneading over his gathered materials, and in recovering at home what had been broken up and in part lost by his previous convulsion, and then by his sudden departure. Thus the present triennial Epoch, which is essentially that of Recovery within and without, will be completed, healing over the breach made by the previous time of volcanic eruption.

The first matter of importance is that his voca-

tion be restored. When he arrived and looked over the field, he found that he had no fixed hold anywhere, he had nothing to do, his place was filled. He could not go back to his old position and be again a traditional minister in some church. Still he loved the speaker's art and deemed it his way of delivering his message. Accordingly we find him giving lectures, wherever he can get a chance, on the most diverse topics. He starts at Boston with a course on Natural Science, since just now he is thinking out and writing out a work on Nature. But he speaks also on literature, on poetry, on his trip abroad, and shows much interest in the biographies of Great Men, a future theme. He will even preach a sermon of his sort if called upon. In such a scattered way Emerson is trying to pick up and co-ordinate his hitherto dispersed knowledge. Still further, he is practicing himself in his future calling, he is establishing the Emersonian Lyceum which he will perpetuate during his active life. Or we may say he is establishing the University Emerson, with himself as President and Head-Professor in every department. Evidently this new vocation grows out of his pulpiteering, and is specially nourished by his love of oratory.

In the second place Emerson feels that he must win his community, and thus be restored to a communal life, which he will share and develop with its other members. He has hitherto lived a kind of vagrant existence in Boston and in various places about the city. Many have been the movings, his

own as well as those of his mother's family from spot to spot. But all that must now be stopped. Sometimes he thinks of flight to the Maine Woods, or to the Berkshire Hills. But at last he settles down in his Indian Musketaquid or civilized Concord, his ancestral community dating back to old Peter Bulkley, his forbear of two centuries, whom he eulogizes in an address of this time as "a distinguished minister of Woodhill, Bedfordshire, descended from a noble family, honored for his own virtues, his learning and gifts as a preacher, and adding to his influence the weight of a large estate."

Thus the anti-traditional Emerson resolves to take a dip backward into the stream of domestic and communal tradition. We have just seen how inclined he was to belittle Europe's past, but Concord's past is a theme for his superb glorification. Sea-born Venice became for him "a most disagreeable residence," being to his sight "a city for beavers," though he seems to delight in the muskrats of the Musketaquid. Very suggestive of his present mood is his "Historical Discourse on the second centennial anniversary of Concord," the somewhat exuberant laudation of the wee town on its birthday, September 12, 1835, when it had reached the reverend age of two hundred years, after much tough fighting of its people with Nature, with the Indians, with the British, and somewhat with one another. Of this little Yankee Iliad, Emerson is the Homer, and his ancestor, heroic Peter

Bulkley is the divine Achilles. And it makes an interesting, heart-uplifting epic of the community. Still we can not help thinking, Is this the same Emerson who not long since found so little in antique Italy, and now finds so much in antique Concord? Do not both belong to that transmitted world of the past against which lay his revolt? To be sure, Emerson never pretended to consistency, except perchance to be consistent in his inconsistency. Antiquity abroad is one thing; antiquity at home, especially in the House of Emerson, is surely another. Very delightful it is to see him heroize forefatherly Reverend Peter Bulkley, after having pulled down the colossal statue of Julius Caesar and leveled Rome's mightiest man with us the masses, proclaiming "A soul as great as his is your own." So Emerson makes us all tingle with our new-famed grandeur, and celebrates our heroic equality with the supreme world-historical characters of the ages.

Never to be forgotten, among his other more exhilarating freedoms is that underlying economic freedom which he bears with him into his home's renewal. More than a year before his marriage he writes in a letter to his brother: "The Tucker estate is so far settled that I am sure of an income of about twelve hundred dollars," which considerable treasure "will enable me to buy a hearth somewhere." Hence it comes that we read the gratifying news less than a month before the new wedding day: "I have dodged the doom of building and have bought the Coolidge house in Concord,

with the expectation of entering it next September'' for the marriage festival. Will the reader's heart not be quickened that Emerson has now the solid cash to meet this considerable expense, amounting to some four thousand dollars according to his figures? Thus he has gained his permanent home, his Castle of Defiance, where he will stay the rest of his life. The Coolidge House is destined to an immortality imparted by its occupant and has become the shrine of a great pilgrimage, unique in its variety of pilgrims and of their mental idiosyncrasies.

Thus Emerson gets settled against his life's drifting which has indeed lasted a good while, almost his first third of a century. He will no longer stray at random, more or less the sport of chance, but he will henceforth radiate in all directions from a fixed center. Nor must we forget the peculiar community to which he has come back as being indigenous to its soil and character. It is indeed a significant return both of body and soul from a long separation, inasmuch as Concord is not far from being the most traditional town in the United States, having consciously cultivated just that faculty to an unusual degree of excellence. The reader will now glance with fresh interest over the leaves of the previously mentioned "Historical Discourse" of the returned indigenous Emerson, in which he so glorifies his fellow-autochthons of the venerable community, surely to their well-merited happiness. Still the real aborigines, the Indians, are absent, except possibly Thoreau.

But mark the consequence, or at least the sequence of this happy communal lovefeast. The orator having made to his festal Concordites such a concordant speech, sets out at once to do another traditional deed of even deeper harmony. Two days after the foregoing celebration we read in his *Journal* (September 14, 1835) with blank unexpectancy: "I was married to Lydia Jackson"—where, when, by whom, not a word. Not one customary or traditional gust of love—this must be again the anti-traditional Emerson. A very unglowing statement of a glowing fact, as old memory runs; so we search in his *Journal* after a few warm words, but it keeps utterly dumb for a fortnight and two days when it seems faintly to whisper: "The woods are all in a glow"—which short breath we may take as an Emersonian symbol of the spirit—doubtless of his own spirit.

Seemingly not much outer ceremony or celebration can be charged against that wedding. The most alert reader has hardly expected such an outcome to the rather colorless insertion of the preceding January 23rd: "Home again from Plymouth with most agreeable recollections." No hint as to what caused so much pleasure. Quite neutral still is the tint of January 30th, which day "I spent at Plymouth with Lydia Jackson," though here we catch a place and a person. No poetizing by the poet breathes in the intimacy of his *Journal*, no lover of love seems this lover. All of which bears profoundly upon the character of Emerson and of

his literary tendency, which we are seeking to understand.

But the main fact is that Emerson has now returned to his own after a deep and stormy estrangement. He has won his Recovery, as we name this Epoch, having been restored or rather having restored himself to vocation, community, and family, though he has put these old social relations upon a new and independent basis. How profound and strong runs his ancestral feeling as he shouts: "Hail to the quiet fields of my fathers!" But at the same time in this transmitted environment we hear his emphatic affirmation of spiritual liberty: "Henceforth I design not to utter any poem, speech, or book that is not entirely and peculiarly my work." Does not this unsworn oath to his Genius indicate that his Apprenticeship is drawing to a close—the long term of years which he has devoted to the appropriation of the transmitted Past? Evidently not a new Epoch merely but a new Period is knocking at the door of his coming career.

## VII.

### RETROSPECT

Our best reader at this turning-point of a long Period, will of himself face about and glance backward over the entire stretch of life through which he has just traveled with Mr. Emerson. Under all its driftings, fortunes, and misfortunes, it reveals an inner order, indeed a certain unity of purpose

secretly winding through it from first to last, and organizing its diverse and often mutually repellent masses. Moreover the intimation has more than once been heard that this particular Period of one life has its universal aspect belonging to all lives, that Emerson's biography, rightly conceived and set forth, not only mirrors human biography as such but contains the very process thereof as its profoundest moving-principle. Here too we are to vision all in the one.

Thus we have reached a point at which we are led to look backward, but we must stop with that. We eagerly inquire, can we catch Emerson also looking backward from this same point and about this same time? A little hint brings forth the fact that on January 9, 1834, he is deeply pondering over the present subject, since we hear his searching inquiry of himself: "What is it that interests us in Biography?" His answer in its essence runs "that, in the writer's opinion, in some one respect this particular man represented the idea of Man." So there are representative men shown in biography: a theme which he will carry with him and work out many years later. But let us here behold Emerson viewing human life, his own included, and declaring that the particular form of it must have a universal significance, or represent "the idea of Man." Let us not forget that about this date we see Emerson passing a grand node of his own life, from his First to his Second Period, as we designate the transition.

But this is not all of his self-communing just now on the present subject. His record goes on: "And as far as we accord with his (the biographer's) judgment, we take the picture for a Standard Man, and so let every line accuse or approve our own ways of thinking and living by comparison." (Journals III, p. 249.) Two points are here noted, both of them deeply significant for Emerson's future. In the first place he announces his conception of the Standard Man, underlying, imbreathing, yea creating all right Biography. A wonderful glimpse is that, nothing less than a forecast of a science of Biography, with its genetic principle, the Standard Man, incarnating himself in the individual man. But it is as yet only a glimpse, a prophecy, a far-off foreview of the new kind of life-writing. Just about the most needed thing in to-day's literature is this conception of the Standard Man, but his inner process should also be shown, the very movement and law of his soul as it embodies itself in the events of the particular person, through which as its transparent medium it is to shine self-revealing. Will Emerson ever make real his grand prevision, will he ever organize chaotic Biography? He is now entering a new stage of his career, just the creative one above all others. Let the reader watch him with keen discrimination, but also with generous hope.

There is likewise a second noteworthy thought in the above cited passage. Emerson implies that in every written life which we read, we are to look for

“the picture of the Standard Man,” and after such a standard (hence the name) gage ourselves “by comparison,” accusing or approving our own lives past and present according to the judgment. Thus we spy Emerson looking backward from this mountain peak of existence, and seeking to get the trend and the purport of what he has passed through, since he feels that it must be a determining factor of what he is to become, really an integrating arc of the total cycle of his years.

So we discover at this transitional line the retrospective Emerson, and we are doing what he does, yea we are trying to be what he is. We also find him making deep studies in Biography both for his lectures and for himself. The next year (1835) we come upon him still ruminating over “the great value of Biography,” which shows, regardless of those mighty separators, Space and Time, “the perfect sympathy between like minds,” which Emerson finds especially in ancient Plutarch. He adds: “We recognize with delight a strict likeness between their noblest impulses and our own. We are tried in their trials, conquer in their victory.” Thus Emerson relives the lives of heroes, traces in their deeds his own very soul, discerning and identifying both in them and in himself the Standard Man, the Universal Person who individuates his oneness into the Many. Still we have to beg: Give us, O seer, the creative process of your Super-Man, reveal to us the very soul of your Over-Soul in its psychological round as it manifests itself in Mind and in

Nature. Some such "First Philosophy" Emerson is working at now, and has been, and will continue to be, as we often observe while we stroll through the jottings of his Diary. But at present we must wait for its fulfilment.

As we are eager to peer in advance whither Emerson is tending, we shall skip a good many years and take an extract from his Journal for September, 1847, which is in line with our present theme: "*All biography is autobiography.*" So he underscores this pithy aphorism which has its special pertinence to Emerson himself, as we may observe in what follows: "I notice that the biography of each noted individual is really at last communicated by himself." Good! for here Emerson hints that Emerson's life must be finally construed out of Emerson's own writings and sayings. All the author's works are ultimately his confessions, or his self-revelations, whatever be their guise or disguise. But listen again: "The lively traits of criticism on his works are all confessions, made by him from time to time among his friends and remembered and printed." Not only his criticism on his works, but the works themselves are confessions, as Emerson declares repeatedly elsewhere.

Hence it comes that we try to find in Emerson's own writings the various stages of his biographic evolution. He is always telling on himself, but we have to catch him at it, and be able to peep under his masks of which he possesses quite a variety. Undoubtedly Emerson the author, with all his literary

fertility, never wrote directly his autobiography, as did Goethe and Rousseau; but indirectly he wrote nothing else. What he has written must, therefore, be reconstrued, condensed, and organized into a new biographic Whole, which reveals as its generative source the soul of the Standard Man, as Emerson names him, in the very process of his life's unfolding.

And now the reader, for his final edification, we hope, is himself to look backward, and to trace in this First Period and its three Epochs not merely some external divisions foisted on the subject from the outside, but the essential movement of the Man himself, the Standard Man, here individualized in his Emersonian wrappage of time and place. Not for the sake of convenience or even clarity, or any other rhetorical artifice are these chapters and sections set down and even numbered so emphatically; they indicate the inner stages of the soul's very activity which thus makes its own divisions or takes its own steps in the forward sweep of its native development. Hence there is to be seen and spiritually appropriated in the three Epochs of the present Period a necessary soul-growth from within, not an arbitrary classification from without. Emerson's life-problem we may generalize as his conflict with Tradition in its manifold forms, which evolves of its own inherent nature through the three stages indicated in the foregoing Epoch. Let us recall them in simple but transparent outline: (1) Emerson acquiring Tradition through education which cul-

minates in his traditional vocation; (2) Emerson breaking with Tradition in the form of his traditional vocation (the ministry); (3) Emerson restoring himself to Tradition (community, family, vocation) yet under changed and for him new forms. In these three Epochs we are to see active and creative the soul's own movement, or Psyche's ultimate round self-generating and generative (called elsewhere the Psychosis). Glimpses of this basic psychical process we shall often find in Emerson, though he remains the glimpser, not the organizer.

But enough of retrospect for the present; let us turn to prospect. A new and far greater Period of Emerson's career has dawned and awaits survey, which must also give ultimately its creative psychical process. Now we may affirm that Emerson's Apprenticeship to Tradition within the limits heretofore laid down is closed, and we advance to his Second Period with its round of Epochs which reveals a still deeper estrangement from Tradition, and its corresponding warfare of speech and action. In fact, Emerson now proceeds to universalize that first breach of his with his church; he drives toward an all-embracing negation of the past which has hitherto trained him in its routine of formalism and faith. Still he has his exceptions, he does not quite reach the point of an absolute nihilism. But let us step over.

## Part Second

### The Revolutionary Emerson

#### 1835-1865

The Middle Period of Emerson's life is one long protest and assault, under multitudinous forms, against the world prescribed and handed down to him from the past, especially at those points which limit and chafe his free individuality. He takes pleasure in calling himself a non-conformist, a dissenter from all things established, a protester even against the transmitted Protestantism; once at least, perchance at an extreme moment, he lauds anarchy by name. He also designates himself as revolutionary, and this word we have chosen from a goodly anthology of similar self-applied epithets, as his characteristic title for the present Period, which subtly connects him with Concord's famous revolutionary deed, as she "fired the shot heard round the world." So did he, but his were word-bullets.

When he was an old man and looked back at his era and himself in it, he cited the well-known apo-

them: "Revolutions begin in the best heads and run steadily down to the populace." In this general statement he implied his own revolution, whose spirit had percolated far and wide. To be sure, it was not at the start a bloody revolution, though it began to take a sanguinary streak in John Brown, whom Emerson defended and hallowed in name and deed. Still we are not to forget that Emerson silently recalled this utterance of his concerning Brown when, after the Civil War, he had passed out of his Revolutionary Period into a new attitude toward the existent political order.

The preceding Period was designated as Emerson's Apprenticeship to Tradition, with which he had a considerable experience, theoretical and practical. The result was for him a deep and persistent hostility passing over into and underlying this entire Second Period, whose main theme will be his battle with Tradition in all its forms and everywhere, so far as he is conscious of them. In religion, in literature, in social order, he became an incisive critic of the transmitted dogmas and methods.

Particularly he arraigns man's associated life coming down from the past in the shape of institutions—Church, State, Economic Order, and even the Family. He seems to have fallen out with total society, and seeks in some way to get back to the purely individual existence, wherein lies for him the only freedom and the only civilization. The instituted world, he holds, is but an obstacle to the soul's highest relation, an interruption of the free

communion between man and God. To be sure Emerson does not claim to be always consistent in his views, in fact he claims to be inconsistent—every moment has the right of a different inspiration from above. Any restraint upon that primal divine right, as prescribed dogma, ceremonial, system, calls for the instant challenge to battle.

It is evident that here lies a great estrangement of the individual from his environing world of order, and from the presuppositions of his own existence. In this sense Emerson is a revolutionist, and his attitude will last through the present Period. His writing will be a critique of human association, which he puts to the question in all its manifestations. During three decades he is passing through his purgatorial journey which is one long spiritual denial of accepted doctrine and society, till he works himself free of his negation.

I. This Period can be conceived to lie between two different Emersons, or between two supreme ideas of the same evolving man, the one starting and the other closing what may be called his thirty years' war. The first Emerson asserts the individual man as the true and sole vehicle of the divine effluence; the second grants this power also to associated man, to the people, to the masses, with whom he finally becomes reconciled. Between these two conceptions move three decades of spiritual struggle—really this whole Revolutionary Period. Emerson at the beginning of it disliked and distrusted popular government with its ballot and crass mul-

titude; but the experience of the Civil War made him a strong believer in the divine "perception that passes through thousands as well as through one." Thereby he becomes not only pacified externally with his institutional environment, but internally harmonized and unified with the same in his conviction. Thus we behold the Revolutionary Emerson passing into the Reconciled Emerson, or we may say, the Institutional Emerson.

This was indeed a deep-searching human experience, and it calls forth the excellence of Emerson both in his writ and his life. Moreover such an experience belonged to his people and to his age, and is still a thing not transcended. To-day the social fight continues with greater intensity than ever, and all the forms of associated Man are challenged afresh in new ways and with new weapons. So we may see that Emerson's literary and biographic value persists and even increases. Verily his career is remedial, showing how he got well of the time's deepest malady; his life, like every great and complete life, bears in it a vicarious strain, we may deem it in a sense mediatorial, though he disliked the word and its thought as something transmitted in religion.

II. This Second Period, accordingly, we conceive in its general outline, as the time of Emerson's supreme achievement, of the fulfilment of his life's essential task. He makes his vocation a reality and a permanence, so that it becomes an enduring fact in the world. Looking back at and weigh-

ing his First Period, in which he was substantially but a limited individual with his viewpoint and outfit, we may say that he in his Second Period universalizes himself; that is, his own idea he seeks to make universal, applying it to many subjects. He seeks also to impart his spiritual view, bringing it, as far as possible, into general circulation.

Now, to compass achievement, he must first have the thing to achieve. Possessing his germinal thought, he is to think it out fully, for which work his quiet Concord Castle offers a good opportunity. Elaboration must be his first watchword. But even then must follow propagation of his idea, which drives the retired thinker forth from his Castle into the busy world. He will lecture, write, form clubs, help start magazines, and especially he will publish books, if need be at his own expense. Yea, he will establish the new University, the traveling Institute which he will call the Lyceum, of which he is Head Professor, going from town to town at call. In fact, he opened his home as a kind of school for all comers who were asking for light. The result was that alongside the sane seekers all the crazy reformers of New England flocked to his entertainment—cranks, bores, monomaniacs, who at last disgusted him and drove him to flight (see his lecture on *New England Reformers*).

Thus he elaborates and propagates the Emersonian Idea, making it actual—an objective, existent fact of the time. But then something better and higher he does—he lives his principle, yea bet-

ters it in his living so that his life seems greater and worthier than his word spoken or printed or propagated—more ideal than all his formulated idealism, more transcendent than his doctrinal Transcendentalism, greater than anyone of his works, or than all his works put together. In fact the life of the man is what has preserved and eternized his writings, interpreting and re-creating them ever afresh to coming generations.

More poetical was his life than his poetry, though I am of those who believe that Emerson was a poet within his range. Loftily he lived an epic, even if he never wrote one, and seemingly could not. Emerson indited Essays, literally tentatives—fragments of life, never the totality of it; he possessed no all-encompassing literary form, the novel which is such at its best, or the drama, or the epic. His writings are therefore but parts or a part of him; his supreme realization is his life, and can only be found in his biography, which is, therefore, poetical and might be a poem.

III. Emerson's Middle Period we call it also, as it runs through the middle years of his career to the borderland of old-age. Thus we seek to emphasize at the start the periodicity of Emerson's life taken in its entirety, of whose cycle we are now entering the second grand arc, or Period, as we name it distinctively. For this portion of his career though it be but a stage of the total man, has a unity, a meaning, and a process of its own, all of which must be seen if we wish to grasp aright his

life's wholeness. Moreover the forward-peering, limit-transcending reader should not fail to glimpse that this Second Period belongs not merely to the individual Emerson, but to all men's complete presentation; it is at last to be visioned as a chapter not of this particular biography alone, but of Universal Biography.

Already it has been set forth that when Emerson was about thirty-two or thirty-three years old, a great new turn had gradually insinuated itself into the sweep of his existence. When he goes back to Concord and becomes permanently settled in his domestic and communal life, and forever fixed in his world-view or basic principle of the Divine Order, he starts on a fresh stage of his journey, which, according to our estimate, will last fully three decades, and include quite the whole range of his productive years. Such is the general measure of the present Period, whose bounds fore and aft need not be clamped down to the exact year, but which become spiritually distinct to the searching eye of the soul's deeper contemplation. In such outline we seek to overspan the activity of the fully ripened middle-aged man, up to the brink of senescence, on which we shall behold him standing and peering forward and backward, with the look of having finished his task.

The first question, then, to be asked here, is this: What is the thought or general idea of this Period as a whole? Can its meaning be summarized in a term or statement out of which all its particulars

may be seen unfolding? If it were possible we would like to set down in a word or two its germinal conception, its genetic secret which is to reveal itself in what follows. Already we have given some indications on this line; we may add one or two more.

IV. The protest which we have noticed hitherto in Emerson's career (First Period), as active, but more or less implicit, is now to be made fully explicit; the potential of his Apprenticeship is to expand into the real. The as yet unexpressed denial in his soul has to find expression, adequate expression both in deed and in word. The transmitted heritage of conventions, social beliefs, religious dogmas he refuses to accept and will cast out as the time's and his own very devil. We have already noted how deep is his alienation from the realm of tradition, especially as regards religion which is truly the starting-point of his Heaven-defying recusancy. That former explosion of his which cast him out of his inherited vocation and hurled him across the ocean to Europe for recovery, has still left its scars, if not its wounds; the volcano will abate its sudden fitful violence, but continues its steady more massive eruption, over a wider and wider territory till it finally embraces quite the whole constituted order of man. With his own consent we name this Period the Revolutionary Emerson, for it is one of his own designations, and belongs to his ancestral environment.

Deeply separative it is, really the deepest sepa-

ration and estrangement of his career, just the separative stage of the man's spiritual existence. He is now in thought the negation of all associated life, which, he deems, must be sacrificed for the salvation of the moral individual life. He rather likes at times to assume the daring names of heresiarch, revolutionist, even anarchist. His separative tendency often turned him to a separation from the concrete in favor of the abstract in word and in spirit—such as Virtue (see his Essays and their titles). From the personal he would turn to the impersonal, as in the case of Love. "To go without" was one of his favorite mottoes; he praised and practiced aloofness and solitariness. His body looked an abstraction; later in life his face became almost impersonal, and even his mind.

V. We have said a good deal about the dissenting, militant, negative Emerson, the thinker of the time's protest and the campaigner for its propagation. Undoubtedly this is the phase of his activity which determines his present Period. Hence its organization must reveal itself after its strongest, most decisive principle. This we have sought already to present.

But we are not to neglect the fact that there runs a pervasive resisting countercurrent in Emerson, which may be called his affirmative strain, in opposition to his more commanding negative part. The attentive reader can always hear his Yes, though it be not so loud nor so shocking as his No. Thus he has his constructive task which indeed underlies

all his opposition. This is seen in the stress which he puts upon the direct downflow of divinity into the recipient human soul; inspiration from above is ever his central creative urge. Herein he was positive, doctrinal, yea, even dogmatic, though the quick antagonist of every other kind of dogmatism. He proscribes all prescription, and such proscription becomes his own ever-recurring prescription. He is the preacher from the one ultimate text, which is his own; of other texts he is the iconoclast.

It has been already suggested that this long Period of thirty years can be divided into three decennial Epochs without forcing it into any foreign foregone scheme of arrangement. Of course such a division is not to be vindicated in advance; its validity must be proved at the close, when all the evidence has come in and is surveyable. The subject must divide and arrange itself in these three parts after its own natural evolution. Here, then, are the three Epochs of this Second Period set down beforehand in a brief abstract summary.

I. *The Creative Decennium.*—Emerson the Transcendentalist in his primal originality, which is in the main a critique of the established or the institutional world. Negative chiefly, yet with a positive substrate.

II. *The Re-actionary Decennium.*—Emerson in a state of self-scission which criticises his critique; having fallen out with himself and his own, he seeks to transcend his former limits. His flight

both spatial and spiritual, marked specially by his second trip to Europe.

III. *The Practical Decennium*.—Emerson returns, and passes from his theoretical negation, particularly of the State, to his active or practical negation thereof, which, however, he finally overcomes through the time's school of the Civil War.

Very meagre is such an outline, no more than a sign-board of direction; still it may indicate the process of a great soul during the central and active portion of a life-time. It glimpses Emerson in his long discipline of denial, which gainsays the universal order of things as transmitted, till he triumphs over his denial. This Second Period is not laid down in any one or two books of his; its meaning and movement must be caught from all his writings and doings, in fine from his life as a whole. Moreover what he achieved by his career is contained essentially in the present Period, which is his time of self-realization, though it has a before and an after. He now thinks himself out and publishes himself in print and speech; he elaborates and delivers his message.

But thirty years make a long stretch and cannot all be of equal importance; their concentration and genetic energy are fused into one Epoch which is next to be considered.

## CHAPTER FOURTH

### THE CREATIVE DECENNIUM (1835-1845)

Let it be emphasized that this is the most creative Epoch of Emerson's most creative Period. It embraces his supremely original works, or, in the highest sense of the word, his only original works, from which to a greater or less degree, the later ones are derivative. Also his outer activities of the present Epoch are the most creative of his entire life; his deeds show a genetic energy which draws the main practical lines on which hereafter will unfold his career. Both his Intellect and his Will now drive at the topmost speed and excellence of their creative power, so that we stand amazed at the quantity as well as the quality of his performance. If the epic of Emerson could be written, this would be the heroic portion of his life, which we might call the Emersoniad.

Thus we seek to stress and to mark off the ten years which drive mightily between 1835 and 1845, designating the whole as the Creative Decennium of the author. It lies just about in the middle of the sum total of his years, as he lived somewhat more than seven decades, this decade being the fourth. Of course there is no intention of making these annual bounds absolutely rigid, for they are not; they are designed to suggest the soul-limit

rather than the time-limit of the man's stages. So let their margins sway hither and thither in a kind of elastic resilience responsive to the spirit's epochal movement. Still they trace in their wavering outlines a determinate and characteristic phase of Emerson's total life-work, and are necessary to mark the joints of its organism. During this time he elaborates, expresses in writing, and publishes to the world his most distinctive message, both as to its form and its content. Moreover this Epoch finds him at the highest maturity of his middle-age, say from his thirty-third to his forty-third year.

A special name has been given to this time and its peculiar doctrine—Transcendentalism. So this is Emerson's distinctive Transcendental Epoch in its rise, flowering, and decline; and from him as the fountain this movement overflowed into the rest of the world and into the future. The creative source of the new illumination lay in the present decennial Epoch of Emerson. It may be deemed the central luminary which irradiates his entire biography, somewhat after the manner of his doctrine of the divine effluence.

On the whole, the time favored the meditation of the retired student or the scholar, as Emerson often names his own personality. The anti-slavery excitement over the enactment of the Missouri Compromise had subsided, while that of the Annexation of Texas had not yet begun. The Nation was in a state of quiescence, if not somnolence; no really pivotal question agitated deeply the people, and the

personal character of the two Presidents during these years, Van Buren and Tyler, was not of the strongest. No great historical issues arose to call Emerson out of himself; even Europe lay quiet becalmed between the revolutionary outbursts of 1830 and of 1848. Also the religious upheaval of New England had rather spent itself. A good time for introversion and undisturbed self-communion was this Transcendental Decennium. But we shall find that some years after this Epoch Emerson will be deflected into the pressing practical interests of his country and of his age, passing out of his present dominantly theoretical attitude.

Moreover, the time was getting ready to hear Emerson's evangel for another reason. The established order in Church and State had fallen stagnant and even malodorous, was becoming demoralized, yea immoralized, the clog instead of the support of human development. Upon such a cancerous carcass of prescription was drawn Emerson's keen dissecting blade to let the gathered poison out. This, to be sure, was only a negative service, but surgically necessary for renovation. We shall often take note of Emerson's sharp critique of institutions, temporarily needful but eternally one-sided, and hence itself needing a critique. But it should never be forgotten that Emerson in the end, with the aid of a new order, rescued himself from the backstroke of his own negation—a great feat in any mortal, and for his readers the highest example.

As this Epoch is the most original of Emerson's life, it is also the most prolific, as well as most diversified in its kinds of work. Never again will his activity show itself so colossal and varied, never again will he do so great things and so many great things together. He lectures, edits, publishes, corresponds, takes notes, poetizes, writes much prose and manifold, entertains—what does he not do? And on the whole everything done is at his highest. The result is the contemplation of the man becomes a mind-stretching as well as a heart-exalting employment. His personality rises to its culmination, as distinct from his works; we gaze and wonder at him in his epochal sunburst, as he scatters his radiance over the ways in all directions. His whole life can be regarded as one continuous emanation of light, which has its luminous concentration in the present Epoch. We may well conceive Emerson's career to have this intense point of effulgence, which fitly illustrates his cardinal doctrine of the spirit's effluence from above into the soul. Thus his world-view determines even the form of his biography.

Emanative we may, accordingly, deem Emerson in character as well as in production. Without question this native bent of him will assist in explaining his decided drift toward the Orient and its poetry, though he belongs to the Occident also. Hardly could he help being moulded by his own deepest faith; all life and expressly his own life was an outflow of the one central energy, which ultimate fact of it must be made manifest in its

record. One other consequence should be noted: the power of the luminary grows less and less the farther it is emanated from its burning center towards the bounds of its existence. We shall in like manner have to observe concerning Emerson a continual dimunition in creative energy till it becomes quite extinct while he yet lives. His sun-like originality seems to stream out from this central Epoch, ever-dimming on its way deathward. Hereafter we shall find him largely repeating or varying or recreating this his primal Creative Epoch in its spiritual essence as well as in its literary form. Accordingly all his future career is to get its light from this solar Decennium.

Finally we have to speak of the difficulty of ordering this Epoch with its enormous diversity and subtlety. Its very diffusion makes it seem confusion, which is increased by its frequent sudden leaps from topic to topic. Here then lies the hardest test for the writer as well as for the reader: how shall we put into tractable shape this huge refractory mass of material, a very mixed conglomerate at first sight to the outer eye and inner reason. A chronological itemizing will certainly not bring the light we want. Somehow we must so construe it that the soul will shine through the body, or the organization be made transparent to its spirit.

A carefully measured outlook over the total field will bring to vision three lines running parallel as it were, and dividing the Decennium into three distinct strips or tracts each of which is ten years

long. A division lengthwise by topics rather than crosswise by times we are to conceive, which we shall letter and label as follows, for better clarity we hope.

Section A. *Productivity*. The Idea, Transcendentalism, shaped into completed utterance; the literary product of Emerson at its best. The triumph of his Intellect.

Section B. *Propagation*. The Idea promulgated through various instrumentalities which have their center in Emerson. The triumph of his Will.

Section C. *Origination*. The Idea in its earliest, most immediate forms of utterance—the literary embryology of Emerson, his protoplasmic forms of expression.

Such are the three main themes of this the most important Epoch of Emerson's life, which Epoch, we must keep in mind, is the starter of his Second Period embracing the inner germinal substance of his achievement. Thus we seek in advance to indicate the chief joints or sections of this intricate and peculiar organism of a life, well knowing that such anatomy is repellent to some readers, though indispensable to any final knowledge of the subject. And we may be permitted again to enforce the point that the content of the present Epoch is vaster, more complicated and more creative than all the rest of Emerson's career put together. Let it be emphasized in short that this is the most creative Epoch of the most creative Period of Emerson's entire life.

### *Section A. Productivity*

Under this head is included the Emersonian literature of the present Epoch in its finished and more permanent forms. These are principally the Essay and the Address or Oration, not to speak of articles, reviews, and other temporary efforts. His poetry we shall place under a different category, as well as certain other important but more primary and embryonic writings.

Here we are to find and to appropriate the eternal Emerson, the part of him most excellent, which has lasted and is going to last—Emerson as he supremely was, is, and will continue to be. Today we commune with his spirit through his written word which won its sovereign character in this creative Decennium of all his years, and which has been handed down to us with a new increment of influence long after he has passed away. In the present section we are to come into participation not only with the immortal but the immortalizing portion of the man. This one enduring part of him is what makes him endure in every part, inbuing the same with its own regenerative energy.

In the considerable list of his works now to be considered, we are to trace the stages of his world-view, to mark his spiritual evolution, in fine to write his psychical biography. These ten years are by no means all alike, nor are their productions alike;

they show a gradual transformation in thought, mood, and manner—a budding, blooming and drooping of zeal—the rise, culmination and decline of the original idea in its originator.

Repeatedly this Idea has been mentioned in a passing way, though it be the as yet unseen Prime-Mover of the whole undertaking. The justly inquisitive reader must have queried over the same: what is it—whose—whence? And the specific name of this Prime-Mover has been already announced several times in a desultory fashion—Transcendentalism. This somewhat elusive and shifty, yet central vocable is first to be considered in its origin, meaning, and influence.

## I.

### TRANSCENDENTALISM

The cardinal word of Emerson and of Emerson's doctrine, and of Emerson's followers for this Epoch: it rises up the initial mountainous difficulty with which his thought-searching student has to grapple. First let it be said that it is doubtless Emerson's own designation of his own idea, even if he found, as he says, the term already in German Philosophy. We catch an early glimpse of its existence hinted in a letter to Carlyle, dated March 12, 1835, in which Emerson speaks of *The Transcendentalist*, the name of a new journal about to be started, in which he has evidently a good deal of interest. Moreover a kind of Transcendental Club

composed of a group of young men, of whom he seems to be the disguised motive-power, peeps out modestly in the same letter.

Thus we may infer that Emerson already in the beginning of this his Creative Epoch had found the suggestive name, or the distinctive category which was to cleave to his work as well as to his personality in the time to come. The name has turned out a hitting one and of happy fortune which has never lapsed in spite of some opposition and even obloquy. It is Emerson's word for Emersonianism, for the new Idea which he had conceived and which he would now set forth to the world in deed and speech. To be sure Emerson was never quite ready to acknowledge the paternity of the label, even to his nearest friends and followers. One of the earliest of these is Dr. F. H. Hedge who writes: "How the name *Transcendental* originated, I cannot say. It certainly was never assumed by the persons so called." Yet Emerson seems to have used it before anybody else, and to have been quite familiar with it, since it rises to the surface in another early letter of his to Carlyle (April 30, 1835) which alludes again to a projected Journal, or perchance "a book to be called *The Transcendentalist*." Its editor is to be this same Doctor Hedge, who says of himself: "I was the only one (of the group) who had any first-hand acquaintance with German Transcendental Philosophy at the start." Still he disclaims authorship of the name or any knowledge of the author. That must have been Emerson's closely

guarded secret—a wise precaution on his part, we may well reflect.

Nevertheless the term itself was not original with Emerson, who has given himself unusual trouble to tell us whence it was derived: “The Idealism of the present day acquired the name of Transcendental from the use of that term by Immanuel Kant, of Koenigsberg, who replied to the skeptical philosophy of Locke.” This states the source as well as the ground of its adoption. The same passage runs on: “The extraordinary profoundness and precision of that man’s (Kant’s) thinking have given vogue to his nomenclature, in Europe and America, to that extent that whatever belongs to intuitive thought is popularly called at the present day *Transcendental*” (Emerson’s lecture on *The Transcendentalist* read in January, 1842, hence some seven years after the movement had started).

Thus Emerson, looking backward to the origin and scope of his fertile idea when it had gathered great force, connects it with the German philosophical thought of the Eighteenth Century in its reaction against the sensism of Locke and his followers. Moreover in this same lecture the new doctrine is explained as “the tendency to respect intuitions and to give them, at least in our creed, all authority over our experience.” Furthermore in the first sentence it is emphasized that this new doctrine is “not new but the very oldest of thoughts cast into the mould of these new times,” being really the old Idealism reaching back to Plato, yet “Idealism as

it appears in 1842'' at Boston. So Emerson, in a prescriptive mood not always his, seeks to connect his spiritual child with the past and to make it a development out of foregone philosophies, especially the German. Still it is by no means a mere repetition or imitation, but an evolution, which indeed underlies the 'unconscious Emerson everywhere, and at times breaks up into conscious utterance, whereof a well known instance peeps out prophetically in the lines:

And, striving to be man, the worm  
Mounts through all the spires of form.

It is, however, our opinion that Emerson in the foregoing account, which is historically true enough, though not wholly flawless, has not revealed the source whence he himself derived the word and the idea of Transcendentalism, for which he was indeed ready and even groping. He doubtless heard the doctrine and its name for the first time from Carlyle when he paid the latter his visit already recounted, though he remained silent about this fact. And we shall often find out that Emerson had his peculiar reticences on pivotal matters, for reasons which he kept very private. But as this point relates to the spiritual genesis of Emerson's work, it may be a little further expanded.

In an early passage of *Sartor Resartus* (Book I, Ch. 4), Carlyle, in describing Teufelsdröckh's many startling spontaneities, regards them as possibly having their "second source in his Transcendental

Philosophies," with which is also connected his "humor of looking at all Matter and material things as Spirit"; in which citations may be found the word as well as a hint of its Emersonian meaning. In fact Teufelsdröckh can well be taken as the first and germinal Transcendentalist. Sartor Resartus was printed by instalments in Fraser's Magazine, starting November, 1833, with the first four chapters. It must have been read to Emerson during the latter's visit with Carlyle at Craigenputtock in August, 1833, for it had already been written and made into a book rejected of publishers. Really Carlyle could hardly help reading to his appreciative guest salient extracts from his greatest creation, and talking about its idea, as he thumbed the precious manuscript. And Jane Carlyle at his side would surely have prompted him if he had neglected aught, for this she declared to be her darling's "work of genius, dear." What else had they to talk about during that long stretch of a day and more? And what but the new idea could have made such a lasting and creative impression upon Emerson? Still he has not recorded this truly genetic impartation in either of his two printed accounts of the visit.

Let us here take note that Emerson did not fail to signify, usually in his placid manner, that there was a negative, defiant, fighting side to his Transcendentalism, which he would stress in his martial mood. The enemy whom it everywhere scented with a blood-hound's keenness, and whom it would chal-

lence on the spot was Tradition, anathema to its infernality.] Characteristically opposite to the preceding German derivation of his idea is Emerson's reply to an inquirer: "I told Mr. ——— that he need not consult the Germans but if he wished at any time to know what the Transcendentalists believed, he might simply omit what in his own mind he added from Tradition, and the rest would be Transcendentalism." To be sure, Emerson never carried out his doctrine to the extreme intimated in his statement; there remained in his nature, after all his eliminations of what had been transmitted to him, a deep substrate of traditional beliefs, mostly unconscious, but often identified and even vaunted.

He gloried in his inherited Puritanic consciousness, especially as regards its morality, though he rejected its dogmatic element. And in the unlit underworld of his soul were stored volumes of ancient prescription whose pages he seemed not to read aloud or at least not to express in writ. That Concord community, so dear to him, was largely a transmitted thing, inside him and outside. Such in fact was the substructure of his whole activity, whose superstructure, however, was a strongly fortified citadel reared against the instituted order as handed down from the fathers. The Transcendentalist would exclude everything externally transmitted or prescribed; no outer mediate descent into the soul is allowed, only the inner immediate effluence, that of deity himself.

Though Emerson denies and defies the principle

of authority, he hardly gets rid of it in his doctrine, but transfers it, that is, he shifts the seat of authority from Tradition to Intuition, and stresses the individual more than the institution. Thus the recalcitrant has his place of submission, if not of servility. The iconoclast of induction, he turns idolater of instinct, through which alone God reveals himself. The soul is to be obedient, receptive, subject to the divine effluence, whose dictation is final and without question. Thus Emerson turns back to the Oriental consciousness, and becomes the modern theocrat, born of Puritanism on our Western Continent. No wonder that he reverts so much to Persia and India for his spiritual comfort and inspiration. There runs through him a line of return from the Occident to the Orient, even from democracy to absolutism. Emerson was not in harmony with the American polity during his Creative Epoch, though in later years he became more reconciled. To be sure he affirmed strongly the side of individual judgment and initiative, but he shied at individual association in the form of the State and other Institutions. The atom he uplifted and glorified, but the organized body composed of atoms lay not in his interest, perchance not distinctly in his vision, at least not during his Creative Epoch. Moses and the Prophets in old Judea received God's message directly; why should not I, Emerson, now do the same in New England without their words' interposition, but imitating them just in their supreme act? Commune not with their evangel as

final, but reach back to the source of it and tap that in thine own right for slaking thy soul's thirst. Here lies the reason in part why Emerson was influenced to such a small degree ostensibly by the Hebrew Scriptures, though in doctrine at his deepest he was their offspring.

This sovereign Spirit Emerson postulates: he did not undertake to say, how it came down into the human soul, nor when, nor where. Nor did he try to elaborate the conditions under which the soul received the divine message; it seemed rather passively to register the upper decree. Indeed we cannot always tell whether he deemed this original Energy as coming from without or from within—is it his own Ego or another Power impinging upon the same? The Transcendentalist is inclined to see “the facts you call the world as flowing perpetually outward from an invisible unsounded center in himself, center alike of him and of them,” and hence as having “a subjective existence.” Thus he would seem at times to make deity essentially internal, yet not always; his idealism takes often a dart toward Fichte or Berkeley, and then stops or turns back. Emerson, while eschewing all system or dogma in the matter, appears to hover between a distinct subjective and an indistinct objective God.

Hence it comes that Transcendentalism can have no organized form, its record being that of the day's direct inspiration. It is the soul's diary of the moment's downflow from deity, whereof the example may be noted in Emerson's Journal, the mo-

mentary emanations of his Ego, which are the elemental ever-jetting fountain of all his writings, whose ultimate drops never quite coalesce or grow organic even in the finished product. Accordingly, Transcendentalism is not a philosophy, though it philosophizes, not a religion, though it religionizes, not a psychology, though it psychologizes. It disdains all system, or rather its system drives forward to be unsystematic. From this angle it shows a decidedly negative bent, and bespeaks itself a child of the revolutionary Eighteenth Century, whose push was also to assail and to overturn the ordered world as transmitted to it from the past. Thus Emerson brought a phase of the French Revolution, as well as of the American, into quiet New England, and whelmed the Puritan against Puritanism. The rigorous faith of the fathers (or faithers) is undermined, the other-worldliness is transmuted to a this-worldly outlook, and even the transcendent God becomes immanent, if not wholly subjective, being made the vehicle of the individual's worth, but hardly now its sole supreme end, as of yore.

Such is the decisive, we may say, genetic principle in Emerson's world-view—the unobstructed efflux of the Divine Spirit into man, the descent of the Over-Soul into the human soul. [This central conception is the primal source as well as impulse of his creativity, which will push him to a thousand-fold application and utterance of itself in speech, writ, and in life.

Still it would not be out of place to call Emer-

son in his religious aspect a theocrat, who partakes of and is governed by the direct inspiration of God from above against all human law and institution, as well as against all doctrine of every kind transmitted from the past. On this side we have to think of him, with that whole Puritanic inheritance of his consciousness seething through him, as an evolution of the original Hebrew God-consciousness so deeply indwelling the spirit of his long clerical ancestry. He could be inspired as well as Isaiah, for it is the inspiration in itself purely, which is divine and universal, not so much the particular word or thing. Moreover Emerson's own verbal message, which he has to impart, will also undergo the fate of the old prophet, and become a prescription to his faithful apostolate, who in turn will have to learn through Emerson to transcend Emerson, just as he transcended his spirit's origin, and is to be imitated with his own imitation by his followers at their best. Thus Emerson's doctrine of Transcendentalism bears in itself the push to become self-transcending if not self-undoing—an unconscious irony lurks in his writ, which time will make aware.

But the lasting fact about Transcendentalism was its pervasive and persistent impress upon its time, especially its power over the New England mind. Dizzily rapid was its sweep from effluence to influence, from the inner overflow to the outer, and just therewith unprescribed Transcendentalism became a prescription, its very denial of tradi-

tion turned traditional in a kind of self-opposition, which in time Emerson himself will feel and humorously lament. But at the start it wrought as a mighty but subtle force, leavening the minds even of its enemies. To be sure, it spread out to matters and assertions far beyond the intention of its founder; Emerson himself drew sharp lines against some of its interpretations. But even when misunderstood or rather the more it was misunderstood, the more it produced a ferment. We can trace its effects even on those who were least willing to acknowledge its power and on many who knew not what had hold of themselves. Some of its more manifest results we may set down.

The most striking as well as the most permanent result of Transcendentalism is seen in Literature. It dominates Emerson's supremely distinctive Period, as well as his supremely distinctive work—his Essays. From him as a center it overflowed in many directions and permeated the Epoch's spiritual utterance. His style was imitated, his manner as well as his mannerism struck root and grew. The New England preacher would clothe his orthodoxy in an Emersonian vestment. Especially it cultivated the ideal or poetic side of life. Still it produced no poem of supreme rank, primarily because it did not furnish the theme for such a work which must be national first and thence rise to be universal. But Transcendentalism was [essentially provincial, not even national]; it had the New England limit upon it, wherever it might pass. If not wholly

denying it minimized the part of mediation in the universal order; but every world-poem, or sovereign work of art, is mediatorial, we may say, even vicarious.

Another wide-spread result of Transcendentalism was what we may emphasize as the Flight—the estrangement of the individual from his social environment and his escape to the woods or to primitive life. A profound dissatisfaction with the established order seized the Yankee heart, which was an original deep-seated trait of the Puritan and caused his primal flight to America from England, and then to the wilds of the West. The political situation of the time both in the State and the Nation intensified the feeling. Emerson began his career by such a flight to Concord, and held his Castle of Defiance to the end. The Puritanic consciousness has an original taint of fault-finding with the world and its ordering, and herein Emerson does not fail to voice his people. Still he never quite broke and fled to the woods, though he threatened it several times and lived on the edge of Walden, and not so very far from Brook Farm. But the great exponent and literary protagonist of the Transcendental Flight was Thoreau, Emerson's friend, and to a degree imitator, though with a stout character of his own.

Another far-famed and significant result was the new Transcendental Community, which was its determined practical endeavor. For the Flight was after all only a protest, a denial, a negation; but to

build up the social order afresh from the bottom was a decided affirmation. Thus it was acknowledged that man must associate and construct out of himself a social system; but the old way of human association, largely left to chance and instinct, must be remodeled by rational foresight. Here the pattern was mainly the premeditated structure of the Frenchman Fourier. Emerson held aloof from this last consequence of his doctrine, indicating a trait in him otherwise notable. He left this part of the program to be carried out chiefly by another friend of his, A. Bronson Alcott, a man always ready to march to the last ditch, but never quite ready to die there, whose ideal community went to pieces several times, though he always escaped with his life to tell the story. Moreover, Emerson's real flight was to Concord, perchance the germinal model, from which spot he would not stir after his first homing. It must be confessed that Alcott had more of the hero in him than Emerson, who was a great darer in word but not so much in deed.

Another characteristic of Transcendentalism has been its genetic energy in producing new forms of itself, different indeed yet with salient strains of its parentage. The so-called Christian Science with its wild-fire propagation from the chief Transcendental center, Boston, despite denials of Mother Eddy, shows no superficial likeness to Father Emerson, one of whose most smiting spiritual characteristics was the undervaluation, if not quite elim-

ination of the Negative in man and even in God. Evil, ill, and the world generally is the grand illusion, which is to be cured by the new knowledge. As we read in its book, or listen to its exposition from adepts, we cannot help muttering low to ourselves: Yes, in this household Emerson is the unobtrusive, perchance unacknowledged father, while Madam is the trumpet-voiced mother prolific beyond computation, and gifted with a marvelous talent for organizing her globe-girt crusade—altogether the greatest popularisation of the more esoteric Transcendental doctrine.

Nor must we forget the second considerable shoot of Transcendentalism, budding from the same original center and ramifying far and wide over the world. This is known as Pragmatism, whose putative founder was C. S. Peirce of Harvard, but whose chief and world-famous promulgator was Professor William James of the same seat of learning. The Pragmatic germ with its full contradiction may be noted already in the original Transcendental Club, which was declared to be a Club of the like-minded, as no two of them were minded alike. Only today a skillful exponent declared he knew of twenty different kinds of Pragmatism; he might have raised his figure to twenty hundred, one for every Pragmatist, as it is not Pragmatic to follow any formula of Pragmatism. Emerson himself in his first book shows the budding doctrine in his exhortation: "Build, therefore, your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in

your mind, that will unfold its grand proportions." This and similar things, we find in Emerson's earliest book, that on *Nature*, and like sermonic exhortations were vigorously preached along his whole active career. Such pointed sentential stimulation to self-construction undoubtedly has its tonic value for every person; but it also contains the bud which flowers into doctrinal Pragmatism, though this seems to deny all doctrine, and then to deny its denial. All of which can find its suggestion in Emerson.

And now we are to watch Transcendentalism advancing to the spiritual mastery of the world outer and inner through the work of its founder, who starts with Nature as the first of the triple round of the Universe, which is composed of Nature, Man, and God.

## II.

### NATURE IS TRANSCENDENTAL

Such is the pithy aphorism which utters a very deep and lasting phasis of the Emersonian consciousness: Nature is transcendental. Already we have noted repeatedly Emerson's bent toward Nature; at Paris we saw how he turned away from a great literary revolution, in a push of instinct toward the incoming scientific evolution. His permanent trend may be caught in the following declaration: "From whatever side we look at Nature we seem to be exploring the figure of a disguised man."

Thus the First Mind is revealed in its outer visible form, descending primarily from above into the Human Mind which beholds itself in Nature as the "disguised Man" or Ego. Nor should we fail to note that Emerson, the thinker, here has a kind of background to his thought, namely the great trinity of the universe—God, Nature, Man—with a faint intimation of their mutual relationship or perchance of their process with one another. It is indeed but a glimpse, and that is Emerson—the glimprer.

But now we must advance to Emerson's first book, that on Nature, published in 1836—his first spiritual child, and the earliest offspring of Transcendentalism, unless we reckon Carlyle's *Sartor* in the genetic line. The starting-point of Emerson is, then, "the disguised Man," primal efflux of deity, and hence for him "the apparition of God."

"Nature is transcendental," exclaims Emerson setting forth in a lecture the doctrine of himself as Transcendentalist. It would seem that Nature was the first avenue of approach to his new philosophy. Thus it is the subject of his opening literary performance, of his first book. "Nature is transcendental, exists primarily, necessarily, ever works and advances, yet takes no thought for tomorrow." It acts immediately and instinctively, without "thought for tomorrow." Man, too, at his highest has wrought in the same way; "genius and virtue predict in man the same absence of private ends, and of condescension to circumstances" as we see

in the process of Nature. Here Emerson shows his aversion to the mediated, reflective, purposed, and reveals his bent toward the unconscious, immediate, spontaneous, as is seen in the natural world.

The motto to the first edition of his book was taken from Plotinus, and contained the following abrupt jet: "Nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know"—wherein lies Emerson's deepest tie of sympathy with her in this earlier stage of his thought. But thirteen years later (1849) in his second edition of *Nature*, he substituted a second motto in verse which contains the famous evolutionary image of the worm "striving to be man," and in the effort rising "through all the spires of form." Wherein we may see Emerson himself evolving into Evolution some ten years before the publication of *Darwin's Origin of Species*. Still he had already felt Evolution in a stroll at Paris through the *Jardin des Plantes*: "I feel the centipede in me—cayman, carp, eagle and fox." He finds in every form of Nature, however grotesque or savage, a secret affinity with himself—"an occult relation between the very scorpions and man." Thus he forecasts the Darwinian *Descent of Man*, and in his enthusiasm of vision he shouts: "I am moved by strange sympathies" with all creation, "I say continually, I will be a naturalist," which, however, he could not. (See the striking upburst in his Diary, under date of July 13, 1833.)

In this presentimental gleam Emerson was a kind of Darwinist before Darwin, echoing indeed a

mighty propulsion of the time. Herein he bears an analogy to the poet Goethe, who reveals many evolutionary pulsations both in prose and verse; indeed his *Faust* may be deemed the great poem of Evolution, which especially takes form in the numerous transmutations of Mephistopheles. Tennyson also showed an occasional push from this spirit of the time, in spite of his Anglican conservatism. Emerson may have derived his idea from the Frenchman Lamarck whose doctrine held more to the inner appetency of lower organisms "striving to be man," than to the Darwinian Natural Selection, or the pure struggle for existence. Emerson's kind of evolution was more the intuitive, hardly the inductive or scientific, nor yet the more recent creative evolution of Bergson.

But that which chiefly drew Emerson's eye to Nature was his seeing in it the downflow "of that ineffable Essence which we call Spirit," whereby we can commune with "God in the coarse and distant phenomena of matter." Hence the true description of Nature is the poetic, for this manifests "the great shadow pointing always to the sun behind us." To be sure the doubt will enter whether there is any reality to this shadowy appearance before us; still the hopeful philosopher cries out: "the world is a divine dream from which we may presently awake to the glories and certainties of day." For Nature is to Emerson the grandest of all ghosts, being just "the apparition of God."

Nature's ever-flowing creative spontaneity capti-

vated Emerson, being so like himself in his germinal faith, and resembling the genetic downpour of his genius from its divine fountain-head. He quite personified Nature as the original Transcendentalist, who brings forth in rich productivity her marvelous works of power and beauty. He would fall into her generative mood by taking a walk through his field and wood-lot, and receive her inspiration to "efflux" his prose and verse. For her sake he became a farmer, not to feed his body but his spirit. Thus he tapped Nature in her genesis, and thrilled with her ecstasy of creation. Nature was the intermediary of his genius with divinity, even if he was in other respects inclined to look askance at all forms of mediation with the Highest.

The chief interest of this first creative book of Emerson is that it shows his earliest attempt to formulate his world-view, what he often calls his *Prima Philosophia*, making Nature the revealer, or the artist picturing to man the upper ideal realm of the universe. In the book lurks also that peculiar struggle or dualism of the Emersonian Genius between poetry and philosophy, both being equally aspired for, but often getting mutually entangled. On the other hand it is certain that with him philosophy had a push or appetency for something beyond itself, so that he is "looking for the new Teacher" who will be able to make present limits "come full circle"—that circular form being to his vision the final one. Moreover such new Teacher "shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul,"

that is, shall behold it as ultimately psychical—which indicates another aspiration, and perchance ambition of the Emersonian spirit, often expressed but unfulfilled. What haunts the poet-philosopher everywhere is that the laws of our moral or spiritual nature “answer the laws of matter as face to face in a glass.” But this belief remains with him an insight, an intuition, an immediate downburst of the primal creative energy, and never unfolds into a reasoned, interrelated order.

Nature is, accordingly, “the figure of a disguised Man” on the one hand, and on the other, “the noblest ministry of Nature is to stand as the apparition of God.” Thus the primary constituents of the Universe—Nature, Man, God—are sought to be united in a common thought or process, embracing the All. It is Emerson’s vastest reach, or indeed the vastest outstretch of the Human Mind, as this seeks to discover and formulate its place in the Supreme Order. From the same paragraph (See *Nature*, Section VIII) an additional citation should multiply the light: “It (Nature) is the organ through which the universal spirit (God) speaks to the individual (Man) and strives to lead back the individual to it,” that is, to the universal spirit. Again we note the same triple round of the Universe (God, Nature, Man), with the added purpose of Nature in the same: it is the remedial, restorative, we may say, mediatorial element of all Creation whose function or striving is to lead estranged Man back to his Creator. In such a view, we have

to see that Nature for Emerson has largely taken the place of the Christ in the Christian conception of the Divine Order.

So Emerson starts his career of creative authorship with the idea that Nature is transcendental, elevating it from its former state of damnation in the religious view of the world, to being a medium of salvation for man, through revealing to him the image of his deity. That this trinity of God, Nature, and Man is itself a psychical process, is indeed just the Psyche of the Universe, or the Soul of the All (Pampsychois) lies not explicitly in Emerson's vision, even if he glimpsed it intuitively, as was his way.

### III.

#### MAN IS TRANSCENDENTAL

Thus we may mark with some emphasis the next significant stage in Emerson's evolution, as he has set it down in writing. He now mounts up to the vision as well as to the utterance of Man's transcendental portion, as distinct from that of Nature which has just preceded. The new doctrine is contained in three Orations or Addresses given to Academic audiences within the same year (1837-8), hence not very long after the publication of his book on *Nature*. These compositions show the author taking a fresh step in his career, and together they are seen at bottom to have a common meaning, as hinted in the foregoing caption. They may be

specially designated as Emerson's First Oratorical Triad, for there will be a second.

The three Addresses, all of of them phases or parts of one supreme subject or mental experience, are found in Emerson's Works with these designations:

1st—*The American Scholar*, Phi Beta Kappa Oration, Cambridge, August 31, 1837. Emerson's own sub-title is *Man Thinking* (of course transcendently).

2nd—*The Divinity Class Address*. Cambridge, July 15, 1838. The emphasis is upon *Man Preaching* (of course transcendently).

3rd—*Literary Ethics*. Oration before the Literary Societies of Dartmouth College, July 24, 1838. It deals especially with the writer, or *Man Writing* (of course transcendently).

Here, then, we are to listen to Emerson discoursing upon three different intellectual types of men, more deeply upon himself, however, in this three-fold phasis of his spiritual development. These types are Thinker, Preacher, Writer; or, in more exalted Emersonian phraseology we may call them the Philosopher, the Priest, the Poet, all of them distinct embodiments of Emerson's own intellectual activities. Hence these Addresses belong to his biography; or, in their ultimate purport, they are documents autobiographical. Emerson was now hovering toward and around thirty-five years old; so he announces in the last Address: "I have reached the middle age of man;" or as Dante puts

it, "in the middle of the journey of our life," which at this point turns down the road toward three score and ten.

The common theme underlying all these Orations, accordingly, is Man as transcendental, since he must tap the divine source himself and in himself for his thought, for his sermon, for his writ—rejecting tradition and following inspiration. Interwoven with the fundamental idea are numerous applications, allusions, eloquent excursions, which give variety and also power to these discourses. This common theme Emerson repeats under many forms; let us take the following for the nonce: "The condition of our incarnation in a private Self seems to be a perpetual tendency to prefer the private law, to obey the impulse, to the exclusion of the law of universal Being." Here Emerson summons before himself the primordial thought of individuation, "our incarnation in a private Self," as opposed to, yet derived from "universal Being," to which man is to return for participation or indeed re-creation. This is what makes him truly mighty and worthy, for "the hero is great by means of the predominance of the universal nature; he has only to open his mouth and it speaks; he has only to be forced to act and it acts." Thus the universal spirit active is to be tapped and sluiced down into the individual spirit passive, which thence obtains its heroship, its transcendental power and fulfilment.

Accordingly, it becomes of supreme importance to the man thinking, preaching, writing, that he brings

himself into close communion with this supernal creative source, and let its genetic energy stream over into his individual productivity. These three Addresses are guiding lines to such an end. And the first question asked here by the prying reader is this: does our human speaker Emerson now in these discourses draw from the eternal fountain-head in telling how to do it? Our decided opinion is that he meets the requirement. Emerson, giving instruction to be heroic, becomes in the act the hero himself, and exemplifies his own doctrine. We may fairly say that he shows himself to be philosopher, priest, poet in describing what they are, and how they get to be.

So much by way of preface to this oratorical sunrise of the sky-mounting Emerson, with hints of its general purport and place in his Life-Essay. It may well be deemed a forecast of himself in the main currents of his career. While the Addresses have a common idea and also structure, each of them has its own distinct theme and character, as well as style and mood. Their separate points are worthy of a brief examination.

I. *The American Scholar*. This was a New England favorite, as indicated by the praises of Lowell and others. It has a touch of Yankee vanity, not obtrusive, and certainly not disagreeable. Dr. Holmes, in his life of Emerson has called it "our intellectual Declaration of Independence," which term hits off one of its traits. In fact some fifty years and more after the political Revolution, Em-

erson heralds the spiritual Revolution of America, and herein becomes the new Thomas Jefferson, though he had fore-runners. In the first paragraph Emerson proclaims: "Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. We cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests." Thus the title of the oration, *The American Scholar*, as liberated from the European, is already a challenge.

Still this is but its polemical or negative side, and it has a decidedly positive strain, in fact several of them. The basic theme is the return of the individual from "the divided or social state" in which he now finds himself, to "the original unit, the fountain of power" from which he sprang, that he may drink again of his first creative energy. This original "One Man," primordial father of all particular men, Emerson calls up before us in image and fable, to indicate that to which "the individual must sometimes return from his own labor," that he replenish and renew his divinely creative spirit.

But how is this return to be made by "the victim of society," and its traditions? Here lies the function of the Scholar as Emerson conceives him, or *Man Thinking*. In the first place this Thinker must look deep into Nature and see in her "the circular power always returning into itself." Moreover just herein Nature "resembles his own spirit," and so it comes that "its laws are the laws of his own mind." Surely this is the cry for a Psychology

of Nature, in which is to be shown the imprint of mind upon every physical phenomenon, great and small. We feel like shouting to the aspiring Emerson, with his active life still before him: Do that, O Thinker, organize Nature and all her facts and laws psychically, and you will create a new science quite unknown to Europe. Did he do it? Not to our knowledge; in this field too he remains Emerson the glimpsier, the stimulator, the prophet, not a world-organizer, though he proclaims everywhere the vision of the same. But within his limits he is of the worthiest and greatest.

The second great influence which comes pouring into the mind of the Scholar from the outside is the Past in the form of "literature, art, institutions." Great is the Book, but it has a very insidious peril: "the sacredness which attaches to the act of creation—the act of thought—is transferred to the record." Hence the letter killeth: the danger of script is prescription. The function of genius is to create: "if the man create not, the pure efflux of the Deity is not his." Use your own creative moments creatively; when you "can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts." A peep we may deem this into Emerson's sanctum where he seizes first his Diary to transcribe God directly. He also emphasizes the supreme way of reading: "One must be an inventor to read well. There is creative reading as well as writing." Thus Emerson in many a poignant thrust slashes Academicism before those Har-

vard Academics, very learned and industrious, but not true American Scholars, because uncreative, sterilely traditional, hence contemptibly un-Emersonian.

In the third place, Emerson's Scholar is not to be a mere recluse, an unpractical dreamer. A personal warmth we feel here in his words: "Only so much do I know as I have lived." Moreover here lies the source of all true language: "Instantly we know whose words are loaded with life, and whose not." Then hark to this fine apothegm: "Life is our dictionary," is our final word-maker, the creative compiler of our vocabulary. So even our dictionary is not to be blindly accepted, but has to be re-made if it is to be worth anything. "The new deed is yet a part of life," and is still to be born into the word and writ, which must be filled and re-filled with action.

Here Emerson rises to a throbbing glimpse of life in its totality, even of his own: "Living is the functionary—this is a total act;" on the other hand "Thinking is a partial act," is only a limited "function." Very significant is this for Emerson's biography, which he is primarily to live as a whole. The books, the speeches, the works are but parts of the total life which is to unfold according to the universal spirit. There is the round of distinct and separate achievements, then there is the round of the total achievement—just the life which he has lived. This is to be felt penetrating and holding together all the details, whatever be the form or

stage of the man's earthly career. He must at last reveal the whole of himself in each and all that he has won, must be radiant with the entirety of life in every part of it.

Another gleam from Emerson's spiritual workshop we may catch in the picture of himself as a kind of astronomer "in his private observatory cataloguing obscure and nebulous stars of the human mind." Such a catalogue we may see and read in the Diary of Emerson, who often daily swept with his keen, telescopic vision his inner heaven, and set down its fresh experiences as they bubbled out one by one immediately from "the efflux of the Deity"—he being the soul's astronomer itemizing all the stars of his psychical firmament. These, then, he would cluster into a constellation and label it with some outward analogy—this Address, for instance, appears such a constellation of bright particular stars; many such also are seen shining through his later Essays. In it he embraces stars of every magnitude, from the first down to the faintest twinkler and not a few nebulae, which only the most powerful magnifier can resolve, and it not always. The infinite within is his field of discovery, whose outer analogue is the planetary or cosmical image, in which Emerson often expressed himself.

II. *Divinity Class Address.* It is a speech made to the young oncoming preachers, and gives many a side thrust at the old crystallized gospellers of New England, with whom Emerson had already had his first epochal conflict, which threw him out

of his ancestral vocation. The result is a keenness which is intended not only to prick the nerve, but to draw a gush of red blood. The outsider, to whom the controversy is foreign and impersonal, can distinctly see that Emerson has his war-paint on, and proposes battle; rather more fiercely does he slash about him than in any production of his known to us. His parting sermon to his congregation is of Christian gentleness compared to this outburst. The foe caught up the gage and hurled it back flaming; hence the present Address has the name of being Emerson's mightiest noise-producer among his writings. The din is laid now, though a little echo of it may still be heard on occasion. Following Emerson's analogy in the preceding address, we may name the theme here *Man Preaching*, or the Transcendentalist as Preacher. Both the positive and the negative sides are given in the present case, the latter being now and then somewhat vitriolic.

The preceding Address took a secular theme, but now Emerson passes to the religious field which is peculiarly his own by inheritance, character, and vocation. Hence the increased personal touch is felt in it: "the true preacher can be known in this, that he deals out to his people his life—life passed through the fire of thought." Every sermon is to be biographical. The moral sentiment, the sentiment of virtue as realized in his own daily walk is the sermonizer's right theme. When this sentiment is lost or ascribed to another whose authority you follow—that is degeneracy.

Very startling to his hearers was the stress which Emerson put upon the "noxious exaggeration about the *person* of Jesus. The soul knows no persons." Such utterances raised a storm of protest even from the Unitarians. In fact, Emerson's chief assault is upon the transmitted mediation of man with God through Christ. "This Eastern monarchy of Christianity" he will batter down. Emerson will not abolish Christ, but interprets him transcendently, in fact Christ was the prime transcendentalist, going directly to the divine fountain-head—wherein alone the Man Preaching is to follow him, being also the son of God. But let him not make Jesus an autocrat over souls, a kind of Oriental despot in the religious realm.

Still deeper into the accepted religion is the negation of Emerson driving. He seems to dislike the Person as such, and his daring reaches up to a grapple with the Personality of God, whose rule was also an "Eastern Monarchy," since the West "has always owed to Oriental genius its divine impulses." In his Journals of the present time we find Emerson passing through a great deal of doubt and even of denial upon this subject. "Personal life is faint and cold to the energy of God," and there is "some profanation in saying that He is personal." Does this mean merely that God is not an ordinary individual, as some (especially Mr. Cabot) have construed it, and that Emerson does not deny divine self-consciousness? But Emerson emphatically declares: "We cannot say God is

self-conscious, or not self-conscious." We have to think that Universal Personality, or the All-Self was a very hazy conception for Emerson when theoretically or explicitly formulated. Still we shall often find it lurking unconsciously in many a far-reaching glimpse of his, and shall uncover it as the ultimate underlying substrate of his profound but quite unordered Psychology.

In the previous Address Emerson emphasized more what the Scholar should do; in the present Address he emphasized more what the Preacher should not do—whereby runs through it a prevailing negative strain. From this angle we may regard it is Emerson's grand assault upon Personality, including God, Christ, and Man, for the doctrine has its decided relation to Emerson himself, and is deeply tinged with the experiences of his own life and of that of his family, through which runs an emphasizing, oft-repeated evanishment of persons. Hence it has a searching biographic import. Undoubtedly, too, it is a confession of his new faith, which denies the transmitted mediatorial principle of the Church. Its positive side is that it puts strong stress upon the self-mediation of Man with his God, and foreshows the trend of the author's future work. We see it to be a re-enactment of his old pastoral fight against one congregation, but now elevated and generalized into a universal fight against the whole Church as then constituted. It has the ring of defiance trumpeted from his new Concord fortress, amply victualed for

any siege, whence no foe can dislodge him, no congregation dismiss him, now quite the overtowering heresiarch of Christendom.

The close of the Address is for us its sovereign part, in which he utters his aspiration, perchance his ambition. He looks for the hour when lips which "spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the West also," in our unoracléd America. But listen to this complaint of Emerson: "The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures contain immortal sentences, but they have no epical integrity, are fragmentary, are not shown in their order to the intellect." Each of these criticisms, for they are such, reveals an underlying hope of Emerson; he will write a poem of "epical integrity," he will organize a philosophy whose sentences "are shown in their order to the intellect." Such is his aspiration oft repeated in these earlier years; will it ever be realized? Still more concrete is his hope: "I look for the new Teacher that shall follow so far those shining laws that he shall see them come full circle," for they are at last cyclical. This, however, must be shown; but whence? That new Teacher "shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul," which verily furnishes the creative archetype. But who is that coming Teacher if not Emerson himself, here voicing his heart's desire to be not only Priest, but also Poet, and even Philosopher?

III. *Literary Ethics.* This Address, although the least famous of the three here conjoined, seems to us their culmination, and in some respects the

greatest of them all, because the most universal. The first two betray more of the feeling of personal attack and of local conflict; *The American Scholar* tilts against the Harvard Academicism, *The Divinity Class Address* very incisively assails Harvard Theology—both being addressed to Harvard audiences, against which especially Emerson leveled his guns. Harvard understood this well, and practically banned its slashing critic from its precincts for about a generation. But the present Address was given at Dartmouth College then distant a two days' journey by stage, and withal rather anti-Bostonian. The polemical tang is quite dropped, or has only a very general bearing which has its advantages.

Emerson again speaks of the American Scholar as the ideal whom he wished to develop. Hence this third Address is a kind of return in speech and thought to the first. Still its theme is distinctively the Writer, or Man Writing, who is verily the outcome and the fulfillment of the two preceding Men—the Thinker and the Preacher (or Speaker). And this is true of Emerson himself. His eternal portion is what he has written, not simply what he has thought in his study or what he has spoken in his lectures. To be sure, these two—his thinking and his speaking—were the necessary disciplines for his literary work. But they vanish with his individual evanishment, while his writ does not disappear but remains and even grows in influence with time, after his per-

sonal disappearance. In the opening paragraph of his Address he celebrates the Writer, though he still calls the latter the Scholar, "as the favorite of heaven and earth, the excellency of his country and the happiest of men." And this is because he "extends his dominion into the general mind of the country, he is not one but many" which little touch of indirect self-gratulation is welcome in the somewhat reserved Emerson.

What is the first, the original act of the Scholar (or Literary Man)? He must at the start see and commune with "the soul which made the world," and must find "that it is all accessible to him;" then he must know himself "as its minister." All the events of history are "sprung from the soul of man," which must be, therefore, the grand interpreter of all deeds and facts. The chief use of the biography of Great Men "is to increase my self-trust by demonstrating what man can be and do." I am to imitate not their particular acts but their universal creative power. "Seeing that Plato was and Shakespeare and Milton—then I dare; I also will essay to be." Here lies probably the original suggestion and meaning of Emerson's Essay soon to be his supreme literary form: I *essay* to be, as well as Plato and other great writers.

Very significant are these early indications of Emerson on the subject of Biography. The youth is to see in his beloved hero, "that it is only a projection of his own soul that he admires." Emer-

son asserts the common underlying principle in all great men: "I am tasting the self-same life; the difference of circumstances is merely costume." And if you know one supreme biography well, "you master the biography of this hero and of that and of every hero." Excellent glimpse is this of the true science of Biography, still so chaotic in these days. But we have to ask, will Emerson himself realize this conception? Very famous is his book on *Representative Men*; will he unfold the unity working in and through the lives of all these great characters? The answer lies in the future; but let not the reader forget the question, for he is or should be much interested in seeing whether the glimpser Emerson can rise to be the organizer.

The instructions of Emerson to the Writer (or Scholar) are repeated with new emphasis for they are drawn from his most intimate personal experience. The first command is, "embrace solitude as a bride." Renounce the bribe of money and all forms of self-indulgence; you are great only "by being passive to the super-incumbent spirit." He cries out: "Go cherish your soul, expel companions, set your habits to life of solitude." Still we have to remark that Emerson in his own case did not make himself a hermit. He showed a decidedly practical side not only in money matters but also in the propagation of his doctrine. Still this side of himself he did not need to stress in *Yankeeeland*.

Nor must we omit to mention Emerson's emphasis upon life as a whole. The true writer "will feel that the richest romance, the noblest fiction that was ever woven, lies enclosed in human life. Itself of surpassing value, it is also the richest material for his creations." Recollect that when this Address was given, Emerson was only thirty-five years old, quite at the early push of his active literary life. The underlying trend of it is the outlook of a man of letters upon his forthcoming career. What principles is he to follow? So we may catch here certain anticipations or prophetic gleams of his own life, and some guiding lines for biography, especially for his own. He already forefeels "that the richest romance, the noblest fiction that was ever woven" is going to lie just in his own life. Can the biographer show that, without resorting to the form of the novel, which Emerson did not employ, and really did not like, though of course he read a little in such literature? Let it be noted again that the grand totality of his life he seeks dimly to visualize in advance.

Thus we put together this first Oratorical Triad, significant in itself, but especially significant of Emerson's evolution. We may grasp it as a kind of trinity, having three men in one, and one in three; or the Man as thinking, speaking, writing, which three are in essence the one Man as transcendental. So we shall behold them interlinked in a single basic process which is finally psychical.

The ultimate theme in these productions is the relation between God and Man, or between the sovereign Self of the Universe and this individual Self of ours, here and now, whereof the transcendental form is for Emerson the immediate descent of the Divine into the Human. The doctrine is as yet indirect and more or less implicit in this Triad of Addresses, which plays, accordingly, a sort of overture to the coming Emersonian symphony.

Still, the polemical note in it is very pronounced, and it must be deemed Emerson's opening attack upon the fortress of Philistinism, which he rightly espied to be located in the Academic institutions of the land. Harvard College will fight back, and practically ban him from its halls till time brings his acceptance with its reconciliation. But he cannot be suppressed, he has his own Castle of Defiance in which he is not to be starved or captured, and from which he will make a new assault.

#### IV.

#### THE TRANSCENDENTAL MASTERPIECE

Time has fairly settled what kind of work is Emerson's best, and especially what work of his stands at the top of his achievement. His *Essays*, First Series (Boston, 1841) may well be acclaimed his central and most influential book. He was thirty-eight years old when it was published, and stood not far from the middle year of his life's

total tally. Moreover this was his most creative Epoch, and the present work has shown itself the most creative of all his writings, the most capable of self-reproduction in the minds of others. Hence we may call it the Transcendental Masterpiece, or the Bible of Transcendentalism, if such an anti-prescriptive movement can have any prescribed writ, or Bible.

The evolutionary Emerson shows a new stage of his evolution in this new book. His previous form of literary utterance was the Oration or Address, specimens of which we have just been considering. But now he has advanced to the Essay, which is the right artistic expression of the Emersonian spirit, in fact is the Transcendental acme or ideal of human composition. It is a literary form which still preserves the original efflux or the spontaneous intuitions of the God-inspired scribe, even if its contents are put into a confined holder and labeled. Its direct antecedent is the discourse, lecture, even sermon, in which line Emerson has already wrought a great deal and for a long time, as well as uttered himself upon a startling variety of subjects. But Emerson is bound to react against any traditional method, even his own. Hence we find him giving many little impatient kicks against the business of lecturing, though he keeps it up during his active life. The fact is, he has been training in this way his audience which after hearing him will go to his printed page for further light. Thus he

establishes popularly his Lyceum or the Emersonian University, a great communal Institute of Learning, unique in its Professor and in his teaching. This brought to his constituency his personal presence with voice and manner—an un-negligible item of his power.

Still he cannot limit himself to his oral discourse; it is too particular, temporal, finite. When spoken his word belongs only to this speck of time and to this spot of space; but when printed, it belongs to all time and to all space. Hence Emerson must push forward toward universalizing himself in his work. But even this more universal stage has to take some sort of shape—what? Emerson's choice, doubtless after much experimenting and reading and self-questioning, is the Essay, whose original meaning is the tentative or the testing, perchance with a covert denial of finality. Still the Essay in word and meaning is old; here again the untraditional Emerson followed tradition instead of coining his own rubric and scheme. We are told that the Essays of Montaigne, skeptical, dubitative, yet hintful, fascinated his boyhood already. Bacon's Essays also had their influence, especially in their English style, of whose turns and glints we may trace not a few reminders in Emerson. He also must have known the later English Essayists of distinction, from Addison down to his friend Carlyle, whose Essays, however, are built on a very differ-

ent principle from the one which dominates Emerson.

Still Emerson's Essay is decidedly his own, and of his own evolution, of which we can trace three different stages in his writing—the Journal, the Lecture, the Essay. The first records the most immediate form of Emersonian thinking, the momentary descent or flash of insight from the supernal source, or the Oversoul; it shows the reporter Emerson interviewing God Almighty and jotting down the result in his Diary. The second stage (the Address) exhibits the speaker Emerson imparting to his limited group within his limited hour a loosely connected chapter of these communications—he being now the medium between the divine agent and the human recipient, which act of supreme mediation, he claims to lie in the power of every man, not merely of one Mediator. The third stage is the mentioned form of the Essay—the fixation of the fleeting spoken word into its eternal impress, into Literature. This is what we chiefly read of Emerson today in order that we may commune with his most intimate creative energy; for him the Essay is not merely a literary vehicle adopted from the outside, but the very soul-form of his Genius, the inner plastic demiurge of his spirit. He undoubtedly received hints from the past, but he recreated them after his own spiritual image. And here we may repeat the pervasive idea of this Biography: Emerson's entire life, both in its

works and in its behaviors, is an Essay, and is also the ultimate creative source of these distinctive, particular Essays, which are composed from the view of the whole man—not only surveying the past but glimpsing the future. From the highest point of outlook his Biography must be the Essay of all his Essays, his one Life-Essay, which again has its own literary form, distinctive and characteristic.

The present literary form still shows its origin from the quick sporadic jets of the Diary, its primal atomic protoplasm. Emerson we have called the glimpser; he suddenly flashes a bright streak of truth upon the darkness and then vanishes; his words often incandescence like the links in a chain of lightning, with that surprise which he loved so much and cultivated. He did not and probably could not develop and organize his instantaneous downbursts of thunder-claps from above; his intuitive sentences in the Essay still preserve the sudden elemental character of their origin. They still strike fire in the utterance as when first forged in the transcendental smithy.

The result follows that he is often obscure, putting spells of fog or intervals of night between his brightest flashes, which moreover dazzle the vision to a kind of blindness. This peculiar alternation between light and darkness has its well-known counterpart in nature, and also in art. Emerson's literary heaven is starlit rather than sunlit—which fact has a shining worth of its own.

So it happens that he often becomes cryptic, oracular, mystifying, and we cannot catch the full sense of his pithy sententiality. In a degree he has to overmake the reading-faculty in every strong-hearted student, who gets to understand him better by repeated perusal so as to know before hand what he means and whither he is going. Emerson often speaks of prophecy, and he hints of himself as prophet, for he knows himself as a grand reservoir of intimations, aspirations, pregnant futurities. To many his seership is his strongest appeal. Then with him we feel his mighty and persistent longing to become what he is not and never can be; most human is his short-falling ambition of aspiring to be something he never gets to be. And still he becomes, and realizes his true self just in that aspiration.

Twelve Essays are listed in this First Series, and it is to be observed that each has what may be called an abstract concept for a title. They seek universal themes, laying aside local and temporal relations, and rising to the general. In this abstraction they show the present tendency of Emerson, who strives to be impersonal and solitary; each Essay is in its way a kind of Emersonian flight from the concrete reality to the Concord Hermitage of pure contemplation. Still into this abstract form or vase he pours the past individual experiences of his life, many of them very intimate and personal. Consequently these Essays are at last to be read as a disguised autobiog-

raphy—a fact which he himself intimates more than once. To be sure, he will eternize the transitory of himself; he seeks to make universal the particular element of his existence. Hence his stress upon universality in many turns of speech. His confession is one of the self revealing names which he has applied to these productions.

Noteworthy is the fact that the form of the Essay remains with him to the end of his writing days, even if he may give to the collection a somewhat fanciful title, as *Society and Solitude*, which is but another book of Essays. Manifestly he has now won his supreme literary structure, evolved his best organic utterance. He will at times show signs of reaction against the limits of the Essay, he being by nature the limit-breaker; still he will always go back to it as his own right structural form of expression. He continues to exercise his pen in numerous other kinds of writing, as the Address, the Poem, the Letter, the Diary; but his completer utterance remains the Essay. We believe this literary form to be deeply consonant with his spirit's own form, and the study of it is the study of Emerson himself, who is not merely the Essayist but the Essay in person with all its striving to be impersonal.

Moreover the note of defiance is heard everywhere ringing through this book, the will not to be determined by anything outside of himself—especially not by the past, not by society and its transmitted institutions. The grand Emersonian

protest is woven into the living texture of this work. Such is one ground of its popularity—a permanent ground—for it voices the spirit of non-conformity with the existent order, which spirit is perennial and is likely to grow, or at least to recur in periodic outbursts. It is a challenge of the world as handed down from the fathers. Thus we may well deem the book a much needed tonic for the time which was getting ossified in its own organism. Boston and all America had become too crystallized in the old traditions, and needed to be broken up and remade or reformed. Such was the negative side, often excessive doubtless; but there was also the positive side to Emerson's doctrine, else it would hardly have lasted. This was the urgency of drinking directly from the eternal source for all right inspiration of the word or the deed.

But to our mind the most affirmative and hence the most enduring thing in Emerson's Essays is his longing for and prophecy of a new world-discipline different from the transmitted European philosophy, and from the prescribed Oriental religion. A new synthesis of the thought of the Universe for America he hoped for, and indeed sought to create as his supreme achievement.

Which of these twelve Essays is the best? Opinions differ, according to the point of view, as well as cultural preparation; let each reader answer from his own angle. The Essays show considerable diversity in depth, power, and intelligibility. On the whole the central one, and probably the most

famous is *The Over-Soul*, which contains more of Emerson's abstract philosophy than any other single production of his, and hence its distinction. It puts stress upon the universal, while another Essay of this Series, *Self-reliance*, emphasizes the individual by way of contrast. Between these opposites we may place a third Essay *Circles*, as suggesting a form or way of mediating these extremes. To our mind the fore-mentioned three Essays constitute the heart of the Emersonian Masterpiece and hint indirectly its process, even if the author intended no such inter-connection. From this viewpoint we shall take a brief look at each separately then at all of them rounded together.

I. *The Over-Soul*. Emerson has thus given his own designation to "that Unity, that Over-Soul within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other." But this is not the only name Emerson gives to his transcendent principle; at least a dozen other titles he applies to it in his struggles to categorize it, or to define "the indefinable," to limit "the illimitable." It is for him "the eternal *One*" above all separation, wherein "the act of seeing and the thing seen, the subject and object, are one." Thus Emerson gets quite metaphysical, in spite of his dislike for Metaphysics often expressed, especially in his later less potent years.

But another class of terms he employs for his first principle, terms which involve in one way or other the conception of the Soul as already indi-

cated in the title *Over-Soul*. Hence he exclaims "the Soul circumscribeth all things," yea is really all things; not only Man but Nature is the Soul, however much estranged. Thus Emerson shifts from his philosophical nomenclature to his psychological, and shows therein the stress of his mind. He also uses the word *Self* for his cardinal term *Over-Soul*, which he calls "this better and universal Self" which is above all "separated Selves," as he labels individual men in contrast with the *Over-Soul*. So he gets the conception of the All-Self, universal Selfhood, the absolute Ego or Person. But this brings Emerson up against his supreme and lasting difficulty: he explicitly and with some intensity refuses personality to this "universal Self," declaring "it is impersonal, it is God."

But how about the human Self or the individual Soul?—It is the recipient of the efflux from above, and when "it abandons itself to the Supreme Mind (*Over-Soul*) finds itself related to all its works, and will travel a royal road to particular knowledges and powers." Here we may glimpse with Emerson his highest vision: he catches the outline of a Psychology of the Universe, in place of the old Philosophy. Still he does not unfold the far off gleam. Indeed he seems aware that the pivotal matter he has not told: "The action of the soul is oftener in that which is felt and left unsaid than in that which is said." Thus Emerson repeatedly indicates that there is something beyond Emerson, namely his own complete fulfilment.

II. *Self-Reliance*. The most inspiring of Emerson's Essays for the majority of readers—it has in its style as well as in its contents an uplift and exuberance which stamp it as unique and doubtless the most personal of these productions. Its very title is an appeal—an appeal to the individual to fight his own battle. The first brief explosion of the Motto hoists the heart: "Man is his own star." We may almost hear the author whetting his sabre for an onslaught: "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string." So we are now to have pugnacious Emerson asserting defiantly his individuality: "Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist," what I am. Who is the enemy thus challenged? Quite everything established in his environment; especially "societies and dead institutions." All the past, even his own he defies, for he ridicules his own "foolish consistency" with what he has been. Public opinion is scorned: "To be great is to be misunderstood." Even the Great Man, the Hero, he now fillips to one side as not compatible with true self-reliance. Hereafter he will modify most of these antagonisms, but now he has poised his spear for a deadly hurl, verily an all-sided defiance.

At once the reader will observe how antithetic this Essay is to that on "The Over-Soul," which is dominated by a calm universality in due accord with its theme. It meant, if not the absorption, at least the resignation of the individual, who is to make himself the unobstructed vehicle of the divine

downflow from the Supernal One. To be sure Emerson mentions here this upper Self, but rather by the way, for it has not now the stress or the writer's personal interest. Somewhat tame seems those "pious aspirants to be noble clay under the Almighty" in presence of his self-reliant world-defiers.

This Essay is largely an echo of Emerson's conflict with his people and his time, especially with his church. One may hear in it reverberations of that primal explosion which hurled him out of his first pulpit. Indeed he intimates that it is a confession which he lashes his sides daringly to express, shouting to his disguised self: "Bravely let him speak the utmost syllable of his confession." And certainly he lays about himself in all directions with a vehemence, yea with a vengeance, which betrays at its deepest the negation brooding in his soul. Who would have thought that our gentle optimistic Emerson could show so much world-storming pugnacity?

III. *Circles.* The strong opposition between the Over-Soul and the Under-Soul, or between the Universal and the Individual, Emerson tries to reconcile, rather externally by his doctrine of Circles. For this reason we put it here, though it is set forth separately in one of his weakest, most disconnected and external Essays. Emerson sees the circle only as an outside suggestion, calling it "the primary figure," "this first of forms," "the highest emblem," which he finds "repeated without end."

But he makes no attempt to inter-relate these circles, or to put them into any genetic order; still less does he endow them with their psychological significance. Hence his treatment seems like a capricious sport of fancy.

Still he often hints of something deeper and more essential. He says "the life of man is a self-evolving circle which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outward to new and larger circles"—this statement if interpreted aright, may be taken as the method of Biography, which, however, he never applied. Uncertainly suggestive it is—but so is man himself, who "is not so much a workman in the world as he is a suggestion of that he should be." Very biographic is all this. "Men walk as prophecies of the next age"—another instance of Emerson's self-definition.

The author also attempts to get back to the creative source of this circular universality: "Whilst the eternal generation of circles proceeds, the eternal generator abides;" but he is not himself circular in his own process, but is "superior to creation and contains all its circles," which are, therefore, wholly external to it, and not an integral element of Godhood. From this point of view Emerson has not internally mediated the Over-Soul and the Under-Soul, or the Creator and the Created, in one common principle. The dualism remains, as far as this essay is concerned.

But deeper insight we shall find in the author's Essays on *Compensation* which essentially treats

also of the doctrine of Circles. More particularly in human conduct does the deed come back to the doer, thus circling round to its starting-point. But now this "moral circle" is carried up to its source as a manifestation of "the in-working of the All," of which it is the very essence. Also we hear the declaration that "the universe is represented in each one of its particles." Very lofty and true, as far as it goes; still we have to ask, show how? Once more we hearken eagerly: "everything is made of one hidden stuff;" but again we have to cry: What is that universal stuff? Still better is this: "We put our life into every act," that is, our whole life animates every detail—another hint for our biography. Then listen to something yet higher in the maxim that every man "is an entire emblem of human life," which means, if we understand this "emblem," that every individual life reflects the universal life. An inference would be, that every single biography which is not permeated with this universal creative element, is insofar a failure, whatever be the interest of its details. But the highest point of his vision he touches in the following: "God re-appears with all his parts in every moss and cobweb." In fact just this is the supreme generative act of the Creator, who puts himself "with all his parts," that is, with his threefold process, into every atom. Here the before-mentioned dualism between Over-Soul and Under-Soul, is harmonized. But did he see this? At any rate he has not stated this ultimate insight of his in the unify-

ing terms of the soul (or Psyche). He adds: "the value of the universe contrives to throw itself into every point." Good again, but he is still metaphysical in spite of himself, he has not quite broken through to the psychological, which ultimately is not only circular, but the creator of circles and of itself too as circular. Such is verily the process of the All-Self, creatively projecting its own circle or process (the psychosis) into every creative individual, thing or person.

This height we may well deem the culmination of Emerson's pure thought in the present Transcendental Epoch. It is not wrought out or organized; it still remains an intimation, suggestion, prophecy, as he himself often declares. Amid his furious negative critique of Tradition, he intersperses these far-away disconnected glimpses, yet grandly positive, of the All-Self who "re-appears with all his parts in every moss and cobweb," and thus is the basic ever-pervasive principle of Universal Psychology. This is, in our opinion, what he visions in his First Philosophy, which haunted him as an unfulfilled aspiration quite to his last sunset.

## V

### THE TRANSCENDENTAL CRISIS

We now are to consider a phase of Emerson's activity quite distinct from that which we have just set forth, which was the phase of the Essay. In this he was looking upward, toward the height, to-

ward the Universal; but now his eye has turned downward, toward the Particular, yea toward the People. We may take the following sentences which belong to this time, as hintful of his present spirit: "Transcendentalism does not mean sloth," nor does it mean withdrawal to our castle; "the good and the wise must learn to act, and carry salvation to the combatants in the dusty arena below." So Emerson descends from his lofty perch and proposes to make his appeal directly to the people. This change involves what we may call the Transcendental Crisis in Emerson's life.

Under the above heading, which indicates a new turn or tendency in the author's evolution, we place, four Addresses; let us name them specially the Oratorical Quaternion, with the following titles—all of them having been delivered in the same year:

1. *Man the Reformer*. Boston, January, 1841.
2. *The Conservative*. Boston, December, 1841.
3. *The Times*. Boston, December, 1841.
4. *The Transcendentalist*. Boston, January, 1842.

The first contrast to be emphasized is between these four Addresses delivered at the high tide of Emerson's Creative Decennium, and the three Addresses made some three or four years earlier, and forming the preliminary attack of the Transcendental Epoch. Then the appeal was to an academic audience at Colleges; now the appeal is to a popular audience on the several occasions at Boston. Herein we see a significant change in Emerson's field of

propagation; he has turned away from the learned professoriate, and it has more decidedly turned away from him, especially in the case of Harvard, after that defiant Divinity Class Address. Emerson now sets his face to win the folk, and he will keep it set in that direction during the rest of his active life. He finds that he must mould his constituency afresh out of the original popular protoplasm, quitting the world of educated tradition. This more popular appeal is stamped, we think, upon the style, the treatment, and the choice of the subjects of these Addresses. We feel the adjustment of the new idea to the new audience.

Significant is the fact that this oratorical Quaternion falls within the same year (1841) which witnessed the appearance of the *Essays*. Let us note the striking contrast between these two Emersonian works, though they were contemporaneous in publication but probably not wholly in composition. Mark how different the attitude, even if the thought remains the same. From the summits of contemplation in the *Essays*, we now behold Emerson in these Addresses coming down into the plain below, as it were passing from Concord to Boston, there to do battle for his cause. In this same pivotal year (1841) the magazine called the *Dial* is started, chiefly by him, so that the printed page in its periodical form is made to do the work of propagation and also of onslaught.

Thus we may notice Emerson evolving a line of literary products which start with his book on Na-

ture whose character is not that of the Essay or of the Address, but that of the Treatise, or bundle of little Treatises, gathered about one common theme. We now imagine the author turning the middle year of his Creative Decennium with two different, indeed quite opposite sets of works, and advancing to a new stage of his career. But just at present it falls to us to give a few details concerning each of these four Addresses, which we have put together under one name as his Oratorical Quaternion, in contrast with his previous Oratorical Triad.

I. *Man the Reformer.* His audience was mainly composed of Mechanics' Apprentices, before whose Library Association he gave his lecture. Hence he puts stress upon "the claims of manual labor, as a part of the education of every young man." So it comes that there runs a socialistic thread through the entire discourse: "We are to revise the whole of our social structure, the state, the school, religion, marriage, trade, science;" indeed the whole institutional world is to be thrown into the furnace and to be moulded anew. Such is really Emerson the Reformer at this time, whom he defines as "the Remaker of what is made;" he will take nothing transmitted from the Past, without a thorough overhauling and reconstruction. Man, now rendered artificial by society, must go back to his natural task of physical labor. Well might those young fellows, Mechanics' Apprentices, have applauded such a passage as this: "the manual labor of society ought to be shared among all its members;" or

this: "A man should have a farm or mechanical craft for his culture." So Emerson is here addressing the pupils of the New University—he himself being now Head Professor in the Department of Labor.

The time indeed overflowed with all sorts of schemes for social amelioration, as the speaker emphasizes: "In the history of the world the doctrine of Reform had never such scope as at the present hour," and he proceeds to tabulate the grand up-burst of *isms* which has shaken to the center everything established: "not a kingdom, town, statute, rite, calling, man or woman, but is threatened by the new spirit." Especially Emerson himself is surrounded and "threatened by this new spirit." Theoretically he holds on and onward, but practically he holds back. This very year (1841) his friends start their grand overture of human regeneration known as Brook Farm, but he does not start. Still he remains their greatest exponent, itemizing in this Address an ominous list of social abuses.

To our mind the most interesting as well as most positive and biographic part of the lecture is his description of the self-sufficing man, independent of all social relations, lodged high and inexpugnable in his Castle of Defiance where he can devote himself to Poetry and Philosophy, and other things "incompatible with good husbandry." Let him be "a pauper, eat his meals standing, relish the taste of fair water and black bread." So must the Genius live "who can create works of art," no self-

indulgence, no taste for luxury in that little back room of his. But it should be repeated that Emerson the writer was never reduced to any such tussle with the dragon Poverty, having that nice little nest-egg of one hundred dollars a month, which was always being laid afresh in his Concord nest. Let us rejoice that he is not in the condition which he describes: "This is the tragedy of Genius—attempting to drive along the ecliptic with one horse of the heavens and one horse of the earth—there is only discord and ruin and downfall to chariot and charioteer." Thus Emerson appreciates his economic independence and uses it for the highest end. Still many a Genius has done his work anyhow, though compelled to yoke in one team, heaven-scaling Pegasus and earth-plodding Old-Sorrel.

II. *The Conservative.* Here we behold Emerson turning right over to his own opposite in less than a year, passing from the Innovator to the Conservator of man's Social Order. Doubtless a considerable personal and somewhat sudden experience lies behind this change; also the audience is now different, the lecture having been held at the Masonic Temple. Probably a gathering of middle-class business-folk, hardly of Mechanic's Apprentices; we hear little of the return to manual labor, and of the immediate satisfaction of our wants by our own direct toil. And the Economic Institution with its intricate mediation of demand and supply is not abolished, but actually defended; the system of Property is old and seemingly indispensable. Strangely

we now hear Emerson crying out to his own Reformers: "You also are conservatives. However men please to style themselves, I see no other than a conservative party." He has really gotten into a tiff with his own people: "You quarrel with my conservatism, but it is to build up one of your own." You, too, wish to make your doctrine prescriptive, and so you berate "the seceder from the seceder," who is none other than myself just as present.

With surprise do we see Emerson sallying forth from his fortress to excuse and even to defend institutions: "they do answer their end, they are really friendly to the good, and unfriendly to the bad—they foster genius." Even greater is their merit: "they afford your talent and character the same chance of demonstration and success, which they might have if there was no law and no property." What a change inside of one year—what caused it? Or was it simply that love of inconsistency and of self-contradiction which he not only defends but flourishes.

Still we are to mark the exception. Amid all his new propagandism, Emerson declares: "Existing institutions are not the best; they are not just, and in respect to you personally they cannot be justified." When Emerson regarded the absolute authority of the divine efflux, law and institution were swept away before it: "A strong person makes the law and custom null before his will." Such is the supreme struggle of Emerson at this time, "bal-

ancing reasons for and against the establishment," tetering between the two parties; so he declares that "there is no pure Reformer," and equally on the other hand "there is no pure Conservative." Thus he fluctuates from side to side caught in the time's dualism: Innovation vs. Conservation.

Emerson holds that Institutions are expedient but not just ideally; he says, "I gladly avail myself of their convenience," but to truth they cannot be vindicated from the standpoint of the Over-Soul whose message to me personally must be absolute in command. Thus his religion made him anarchic, while his experience or his Yankee Common Sense helped him to be somewhat institutional. What caused this breach in his spirit? His friends propose to realize his doctrine, but he stands aghast at the reality; Brook Farm cleaves in him a deep chasm of soul between the theoretical and the practical, between Man the Reformer and Man the Preserver, between the new experiment and his old Concord home. We feel specially in this Address that he is mostly addressing himself, that his speech at its deepest is self-expression, and thus is biographic.

There is no doubt that Emerson herein has tackled the profoundest and most enduring problem of his life. At bottom his evolution hovers about Institutions, for and against, passing through a number of phases up to his last Period, when the see-saw lets up.

III. *The Times*. The title of this lecture indicates that it might be a kind of synthesis or co-ordi-

nation of the two preceding lectures, thus seeking to reconcile their contradiction. The opposites, the Reformer and the Conservative, play through it, under a variety of designations, as we may note in the sentence: "The two omnipresent parties of History, the party of the Past and the party of the Future, divide society today as of old." But also there is the search for the mediating principle: "The main interest which any aspects of the Times can have for us, is the Great Spirit gazing through them." Is not this a glimpse of the World-Spirit which is sovereign over all the conflicts of parties, and uses them for its end? So all the events of the time and the experiences of the individual have the one purpose: "the information they yield of this supreme nature which lurks within all." Or we may in his words call it "the Law which enters us, becomes us," making us "immortal with the immortality of the Law." Emerson calls it also the Moral Sentiment, vainly wrestling to categorize it to his satisfaction.

It is evident that Emerson is struggling to catch and formulate, and also to name, the pervasive and eternal element in this storm of daily occurrences, in this dualism of existence. "The Times are the masquerade of the Eternities;" thus he opens in the first paragraph, condensing his theme into a sentence; the Idea underlying and creating all these ebullient appearances of Time is what he will clutch and express.

This lecture, though delivered a week before the

previous one on the Conservative, contains properly the universal thought overarching and unifying all these lectures. It is, therefore, one of his supreme efforts, though strangely neglected by the biographers and commentators. The composition, however, is unequal, with a certain aridity in parts, and with too much repetition for the reader who has just perused the preceding Addresses. For the original listeners this was probably not a fault but a help. The best portions are Emerson's attempts to grasp the World-Spirit lurking "underneath all these appearances" and generating them. Very subtle and elusive is "this ever-renewing generation of appearances," still we are to take note that it "rests on reality, and reality that is alive," yea, it is verily "the Life of our life." So Emerson wrestles with the conception, certainly a great one, and flings down along the path of his struggles many a designation of it: Life, Cause, Being, Reality, Moral Sentiment, the Great Spirit. Still he seems somehow unable to grasp this Prime Mover as psychical in spite of his suggestive term *Over-Soul* (not used in these Addresses). Still less does he organize his subject with an all-pervading, consistent nomenclature. Well, if he did, that would doubtless jeopard the popular appeal of his speech, for his wriggling is what makes his audience wriggle, and so keep awake.

A glimpse of what constitutes the Great Man, Emerson gives us fleetingly: "The elemental Reality, which ever and anon comes to the surface forms

the grand men," the supreme leaders who are sharers in this supernal energy. We cry out: apply the doctrine, show it, O Emerson, in your biographies. But can we find it, for instance in Representative Men, where it ought overwhelmingly to appear? Still a great and fertile thought is here uttered, even if fragmentarily; nothing less than the hint of the Great Man and of what makes him great; so that this Address at its highest may be deemed Emerson's treatise on the World-Spirit.

IV. *The Transcendentalist*. And now Emerson proposes to give to his audience at the Masonic Temple (Boston, January, 1842), a direct, undisguised account of that doctrine which has been close to his heart, but has remained unspoken in the three foregoing lectures. Only once or twice have we heard the word dropped passingly in the course of their delivery. But now the thing must out, and so the father tells of his child and its history, from which record we have already taken significant extracts and need not repeat them here. We behold Emerson reviewing and re-affirming Transcendentalism after six or seven years' trial of it, if we count from the beginning of the present Creative Epoch of his life. There is an apologetic note, an undercurrent of defense in the lecture; manifestly the new doctrine is not popular in Boston. Many are the accusations against the Transcendentalist, especially "the charge of antinomianism," for he claims that "he has the Lawgiver" in himself, and can make his own Law, and hence, "may

with safety not only neglect but even contravene every written commandment." He carries about with himself his own Legislature, and enacts, according to need his Higher Law.

It is evident that Society will not look with favor upon such a man, who of his inner necessity betakes himself to flight from the social system "to a certain solitary and critical way of living, from which no solid fruit has yet appeared to justify the separation." It is at this point that Emerson becomes critical of his own people and shrinks from these consequences of his own doctrine. He does not endorse the act of Thoreau, nor approve of Brook Farm. But is not his own theory thus made practical, and are not his own flight and isolation repeated by his followers? Emerson, however, protests against this outcome of Emerson, as he looks at such a distorted image of himself. With reproaches he couples advice. But it is plain that Transcendentalism has developed certain repulsive phases to its founder.

Thus he feels strongly and confesses with no little disappointment the negative side of his work, which he calls in one passage "this Iceland of negations." Still he does not give up, but cries: "Patience and still patience." A streak of depression runs through this lecture, and a vein of fault-finding; he is disillusioned as he scans some of the results of Transcendentalism. He criticises his followers, but he cannot help feeling that his words are somewhat of a boomerang. Here, too, we find

one of his moods of self-confession, which keeps flashing guide-lights over his biography.

In the midst of his lecture without much connection with the rest, Emerson throws out this brief gleam: "I—this thought which is called I—is the mould into which the world is poured like melted wax. The mould is invisible, but the world betrays the shape of the mould." That is, the shape of the I or Ego is what we are to behold everywhere in the world—in Nature and Mind. This, if carried out into its details, would give the world-science, revealing in all its shapes the ultimate creative shape of the I or the Self. Here, then, suddenly darts upon the reader another glimpse of Psychology as the universal science. But it remains a disconnected sentence, a germinal thought, not an evolution; a prophecy, not a fulfilment. Still amid his present discouragements it gleams up his great positive hope, which will stay with him to the end. We might almost regard this supreme psychological insight, or perchance outlook as the chief anchor of his life. Already we have noted it, and we shall note it again as it repeatedly rises to the surface.

Such, then, is that work of Emerson which we here call his Oratorical Quaternion, largely a critique of man's social Institutions, somewhat in contrast with the previous Oratorical Triad which is more a critique of Doctrines as embodied in the three types of intellectual men, the thinker, the preacher, and the writer. Both sets of Addresses reveal as their common animus Emerson's hostility

to Tradition, doubtless with exceptions and fluctuations. Such is more or less the negative, critical Emerson, but over, around and through these negations the affirmative Emerson shoots his sun-gleams of optimism and prophecy.

We cannot quit this year (1841) without remarking its almost superhuman activity on the part of Emerson. His mightiest year it seems, his *annus mirabilis*, the very perihelion of his life's orbit. His Essays (First Series), this Oratorical Quaternion, the Dial, Letters, Journals, Poems burst forth to light with a kind of cosmic energy in these months. Never again—but we have not come to that yet.

## VI.

### AFTERMATH OF ESSAYS.

Three years after the appearance of the First Series of Essays, Emerson published the book known as his Second Series of Essays (1844). The two sets belong together, being designated by the same general title, and constructed after a like pattern and out of similar original materials, as his Journals and Lectures. Such pell-mell protoplasmic stuff had to be formed anew, and the Essay is that form, undoubtedly Emerson's most distinctive and permanent art-form, which has its own literary character apart from its content, being the best native garb of the author's thought. That is, the Essay is the most adequate verbal incarnation of Emerson's soul.

Still there is felt to be a considerable difference between the two Series. The first has twelve Essays, and the latter eight, and the number of pages in each Series is in about the same proportion. And we cannot help thinking that this quantitative difference holds true of the qualitative; this Second Series falls off quite one-third in any spiritual valuation—which fact by no means signifies that it is worthless. On the contrary there are many single pithy sentences and passages, which no student of Emerson could afford to miss. Still on the whole, the present Series is a repetition, undoubtedly with many new illustrations and suggestions, yea with new points of view, even if subordinate.

It bears more the character of a retrospect than the First Series; the author is decidedly in the mood of returning upon his past and taking a look at his former self, and at the ground over which he has passed. In this regard the Essay on *Experience* is central, for it tells Mr. Emerson's cardinal experiences, sometimes disguised but sometimes in the first person: "I am not the novice I was fourteen, nor yet seven years ago." Well may he say so, for it is now going on seven years since he delivered his Divinity Class Address, whose afterclap almost hoisted him out of New England; indeed it would have done so, but for his Concord Castle of Defiance. And nearly fourteen years have passed since that earlier overturn which whirled him from his pulpit and from his ministerial vocation forever. Thus Emerson can look back upon several epochal expe-

riences in his retrospective mood, if we date them from the year 1844, the time of the publication of the present work. Perhaps we may find some ground for this bent toward reminiscence in the growing crisis of Transcendentalism, which we have already noted.

The Essay on Experience is pivotal in the life of Emerson for still another and deeper reason: it hints the grand node of his transition from a purely negative to a more positive spirit, his rise from the everlasting No to the everlasting Yea, as Carlyle puts it in his *Sartor*, which Emerson knew well, probably from the time of his visit to the author at Craigenputtock. Here then he indicates his personal history in the evolution of Transcendentalism.

Emerson was indeed fully conscious of this autobiographic essence in his own writing, and for that matter in all worthy writing. More than once he has declared that his works are confessions, as were those of Goethe—extracts drawn from the salient pages of his life's own book. He also saw that this inner revelation was the chief purpose and excellence of all great poetry. In his Essay on the Poet, contained in this Series, he lifts this thought into a lofty sentence: "Dante's praise is that he dared to write his autobiography in colossal cipher, or into universality." Here Emerson is again telling on himself; his particular life he elevates through his writ into an universal worth and import. And so this entire Second Series shows a distinctive strain

in its composition by its more frequent and direct glances into the author's life.

If the Essay on *Experience* has for its central topic the new birth of Emerson into his world-view, being a record of his palingenesis, the first Essay of the Series, named *The Poet*, contains the confession of his life's highest aspiration, which was to be the epic singer of the New World, the Homer of the Occident. This is evident by his several allusions, direct and indirect, to the Chian bard. Moreover, the theme must lie here in the West. Repeatedly we catch the underbreath of secret ambition, as in this: "We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials," unless this genius is to be Emerson's own—a genius which "saw another carnival of the same gods whose picture it so much admires in Homer." Did he meditate some great epic modeled after the Iliad with its Hellenic deities whose scene, however, was to be in our West? He exclaims: "Oregon and Texas are yet unsung," though the heroes of this most recent Trojan War are on hand and in battle, so that "America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres." Since Emerson's time, it has done much metering and story-telling, but has not yet evolved its one all-concentrating genius like Homer. Possibly it is too democratic for any such autocracy of talent. In the line of literary self-expression is not its best product the superlative clown of the great Amer-

ican Circus, Mark Twain, certainly the sovereign of his kind? Very suggestive is the fact that Emerson, our supreme forecaster and prophet, should at least have dreamed of an Occidental Homer singing the overture of the vast New World, and holding another poetic "carnival of the same gods," those antique Olympians who came down from their height and mingled with the heroes in the conflict. But how strange sounds even such a dream from our untraditional Emerson. How could he use again those old gods, who are worn out with much usage!

Still he does not fail to connect the poet with the most recent Emersonian doctrine, the divine efflux which is the direct inspiration of all high poetic achievement. Not only the ideas but also the words at their best flow down from above and seal the poet's expression as God-given. And the poet is designated as "the sayer, the namer," the inventor of the word, and hence it comes that "Homer's words are as costly and admirable to Homer, as Agamemnon's victories are to Agamemnon." In fact Homer with his song is the eternal, Agamemnon and the other heroes with their deeds are the transitory, unless made immortal by the poet's immortality.

Another phase of the Emersonian downflow of the Over-Soul into the individual man is found in the Essay on *Character* of the present Series. This he identifies with that power or personal sovereignty in the man above his works or words, a latent

energy or "a reserved force which acts directly by its presence." Such a Power is often called mythically a Familiar or Genius or even Demon, which has the gift to guide its possessor beyond his reason or even his consciousness. Thus he dips from the source of all happenings, and "appears to share in the life of things, and to be an expression of the same laws which control the tides and the sun," drinking, as it were, from the first fountain of creation. Hence Character in Emerson's view is connected with the divine efflux which now takes the form of a mere human Presence radiating the Over-Soul, without saying a word or doing a deed. So we catch a glimpse of the spirit which holds communion with the genesis of events, and sees what is moving them within from above.

Herein we may behold Emerson grappling with the conception of the Great Man, who is a revelation of the Divine in the one individual, who is thus supernally endowed, and obedient only to his own law, which for him is God's very law. Emerson tears a leaflet from his intimate book of life when he tells what constitutes the sanctity and charm of great characters; non-conformity they show to the existent order, for they all shout: "I never listened to your people's law, or to what they call their Gospel." Truly his own defiant yell from his Concord Fortress, such as we have heard before. Character for him is the born aristocrat, being divinely given, and not to be acquired by any training, not even, we suppose, by reading Emer-

son's books. We might ask, what then is the good of writing them? Full daringly he draws the inference from his view of Great Men: "Nature advertises me that in democratic America she will not be democratized." The true ruler is the Wise Man, who takes communications direct from the Over-Soul, the absolute Monarch of the Universe. For such men are "divine persons, character-born," and receive authority straight from the Lord's Headquarters.

Such is one stage of the ever-evolving Emerson, the undemocratic, the anti-institutional stage, uttered with the war-trump of challenge. In this same Series is the Essay headed *Politics*, in which we hear the same note of defiance even shriller and more bellicose. The State as an organization he theoretically knocks to pieces, though practically we may have to tolerate it for a while yet, till the Wise Man can get hold—why not Emerson himself, the prime vehicle of the Over-Soul? Listen to this: "the Wise Man is the State," for he has Character, and "the appearance of Character makes the State unnecessary." Still we have to swallow a little dose of the State, since it exists "to educate the Wise Man, and with the appearance of the Wise Man, the State expires." Thus Emerson the Platonist becomes more Platonic than Plato himself, whose Wise Man (or Overseer) still kept warriors, but the Emersonian "needs no army, fort or navy—he loves men too well."

The interest will culminate when the Civil War

breaks out and Emerson's Wise Man will be subjected to the severest discipline of the age. In fact just this institutional development of the man through the experience of the Nation's History, may well be deemed the central thread of his biography. His statement now runs: "Good men must not obey the laws *too well*," which leaves a loophole to crawl through, and he will use it more than once hereafter.

Such is the world-defiant, transcendental Emerson on his lofty perch—truly one of his own Great Characters. But he has another humbler side—the individual aspect of him over against the universal—in contrast with the Great Emerson we may here call him without disrespect the Small Emerson. This phase of himself he also discloses in the present Series—see the Essay entitled *Manners*. Emerson now pays not only attention but deference to "the compliments and ceremonies of our breeding" which have been of course transmitted from the past and accepted by this rebel against tradition. Thus we behold the other side of the defiant Emerson; his submission to the ways and even fashions of formal society, so that some have held him snobbish: "I prefer a tendency to stateliness to an excess of fellowship." The great protester adopts without protest the ritual of the traditional gentleman. The transmitted institutions of society he fought desperately, the transmitted manners of society he accepted submissibly. To be sure, his native bent was to cloak himself in the external proprieties;

very natural to him was his courteous aloofness, his dignified isolation: "In all things I would have the island of a man inviolate." The external Emerson is this, quite orthodox; but the internal, spiritual Emerson is furiously heretical. In the last Essay of the Series, called *Nominalist and Realist* he seems to be conscious of this dualism in himself and identifies it with some old philosophic conceptions reaching back to the Middle Ages.

This is the last work of Emerson which bears the title of Essays, though his other books were hardly more than similar collections. But he gave them new names, as if he wished to intimate that his work, though still in appearance a series of Essays, had in it a principle of unity. For instance, his last publication, entitled *Letters and Social Aims* may just as well be called his sixth (or more) series of *Essays*.

## VII.

### THE DAWNING REACTION

The same year (1844) which saw the publication of the preceding Second Series of Essays, witnessed also another event which sets a milestone in Emerson's life history—not a Period or Epoch, but a lesser turning-point in his spirit's evolution. This is marked by Three Addresses which bear the following titles, and constitute Emerson's second Oratorical Triad.

I. *The Young American*, before the Mercantile

Library Association, Boston, February 7, 1844. With look turned to the Future, to the West.

II. *New England Reformers*, a Sunday lecture before the society in Amory Hall, Boston, March 3, 1844. With look turned to the Present, to Boston.

III. *West India Emancipation*, in the Court House at Concord, Mass., August 1, 1844. With look turned to the Past, to Old England.

The three audiences are non-academic, but otherwise differ from one another, and the three Addresses show marks of a separate adjustment on part of the speaker. The first audience is a general one, and hence calls forth in him a more general and affirmative appeal. The second audience seems rather a special one, and evokes Emerson's pungently critical, damnatory mood. In the first lecture he is more the optimist, in the second more the pessimist. The third audience is the popular one, of the country side, and is addressed under the name of Fellow-citizens.

Still in spite of such opposition in matter and manner, the three lectures are at bottom one in spirit and character. For they all show his inner reaction against his decennial achievement; he manifests a deep disappointment with his locality, with his work, and with his followers. It would seem that he thinks or at least fears that he has failed; for time, as usual, turns on him her sourest face before ratifying his deed as immortal. Then he lets us glance into that deepest scission of his soul: his

estrangement from the whole institutional world, from the pre-suppositions of his own spiritual existence, that is, from the social order in which he was born, reared and educated.

On the whole the first speech turns outward, the second inward; the one travels forward to the new world, the other stays at home in old Massachusetts—with uplift in the one case, with downcast in the other—facing there toward hope, facing here toward despondency, if not despair. The third speech seems to indicate the way of escape back over the Ocean. Still let us not forget that all three are sprung of a common source and represent one phase of this decennial development of Emerson. Thus they are trined in one thought; call it his second Oratorical Triad, in striking contrast with his first, which precluded the sunrise of his Creative Epoch, while this Triad epilogues the sunset thereof. Each lecture deserves a brief special notice.

I. *The Young American.* This lecture seems to have been composed in the first enthusiasm after a trip to the West. It is a series of sympathetic glances into the future of the country, which Emerson now seems proud to consider his own, calling it "our fortunate home," the land which "is to repair the errors of a scholastic and traditional education." The latter is Emerson's great enemy in New England; he beholds in the West the mightiest coadjutor of his own work against tradition. No wonder he praises this new disciple of his, considering his disgust at his old Apostolate. Witness the

bound-bursting spirit everywhere, especially in the enormous extension of territory to the Pacific, in the overflowing migration and in the space-overcoming railroad. He seems to say in his heart, though not in his speech: The West is the true Transcendentalist, the right-down Emersonian.

One thinks at times that he is almost ready to migrate to the Promised Land, which he has discovered toward the setting-sun. He daringly prognosticates: "The nervous, rocky West is intruding a new and continental element into the national mind, and we shall yet have an American genius." He dwells on this contrast: "We in the Atlantic States, have been commercial, and have easily imbibed an European culture." He sees and says repeatedly that the original primary genius of America is to get away from that Eastern seaboard, which is dominated by old-world prescription. Here we may ask, will Emerson practically realize this insight? Will he migrate to his new world of freedom, as did his Puritan ancestor, Peter Bulkley, from Old to New England, some two centuries since? Not at all; that is not Waldo Emerson. On the contrary, he will soon go the other way, Eastward toward the traditional, not Westward toward the untraditional. Whereof something is to be said hereafter.

The lecturer, however, continues on the ascent till he reaches his highest point of view, where he visions the "sublime and friendly Destiny by which the human race is guided," which he also calls the

friendly Genius or the serene Power which has in hand the direction of the great movement of the Occident. In other words Emerson now glimpses the World-Spirit in the West. It is not a very extended or a very clear glimpse. Still he catches the ironic method of it, "which infatuates the most selfish men to act against their private interest for the public welfare." It is that Spirit which has made us "build railroads, we know not for what or for whom," yet at our own expense with the motive of gain. The man, pursuing his individual end is used by this Supernal Power to bring forth the opposite of what he intended, namely its own universal end. If Emerson had hearkened about him the very hour he was delivering this lecture in 1844, he would have heard something of the annexation of Texas, intended by the then rulers as a vast accession to the slave territory of the nation, but intended by the other Ruler, the World-Spirit, as a vast accession to the free territory of the nation in due season. Now it is a great merit of Emerson that he in the West caught a flash of that sovereign secret Genius of the Age, and noted the ironic nature which veils its procedure.

The lecturer proceeds to find the positive and praiseworthy side in the communistic experiments which his friends were then trying in New England. Still he gives some gentle shakings of the head at the business. Soon, however, his condemnation will be more incisive. Now, too, with patriotic Americanism he turns away from England,

but it will not be long before he will wheel about and seek her out. Let the reader not forget the present problem of Emerson: Will he move forward to the American West or backward to the European East? Let the future settle it. But just now we have to plunge from this lofty, buoyant, optimistic mood into quite the opposite.

II. *New England Reformers.* This lecture brings before us Emerson composing and delivering a denunciatory philippic to his own people, in which he pitilessly exposes before their eyes their own shortcomings. We must take into account the audience in order to understand the bearing of the address. It was a free religious society, known as the Church of the Disciples, whose pastor was the transcendental Rev. James Freeman Clarke. The listeners were in the main the new reformers, with whose conduct Emerson had become disgusted, even if he sympathized with their object. Yet they were largely products of his own movement. Thus he, the original Transcendentalist, shows a pronounced reaction against the Transcendentalists—against the people more than against their doctrine. But even the latter is not without some questioning on his part, since it has led to such results.

The lecturer gives at the start a vivid account of his own seething epoch, in which “the spirit of protest and detachment,” of dissent and discontent dominated New England. In general, it was a time of universal separation from every thing transmitted and established in the shape of institutions,

beliefs, manners, and even foods. And we hear the arch protester himself starting to protest just against his own protest. He begins to hedge in regard to his darling doctrine, declaring that "the criticism and attack on institutions which we have witnessed, has made one thing plain, that society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things about him—he has become tediously good in some particular, but negligent and narrow in the rest." That is, a hobbyist, faddist, crank, in today's lingo. Such is the keen thrust against the new horde of world-improvers; but the lecturer's speech gets actually venomous when he arraigns them for "hypocrisy and vanity;" the world-improvers turn world-imposters. So Emerson has come to see that the reformers themselves need reforming first of all, and he starts with himself. They do not go to the root of the trouble, but "spend all their energy on some accidental evil;" slaying insects they are only insect-slayers.

Manifestly Emerson has reached the stage of protesting against Emerson, and the original seceder is inclined to secede from his own primal secession. But we are not to think that Emerson has become reconciled with the institutional world. He emphasizes: "the wave of evil washes all our institutions alike," not merely one little corner of them. "I find nothing healthful or exalting in the smooth conventions of society;" yet Emerson had his decided social conventions, in which at times he stayed

or even stuck, rather hidebound. And he will compromise: "it is handsomer to remain in the establishment better than the establishment," though he goes on to condemn Property, State, Society, even Family; everything established is damned and damnable by the simple fact of being established and transmitted. Practically he accepts, though theoretically he anathematizes. "Remember," he almost vociferates, "that no society can be as large as one man." And he warns seemingly the governing powers: "Hands off! let there be no control and no interference in the administration of the affairs of this kingdom of Me." Yet he did pay his taxes instead of going to jail with Alcott and Thoreau, who would thus practically live up to their doctrine and his.

Hence he notes with disapprobation the new reformed societies established by his friends during the past years. "Three communities have been already formed in Massachusetts" he says, probably referring to Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and Hopedale, poetic names redolent of the pasture, the orchards, and idealism. In Emerson's eyes their chief "defect was their reliance on Association." The very "idea of union" has become repugnant to him; the separated dissociated individual is the true universal, yea, the universe itself. He dares affirm the extreme consequence: "Government will be adamantine without any governor." Listen to this: "The union is only perfect when the uniters are isolated." Emerson seems to have reached the stage

when he falls into a fit of horrors at the thought of instituted society. He rejects all forms of associated Man, and spurns the conception of human association as realized in institutions.

So much as to his intellectual view. To be sure when it comes to the will, Emerson plays truant to his hot-worded theory. This malfeasance in himself he recognizes and seems to defend, for he speaks of himself when he says that "every man has at intervals the grace to scorn his performances, in comparing them with his belief of what he should do;" yea, he will even go so far as to side "with his enemies" against himself in their reproaches, "gladly listening and accusing himself of the same thing." Thus the breach between conviction and fulfilment, between his theory and practice, between duty and deed, he not only knows, but glorifies. However, is not such an inner scission the pure melancholy of existence, when a man has realized himself in a deed and then scorns it as unworthy of his best self? Would it not be better to stop doing or even living? From this source we are inclined to derive that strain of disillusion, and at times of downright pessimism which rises to the surface in the present lecture. For it must be acknowledged that Emerson, the far-famed optimist, was not always optimistic.

But toward the close the lecturer falls back upon his positive and happy-making doctrine of the divine descent into him of the Over-Soul, declaring for the hundredth time that "this open channel to

the highest life is the first and last reality," though he may not be able to give it any adequate utterance. He reproves himself for writing such a negative lecture and bids his mood: "Suppress for a few days your criticism on the insufficiency of this or that teacher or experimenter," and he will undo himself. Glad you did not follow your own advice, Mr. Emerson, else we had never had this very characteristic document of your spiritual history. Hear him exhort himself to the better life: "let a man fall into the divine circuits and he is enlarged." Then again: "Obedience to his genius is the only liberating influence." He has resolved after his way his pessimistic discords into the grand harmonizing solace: "There is a Power over us and behind us, and we are the channels of its communications."

Worthily conceived is such a view as far as it reaches; but just this Supernal Power, as he holds it, is the origin of Emerson's limitation and hence of his negation. He grants it lovingly to individual Man, specially to Emerson; but he denies it unconditionally and even passionately to associated Man in all transmitted social organization. Such is the grand Emersonian denial, a negation as great as that of Faust; in fact in this aspect we might call him the New England Faust in spite of his dislike of Goethe. This reminds me of an impression which has often come to mind in reading Emerson's Journals: he felt some deep, very dim, yet repugnant affinity with the poet of Faust, whom he

tackles again and again, but either gets thrown or rebounds violently from his grip.

As we look back somewhat surprisedly at the man giving this lecture, we have to think that Emerson is quite at sea theoretically and practically, almost in a condition of inner dissolution. He has had a fateful experience with his doctrine, with his people, with himself. He appears at times to revel in a love of self-contradiction which shows a kind of demonic defiance of reason: "The union is only perfect when the uniters are isolated"—which seems to say that the essence of union is just disunion. We hear his repeated declarations that he is for the law, but against its execution, in favor of a government without any governing or governor, supporting theory but refusing practice. Discordant soul, what is he to do with himself? For a strong remedial turn he must take soon, with a dip into some restorative influence. The next lecture gives a fresh whirl to his present kaleidoscopic soul-changes.

III. *Emancipation of the Negro in British West Indies.*—In this Address Emerson makes us feel that the act of black enfranchisement was still more deeply an act of white enfranchisement, by no means excluding the speaker himself, even if done by a foreign nation on foreign territory. Yonder in England at least rays forth the sun of hope, though quite eclipsed everywhere here at home—in Boston, in Massachusetts, in the United States. Such is Emerson's self-lacerating estrangement from his own native place, which he must somehow

overcome or sink. But in the distance overseas he glimpses rescue.

The Address was delivered in Emerson's hometown, which had taken into its head to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the emancipation of the West India slaves by British act of Parliament. A peculiar temper of the time and place such a celebration shows; doubtless it sprang from the antagonism to the Annexation of Texas, and to the election of Polk, which took place this year (1844). The proslavery movement seemed triumphant in the free new United States—the unfree, hence lying, disgraceful country; behold in contrast the true love of liberty and the magnanimity of old monarchic Great Britain! Some such feeling must have inspired the occasion, and also Emerson's speech, which echoes it, at times with a good deal of passion for him, usually the dispassionate. Moreover he will now avert his look from the West, which almost unanimously favors that vast increase of Texan territory, and which is filled with its truly Occidental aspiration known as "manifest destiny." Yes, Emerson will not now turn even for hope toward the youngest States but toward the oldest, even across the Atlantic.

The speech first gives a lengthy historic recital of the act of Emancipation, when it suddenly leaps up with the cry: "Fellow-citizens!" The orator then begins spinning a warm personal thread: While working up this history, "I have not been able to read a page of it without the most painful compar-

isons"—with what? With the whole political world of America, from largest to smallest—the Nation, the State, the Community. "Whilst I have read of England I have thought of New England," much to the discredit of the latter. The truth is, that once vigorous Puritan spirit has sunk into the slough of servility to slavery, while the old English stock has improved to the point of moral sublimity, not simply spoken but acted: "The great-hearted Puritans have left no posterity" is one peal of the speaker's agony; another bitter reproach runs: "There is a disastrous want of *men* from New England." Piercing is the present note of alienation from his own ancestral world.

But what comfort? "I point you to the bright example which England set you on this day ten years ago."—Moreover Emerson is decidedly facing himself toward that country, and seems getting ready in mind to start on his way thither. He "feels that a great heart and soul are behind there," which brought about this grand event and made it "a moral revolution, having no bloody war," inasmuch as it had the power to draw to it "every particle of talent and of worth in England." But how is it in this country? It must be confessed that from the President downward "all the seats of power are filled by underlings, ignorant, timid, selfish," from which evidently Emerson must soon take his flight. "The Governor of Massachusetts is a trifler, the State-House in Boston is a plaything;" what is left to the honest man but to get out of the

reach of such a moral cesspool? He will have to go and commune with "the great-heart and soul of England" for his own restoration. Emerson does not directly say this, but the reader has to feel that some such design is fermenting in his brain.

Let us in a brief backlook again put together the three speeches of this second Oratorical Triad which now is closing the present Decennium. They form a significant whole with its triple process made up of the three Addresses, and give stress to a weighty turning-point in Emerson's experience. They round a little arc of Future, Present and Past, moving from the young West through New England, toward Old England—verily a reversion from America to Europe. Thus we begin to glimpse the reactionary spirit, very different from that aggressive forward-driving Emerson whom we heard at the beginning of this mightily upheaving Decennium when he uttered his opening shout of defiance and battle in his first Oratorical Triad. A new Emersonian Epoch is dawning.

## VIII.

### SUMMARY

Herewith is concluded the most creative part of Emerson's most creative Epoch, which we have unfolded under the name of Productivity. It contains his greatest writings, ever productive and reproductive: his Treatise on Nature, his two Series of Essays, and his three sets of Addresses.

Moreover there runs through all the works one central thought known as Transcendentalism, a spiritual energy, multiform and elusive, but ever-present and active. Not a system of philosophy, but a subtly penetrating influence capable of thousandfold metamorphosis, it was the Proteus of the soul of New England, the One amid all her changes. The last transformation may be seen in today's (or yesterday's) doctrine of Pragmatism.

In the printed page of this decennial Epoch lives the eternal Emerson, that part of him which has already shown itself time-proof, that part which stamps him as our greatest American man of letters. Here lurks his genetic thought; we may deem it the brain of his whole life, the rest of him being more the outward limbs and flourishes. This, then, should be the chief quarry of the student Emerson, who will here get hold of the key to the master's entire writ and also to his total career.

The sympathetic reader must have already felt a certain completeness in the present round of Emerson's Productivity, an inner process of beginning, middle, and end, a cycle of the author's creative power—and that his most original cycle. This is the truly genetic stage of the Transcendental spirit whose central affirmative doctrine is the immediate efflux of the Divine into the Human, recurrent with each original act of the mind.

But the negative or critical phase of this literary Productivity is in our opinion, the more fully developed, the more stoutly emphasized, yea the more

tonic for the author's time, and for our time, and perchance for all time. The critique of Tradition of every form gleams in sword-flashes through Emerson's writings, whatever be their label. Especially does he wield his tongue's keen slash against the traditional social forms. And it must be recognized that in this negative vein Emerson has a perennial work to do; for man's institutions—Family, State, the Economic Order, the Church—are going more and more to be put to the question for their right of existence. The result is we have to preserve and rebuild and reform them consciously, through knowing what they are. Emerson, therefore, and just this negative Emerson, is ever renewed and renewable, for he compels us to think our institutional world—which we as a people have never done, except in little patches—not only in order to defend it adequately, but to construct it aright.

To be sure, such a work, though always needful and hence immortal, is not of the greatest, is not grandly constructive either in its own literary character or in the social structure which it manifests. Not originally constructive, hardly reconstructive is it, though the preparation indispensable for all right reform and reconstruction.

We have above intimated that there is an inner process running through and holding together the varied literary productions of the present creative Decennium. The outline of this process we shall

set down in a brief characterization, showing its three stages.

I. *Nature*, a poetico-philosophical treatise: it affirms Nature to be "the disguised Man" on the one hand, yet "the apparition of God" on the other. Emerson's opening book — potential, presentimental, prophetic of his future on a number of lines.

II. *The Essays* in two Series; they pass from concrete Nature to abstract Conception; Emerson reaches his highest thought in the Over-Soul (universal) with its contrast to the Under-Soul (or individual), whose dualistic interaction is the central theme of the whole.

III. *The Addresses* in three sets, making ten all together. The appeal is more popular, less esoteric than that of the Essays. And also the critical element dominates, showing the short-comings of the time in doctrines and social arrangements. The Addresses give the most complete evolution of Emerson during this Epoch—his first aggressive attack, then the fluctuating struggle in him between the anti-traditional and traditional man, finally the reaction from his earlier self, especially toward traditional Europe.

It must be remembered that the three foregoing stages represent chiefly methods of presentation, or the three Emersonian art-forms, which in one way or other he will continue to retain hereafter.

So much for this first line of Emerson's greatness, that of Productivity, running through the

present Epoch. In accord with our plan, we are next to take up a new and parallel line of Emerson's activity, cotemporaneous with what we have just seen, but very different.

### *Section B. Propagation*

We have now come to the second great fact or chain of facts, belonging to this creative Decennium, namely the Propagation of the Transcendental Idea which has been born and baptized into literary form—all of which is supremely the work of Emerson. He is the central conduit through whom this Over-Soul or World-Spirit or Genius of the Age has streamed down into the time, making it truly the turn of an Epoch. Transcendentalism has now written itself out in ink at the quiet Concord Castle, asserting triumphantly its own freedom, its own way of thinking, and its own style of utterance. A creative body of literature it has created, whose echoes are with us yet—witness this book, for instance—and evidently are destined to be heard rolling still a long distance down the decenniums. We may well repeat that here has arisen, according to present indications, the most persistent and influential writing of the literary sort that America has yet produced—not the most popular, but the most persistent and deeply influential.

It should be re-stated that Emerson looked upon this movement as essentially religious, a kind of new Reformation, a return to the true and undefiled, that is, unprescribed Christianity. Or it was

the second great Protestantism, a revolt from the existing transmitted dogma, ritual, forms; a fresh ascent to the primordial sources of all faith. Thus it bore the character of a revival of religion, with its enthusiasms and excesses, at whose wilder manifestations Emerson will soon show disapproval, if not disgust; thus he will begin to protest against his own Protestantism.

Accordingly, we shall next pass to consider how this remarkable binful of seed was sown broadcast through the land and made to sprout. Creation otherwise might have been smothered in its cradle, without propagation. There is no doubt the soil was ready and the means at hand. Boston lay near and shot its roots of publication not only throughout New England, but the whole country. Indeed, it was a book-producing town, and a book-loving community, more famous for its tomes than than now; print-hungry was the town even if critical and querulous. This fact must not be forgotten: Emerson found at his door a ready-made and efficient means of distributing his printed page, and of pushing the same to the full periphery of his audience, however small and scattered. What he could do in this line was seen in the success with which he exploited Carlyle's early works from Boston, a thing impossible in London or anywhere else. So let it be emphasized that the golden opportunity for distributing his brain-products was at hand and working; the psychological conjuncture for propagation was never quite so happy before or since.

Still print alone would not suffice unless workers, diligent and apostolic, were ready to prepare the field for the planting and the harvest. This brings us to another peculiar gift of Emerson: he had the power to gather about himself a devoted and able apostleship. His Castle was the home of an ardent band of missionaries who could defy personal advantage for the sake of the cause, though Emerson himself never let the economic Devil catch him by the throat. Thus he kept a fortress, and to a certain extent a free lunch for the hard-pressed and thriftless comrade in arms. In this respect also Emerson was the luminous center from which radiated many light-giving minds, zealous expositors of the new Idea and of themselves.

So it comes that we must give some account of that branch of our hero's biography which pertains to the Emersonian Apostolate, wherewith he was able to surround himself. Herein we may note a striking difference from the previous strand, from his Productivity, in which he had to be solitary and to commune with himself, receiving the dictates of the Over-Soul into his own single soul—the message "from the Alone to the alone." But now the outside begins to play in, associates join him to carry forward his gospel. Hence this activity we call Propagation as distinct from Productivity. Characters now enter, unique of their kind; they join in the conflict of the time, and produce an action which has its beginning, middle and end, or rise, bloom and decline, with Emerson as the central fig-

ure or hero. We may deem it a sort of Epic, the Concord Iliad, with its heroic Achilles surrounded and supported by other heroes, whose Troy is the anti-transcendental Boston, against which chiefly is the grand battle. Further, we may regard it a Ten Years' War, at least as far as Emerson the hero is concerned, whose work in this line is creatively finished during the present Decennium. Here then lies an acted Epic, whose poetic character is what gives to it an abiding interest; still though all its actors were poets, the action was never sung together, but has reached us only in many bright shreds of verse and prose.

These characters which now appear on the scene, and become denizens of Emersonopolis, are all in themselves originals, even if satellites in the last instance; each has his or her heroic part in this grand conflict, while revolving around the central luminary. Both the people and their deed have become famous: I am not certain but that they form the most fascinating, suggestive, and truly poetic episode of the entire Emersoniad. I personally enjoy them as a whole in action better than their verses, though these are by no means to be left out.

We may group this work of Propagation under four heads or classes, each of which forms a distinctive branch of the Emersonian Apostolate.

1. The Transcendental Circle.
2. The Transcendental Academy.
3. The Transcendental Periodical.
4. The Transcendental Community.

All these forms of Propagation were born and fostered during this wonderfully Creative Epoch, requiring an enormous outlay of energy, quite equal to the intellect displayed by the Master's writings in the line of his Productivity, of course with less lasting results. Such is indeed Emerson's grand push outwards from within, the sweep from his Thought to his Will, from Meditation to Action. Let the reader not forget that these two streams run alongside of each other in time through the entire Decennium, and that they keep mutually intertwining, re-acting one upon the other all the way. Finally, however, they must be brought together and be seen as one Whole in the rounded Biography of Emerson.

Moreover, we should note that Propagation involves some form of man organized, and herein Emerson brings to light a gift not seen prominently in his writings. Productivity is the work of the Mind individual, Propagation is the work of the Mind associated, so that in it the lone author must give up his splendid isolation, and unite in some kind of fellowship with his staff of propagandists.

## I.

### THE TRANSCENDENTAL CIRCLE

Centered around Emerson was a group of friends and fellow-workers of pronounced ability and individuality. Indeed it was his good-fortune and that of his cause to attract people of talent from the

first. There was at the start a Transcendental Club of no small ability and devotion. We already hear of "some young men" in 1835 (see letter to Carlyle, March 12), who, Emerson says, are intending to found a Journal to be called the Transcendentalist. Next year Dr. Hedge dates the earliest origin—"we four," then "some dozen of us," then "a large number assembled." Such were the first of a series of meetings "held from time to time as occasion prompted for seven or eight years." So these gatherings quite overarch the present Decennium, and seemingly measure its growth, culmination, and decline.

From these people of the Club, were gradually sifted out three who may be said to form the innermost Circle around Emerson, who on his side deeply influenced them, not so much by way of doctrine as of stimulation; while they on the other hand, being original themselves, reacted on him in a number of important ways. Thus the fascination was mutual: Emerson took not a little from them as well as they from him, with reciprocal appreciation and enrichment. But he owned a power which they did not, that of expression—they all wrote and spoke and have left books, but he is their supreme voice—their glory is largely, though not wholly, a reflection from his sun. These three are Alcott, Thoreau, and Miss Fuller.

Perhaps we ought to say Circles, instead of Circle, for there were more than one—several if not many, according to the fineness of the lines of di-

vision. But here we can only take the record of one Circle, the nearest to the Center, and most deeply inwound in the heart and mind of its creator; also its members were the most talented and most famous of the Apostolate, truly sharing in the immortality of the work and its prime artificer. Hence only three of them as designated we interlink in this chain of a Circle.

Be it said that while all three receive radiance from the central luminary, which eternizes them in its deathless sheen, each of them shines also by own light, and with a peculiar lustre. Stars they are, lesser suns, not merely lunar; in fact they have their own moons, often invisible except under the telescope. This phenomenon of the Transcendental Heaven is worth its scrutiny.

It becomes us, therefore, to send our best glance after these three persons, asking the triple question: What did he (she included) get from Emerson, What did he give to Emerson, What did he have in his own individual right, as distinct from Emerson and the rest of the group.

I. *A. Bronson Alcott*. We are somewhat astonished at the amount and the height of praise which Emerson bestows upon Alcott in his Diary. To be sure he gives many a sharp counterstroke to his laudation; he perhaps undervalued Alcott as a writer, but overvalued him as a thinker, or as a thinking talker. There was, accordingly, a peculiar personal appeal in Alcott's doctrine for Emerson. This doctrine was distinctively the lapse, the descent

of all Creation down to its negative extreme just through creation. It would seem that Alcott, more than any other person represented to Emerson the living embodiment of the Oversoul with its down-flow into speech, for he always spoke of Alcott's talk as directly inspired from the supernal sources, denying to him at the same time the ability to write—the Oversoul could not push through the pen-point in his case. Emanation lay at the basis of Alcott's world-view, and thus he became in himself a striking illustration of the grand Lapse of Man—a Lapse of the Alcottian mind to the Orient, where Emanation is properly at home. In this retrograde movement Alcott carried Emerson with him, though by no means completely; for the latter still clung to evolution, or the ascent of man versus his descent—which is essentially an Occidental thought and practice.

This Oriental stream was, however, decidedly colored and in part transformed on its way to Concord by the Hellenic Neo-Platonists who started at Alexandria in the Third Century A. D. We hear Emerson call Alcott a living Plato; did he not mean a living Plotinus? At any rate we have the right to see the influence of Alcott in that very Plotinian Essay of Emerson, which we have already considered—the Oversoul, and doubtless in some other productions.

II. *Henry David Thoreau.* Of all the members of the Circle, Thoreau has won this special distinction: his work has shown itself after his death to

possess the greatest growing power. His writings, quite unsaleable and unappreciated during his lifetime, are now printed in edition after edition, while his manuscripts have been given to the public by publishers volume on volume. A cult of Thoreau with a special propagandism seems to have arisen. While he had breath in his body, he deemed himself a failure as a writer; still he wrote on with an all-coercive need of self-expression which has been strangely found to be universal and immortal. To some minds he has even grown to be the rival of Emerson himself.

Thoreau's tendency was on the whole opposite to that of Alcott, to whom Nature was the lowest emanation, or the real degradation of God's creative power. The contrary was the movement and indeed the world-view of Thoreau: Nature was for him the divine appearance itself, with which he incessantly held communion.

The most famous deed of Thoreau is coupled with this doctrine: his flight back to Nature, with whom he would live in immediate embrace, distant from artificial society. So he betook himself to his hut and potato-hole on the shore of Walden Pond, even away from the free household of Emerson. Alcott, however, proposed to associate the individual man in a new society. Thoreau, be it said, returned to home and to Emerson after his daring experiment.

Emerson was deeply sympathetic with Thoreau's bent, as we may see in his first printed book, called *Nature*. In him the Oversoul (Alcott) and the Un-

dersoul (Thoreau) lay alongside of each other, outwardly in peace, if not inwardly reconciled. We may easily point out the two strands in separate Essays of Emerson, perhaps here and there in the same Essay.

III. *Margaret Fuller (Ossoli)*. Here enters the woman of the Concord Epic, and a mighty figure she towers. Indeed she seems to us the strongest personality of the Circle, with the greatest native power, verily a Titanic character. She remained in close companionship with Emerson during this whole Creative Decennium, and, as he recognized, she stimulated enormously his productivity. Also she aided him practically in the work of propagation; for instance she edited the *Dial* for two years without remuneration. However she herself could not write in proportion to her ability; the Titaness was unable to erupt her full native energy into her written word. She confesses: "I shall never be an artist, I have no patient love of execution." She, too, lacked the power of organization.

With her, then, enters into the Transcendental Circle that deepest underlying motive-power of Human Nature, namely sex, which thus has both its phases (or its dualism) represented in this movement. With all her intellect Margaret Fuller was at last an emotional being dominated by love in some of its subtle shapes. Here lies in our judgment the ground of her profound appreciation of Goethe, whom Emerson never could quite understand, still less accept.

Certain lines or tendencies in Emerson's Essays one may identify with Miss Fuller's influence. On the other hand she was trained by the Master and the time into her original power. Still she fell out with Transcendentalism, and shared in the reaction against it, which we have also noticed in Emerson. The result was a flight from Boston to New York and then to Europe, which has its parallel in the career of Thoreau and also of Emerson, for the latter likewise went back to Europe about this same time or a little later (1847).

But Margaret Fuller never returned out of her separation from her city and country. She perished of shipwreck in New York harbor, at forty years of age, just in the act of getting back. Thus her round of life never had its completion such as we see in Emerson. She is truly the tragic character of the set, the woman of the dark fate which we are inclined to trace in her very self all her living days. She never came to fulfilment, yet Emerson has devoted to her his longest and most loving biography, which likewise has a pronounced undercurrent of autobiography, whereby it becomes doubly suggestive.

Such is the Transcendental Circle of three strong characters—all of them possessing genius in their own special lines—they revolve about Emerson at Concord in their highest radiance during his present creative Epoch. All three were very different, yet seem in one process moving together; in doctrine Alcott dwelt upon the divine, Thoreau upon

the physical, Miss Fuller upon the human. Thus Emerson had in his presence beaming into his countenance personal representatives of God, Nature, and Man, the three prime constituents of the Universe.

## II.

### THE TRANSCENDENTAL ACADEMY

All three members of the foregoing Circle had been school-teachers—Alcott, Thoreau, Miss Fuller—and Emerson himself had gone through a considerable pedagogical experience, some of it reaching down to the bottom of the ladder. It was, therefore, quite natural that these teachers should think of a school for their doctrine as one means of its Propagation. And as they were all studying and dreaming over old Plato, they could not help fantasizing an educative institution like the Platonic Academe, to be re-constituted in Concord or somewhere in its neighborhood. Moreover, had not something similar been done in Florence during the Italian Renaissance? Some such scheme hovered enticingly before the Transcendental mind, especially during the present Decennium, so prodigiously prolific and eruptive in every direction.

As an additional incentive for Emerson, we are reminded that he was at this time practically excluded from all the schools of Education in and around Boston, headed by Harvard College, his own *alma mater*, not now in a very maternal mood to-

ward her greatest son on account of his affectionate trouncing of her theologians in his Divinity Class Address. So he was ready to found his own University, and direct it from his Castle of Defiance. Alcott's school in Boston, in which the latter had attempted to start a new pedagogy, had sunk under a load of public obloquy, and for some years he had taken up his residence at Concord just across the street from Emerson. So it comes that we hear of the following scheme in a letter of Emerson under the date of August 16, 1840.

“Alcott and I projected the other day a whole University out of our straws. Do you not wish that I should advertise it in *The Dial*?” This periodical was just then under way with Margaret Fuller as editor, to whom the foregoing letter was addressed. The locality was to be “some country town, say Concord or Hyannis,” not in any large city, above all, not in Boston; “we will hold a semester for the instruction of young men, say from October to April”—a winter school of Philosophy in which each professor “shall announce his own subject and topics, with what detail he pleases, and hold, say two lectures or conversations therein each week.” A very free curriculum both for instructor and pupil—each is to learn and to teach quite what and as he chooses. Even the fee is not rigidly fixed, but left to the conscience of the student who is to pay “according to his sense of benefit received and his means.” This was to be the new enfranchised University, built to “front the world without char-

ter, diploma, corporation or steward." Such was the defiant liberty of the coming education, which here seeks to establish an institution quite hostile to the transmitted institution. Emerson urges Miss Fuller who now seems a part of his every plan: "Do you not wish to come here and join in such a work?" For it would "anticipate by years the education of New England." He does not expect a large attendance: "some twenty or thirty students at first." (Cabot's *Emerson*, II, p. 409.)

Such a plan we may wonder at as another product of the furious fertility of Emerson's brain during this wildly feracious Epoch. Moreover such a scheme has a social trend like all his thoughts and actions of the present time. He closes his letter with an outburst of social hope: "We shall sleep no more, and we shall concert better houses, economics, and social modes than any we have seen." Prophetic of the Now, if nothing else.

Emerson is, of course, to be one of the Professors, and it is suggestive to see what department of instruction he prefers. This he sets down as his self-chosen curriculum: "Beaumont and Fletcher, Percy's Reliques, Rhetoric and Belles Lettres." Not Philosophy but Rhetoric with Poetry is his favorite branch—a peculiar choice; yet he has said more than once that a professorship of Rhetoric would be his preferred vocation for life. More strange still seems his selection of the Elizabethan Dramatists, Beaumont and Fletcher, over the far greater William Shakespeare. Indeed we have to

think from this and other indications scattered through his writings, that Emerson in his heart loved and appreciated Beaumont and Fletcher better than Shakespeare. Some reasons for this singular preference might be hunted up, but they would carry us too far to one side.

The plan for such an Academy was never realized, but the idea remained, and has become exceedingly fruitful, being at work still today. Here indeed rises a view of Education which has not yet been overtaken, the idea of the free, or as we may call it, the new Communal University as distinct from the old transmitted, essentially European University, which still dominates our American educational world. A free faculty, free courses of study, free students, a free society; then such an University should be everywhere, in every community which will take the trouble to establish it and pursue universal studies in an universal way, making a University which is truly universal. That Emersonian plan had its shortcomings and serious omissions; still we may think of Alcott, Miss Fuller, and especially of Emerson as teachers in such a school, with lectures, readings and conversations which were the instruments for inserting a spile into that upper original Energy and making it flow down at first hand to the participants. The old traditional humdrum of drill, recitation, and mechanical device would be supplemented by the direct downflow from the primal fountain of creative power. Some such idea was now rife and

throbbing in the time; Emerson and his Circle responded to it in this scheme, truly the ideal school of idealism, which has never quite lapsed, though it has never quite succeeded in getting itself born. Alcott especially would not give up the idea; indeed he first started it after an infantile fashion in Boston, whereof we may still read in his somewhat forgotten book called the Record of a School, though its germinal suggestion remains and is unfolded in the recent flowering of child-welfare and child-education. The Kindergarden, in the history of its American evolution, cannot leave out Alcott's prophetic experiment. In fact, Alcott was more the teacher than the writer; his Genius would pour forth freely from the tip of his tongue, but hesitated to flow through his quill into ink.

How persistent this idea of a Transcendental Academy continued, may be seen in the Concord School of Philosophy, which came to fruition many years later. Emerson was still alive at the beginning of it, but quite out of harness; Alcott, however, remained, though very old, and retained a good fragment of his pristine vigor. Younger men, Sanborn, Harris, Emery, took hold of the plan and realized it in spite of a storm of Yankee ridicule like to that which Emerson had to weather some forty years before. But this school also went through its rise, bloom, and evanishment.

But altogether the most important and influential phase of the Transcendental Academy was when it broke loose from its fixed locality in the East and

began to wander Westward, especially in the persons of its two chief protagonists, Emerson and Alcott. In the first place both of the Apostles have declared that these trips to the new America away from the old colonial States gave them fresh hope and strength for their cause. Indeed it seems that without this renewed effluence from the younger part of the nation, the movement might have wilted in the bud. Both were to a degree recreated in mind as well as replenished with cash from that new-born spirit in the Great Valley. So they have indicated from their side. On the other hand, their doctrines were sown far and wide over the receptive and fertile prairies.

The Emersonian Lyceum, as it came to be often called, was in space as well as in spirit a kind of universal University, overflowing the Alleghenies to the Mississippi, and then sweeping across that turbid boundary-line toward the Rockies. In most towns of importance, the cultivated people had heard Emerson lecture, had felt the presence of the man even when they did not fully understand him, and had caught some little whiff of that downflow which he not only indoctrinated but incarnated. So he continued his trips for many years—such was probably his most significant work after his Creative Decennium—till finally old age retired him full of honors. Then his books picked up his task, and became his best propagandists, with an ever-multiplying harvest to this day.

Alcott followed his friend to the West but

wrought on somewhat different lines. His prelections he called conversations, which were usually held in private parlors, and took a wide range from the philosophy of the Lapse to Thoreau's shack on Walden Pond. A tall impressive figure he would stride across the room and take his seat in the large philosophic chair, with reverend gray locks falling to his shoulders, and with ashen features, out of which at times he would roll his eyes upward as if in a kind of worship. Somehow he looked his own doctrine of emanation, and this you might also hear in his rather sepulchral voice which had an unearthly note, yet cannily shot through with jets of Yankee humor and even laughter. Alcott had always his elect who found their best reflection in his manner and method. He loved to linger and talk with you—a genuine conversationist; he would often stay a week in one place, and see everybody who paid a contribution. Alcott was much more democratic in manner than Emerson, who could not quite let down the bars even when he tried hardest—which was not always.

Such, then, was this phase of the grand Propagation, probably the most wide-spread and lasting of all. Moreover it gives some hint, even if remote, of the distinctive American University which is to be, in contrast with the European model now thriving upon our soil, yet with strong inner questionings and even loud protests within its own ranks of teachers and taught.

## III.

## THE TRANSCENDENTAL MAGAZINE

Needed a periodical, a review, a storehouse for gathering all the more characteristic products of the new Energy and dispersing them among the great public at regular intervals—such a plan had hovered before Emerson from the first year of this Epoch, yet had never come to fruition. But finally appears in July, 1840, the first number of *The Dial*, a name somewhat ambiguous, especially if we compare it with the first-proposed title, *The Transcendentalist*, of which Emerson had spoken some five years before. This change of label has its significance, the new movement is no longer so fiery in its challenge as it was, but seems inclined to mask its battery.

Still the conception remains and is carried out: namely a continuous bombardment by Transcendental guns against the walls of Philistinism. It is to be an armory for every kind of literary weapon minute and mighty—from Alcott's little bird-shot of Orphic sayings (usually falling short of any discernible game) to Emerson's far-sounding cannonry, which scores on the whole the best hits and certainly the most lasting, of the Magazine. Besides these two were other contributors little known and well-known; among whom Emerson introduces a new name with one of his prophetic glimpses: "My Henry Thoreau will be a great poet for such a company, and some day for all companies." This

from a letter of 1839 when Thoreau was hardly of age.

So another grand scheme of Propagation is launched just about in the middle and the bloom of this specially Transcendental Decennium. Emerson was the chief source of the plan and its main supporter; he was its natural editor on account of his ability, prominence, leisure, and detachment; moreover the movement of which it was to be the mouthpiece, was his creatively, and it openly called him father. But he strongly declares: "I never will be editor"—whereof he will later repent. It was seen from the start to be a hardy, if not fool-hardy enterprise; so he and the other brave Transcendental male fighters shifted the charge to the shoulders of a woman, Margaret Fuller, who was appointed editor and courageously clung to the drifting craft for two years, being paid not in money but abundantly in defamation. Nobody liked it, the newspapers jeered at it, even Emerson criticized it, and the subscriptions kept falling off. After two years Miss Fuller threw up the job, both moneyless and thankless, and started her famous talks in Boston, which at least gave her some bread. Herein as elsewhere she shows herself the most daring mortal of the lot, most emancipated, most defiant, verily the Transcendental Titaness, but never in this life destined to transcend her Titanism, with which she sank in New York Harbor.

But what is now to become of the orphaned *Dial*? It has made itself already a distinct landmark in

the Propagation of the cause, and its work seems hardly yet done. Naturally the abandoned child falls back upon its original parent, and calls for his saving help. His Diary shows him balancing: “the *Dial* is to be sustained or ended; and I must settle the question, it seems, of its life or death. I wish it to live, but do not wish to be its life”—which means, that he would like to escape its editorship. But not another man or woman can now be found to handle the thing, so Emerson with great reluctance takes hold, and keeps the Magazine alive two years longer. Then in 1844 he lets go the rudder, and makes for land in his life-boat, expecting the sea-worthless wreck to sink to the bottom at once. But no! it floats, and keeps floating down the stream of time, with a strangely increasing vitality; the phenomenon is that the old corpse of the defunct *Dial* has more life today than when it was alive (shown by citation and reprint).

To us the most significant fact about the *Dial* is that here is a magazine which simply denies and defies the very principle of all Magazinism. It was in itself an Emersonian Castle of Defiance realized in a periodical, and quite disregarding every sort of public, even its own, without any consideration of money, influence or fame. This character makes it probably the unique magazine of the world—a popular journal scouting all popularity for the sake of the Idea. That is why it is more alive today, more read, cited, and republished than at its birth or during its very precarious existence. And not

its matter has preserved it; what it says is not of the newest or of the best, and can be found better elsewhere; on the whole, its articles taken by themselves are not of the time-defying sort, not even Emerson's, and still they have defied time with an ever-increasing triumph. Its spirit, its presiding Genius, though in a very fragile yea slowly dying body, has not only embalmed it, but has given to it a new and vigorous resurrection.

Some such prophetic glimpse Emerson must have caught of his consumptive bantling after its two years' life-trial. Hence he felt that he dared not let this triumph of his Oversoul (for such he may well have regarded it) perish through lack of sustenance, though so frail of external life. Possibly it was just this contrast between body and spirit which fascinated him as a picture of his own deepest human experience. At any rate with a coercive sympathy he picks up the dear little starved weakling and nurses it two years longer out of his own brain and purse, so as to secure to it immortal life even after its natural death. Hence it comes that you and I today are thumbing this old Dial of nearly four score years, not so much for any single article (which we do in the case of other magazines) as for the whole of it: we seek to know and to commune with the soul of the total work.

It is a noteworthy fact that the only success recorded in the life of the Magazine was Theodore Parker's lecture on a local church squabble, which

sold the entire issue, and created calls for more copies. Very ephemeral and Bostonian was the circumstance, and that number was probably the most magazinish of the whole sixteen; but who cares for it now except to sharpen the contrast of its own insignificance? It is said that Emerson at first declined this article, feeling doubtless its vigorous mortality but its very frail immortality.

Thus into the world is born a periodical which proposes to take its standpoint in the thing to be done and not in the public to be pleased. Emerson hoists the motive: "It does not seem worth our while to work with any other than sovereign aims"—a purpose contradictory to the nature of the magazine, newspaper or periodical in general. The man who dares write books may take such a high stand, hardly the article-maker who scribbles for bread in the Review. And even Emerson would come down a little: "It should be a degree nearer to the hodiernal facts than my writings are" in book-form.

Tell us which of the hundreds of Magazines shooting up around us at present, will survive such an ordeal of edacious Time? If there be one, it is probably the least known and the least food-winning just now. The Periodical is constitutionally the ephemeral record of the Ephemeral, and lives its own character just by dying on time. But the Dial, by defiantly running into the clutches of death, wins immortal life. This was, however, Emerson's eternizing Epoch; just during the Dial's gestation

and birth (1839-1841) he was producing his greatest book, the First Series of Essays, none of which appeared in the Dial, though its early numbers must have been forged in the same cotemporaneous smithy. It would seem that he then regarded his book as his immortal portion, not the magazine. Still he could not help himself; every work which he produced during this Creative Decennium bears the same eternal stamp of his genius.

When the Dial started in 1840, the new doctrine had been already proclaiming itself with no little noise and self-assertion on the part of the new disciples. Then Emerson's Divinity Class Address had roiled all New England Clericalism, orthodox and heterodox, against the master. The result was that Transcendentalism was getting a little timid about itself, especially about its name. The downright truth-telling headline for the new periodical would have been *The Transcendentalist*; but such a label would now have damned the whole enterprise from its birth. Alcott, otherwise the uncompromising, has the credit of having suggested the rather Orphic title, *The Dial*, which has been variously repeated.

The cessation of the Periodical (1844) marks also a change in Emerson, especially in his attitude toward his own movement. Already we have noted how disgusted he has become with many of his disciples and their excesses or what he deemed such. The magician is in a state of pronounced reaction

against the flood which he has let in, but cannot now turn off. And he thinks of flight, quitting the scene of his own disillusion. Transcendentalism had become comic to the public, and even to itself; we learn that some of its most fervent disciples took pastime in jollying one another about their own follies, and in burlesquing the burlesque of the thing. Yea, Emerson himself failed not to let gush his humerous sap, which would show a satirical flavor, such as we detect in his Address on New England Reformers, which belongs to this time (1844). Evidently the Creative Decennium is decidedly ebbing after its mighty overflow.

Thus the Transcendental Magazine concludes its annual life, and unexpectedly becomes perennial, even after sinking under the deluge of Yankee fault-finding, an unparalleled gift in that part of our diversely endowed country. Significant is the criticism of Carlyle: "for me it is too ethereal, speculative, theoretic" (Letter to Emerson, 1840); still another: "the Dial, too, it is all spirit-like, aeri-form, aurora borealis-like." Which tells somewhat of Emerson, but more of Carlyle the writer, who now shows himself very different from the *Sartor* of some ten years before at Craigenputtock. He also has turned a new Epoch in London.

Carlyle vociferates: Come down from your castellated defiant heights, descend into the world, into life, and make it over, O Emerson. Just that indeed is the next scene in the Transcendental drama.

## IV.

## THE TRANSCENDENTAL COMMUNITY

Somewhere in that all-prolific time around and between the two dates 1840-1841, rises to view another scheme, or even series of schemes, which in general we name the Transcendental Community—the attempt to reconstruct the entire social fabric of man in accord with the new Idea. For this plan was, in its present shape, a genuine offshoot of the central movement, which it proposed to realize in a living and lasting communal organism—the highest form which the work could take.

Nor should we fail to note that this upburst is contemporaneous with so many other original enterprises of the time; it runs almost even with the appearance of the Academy, of the Magazine, of the Essays, of the Four Addresses. A colossal eruption of the Transcendental volcano burst forth with a furious energy of world-making—we may call this the most creative year of Emerson's most creative Epoch. Still Emerson himself shrank in action from this last outcome of Emersonianism. Practically he refused to take the step, though theoretically he clung to the Idea and applauded the doers, even while he refuses to do.

The work, then, of Transcendental Propagation shows both its causative power and its resulting effect at the highest in its grandiose scheme of reforming the entire Institutional World. Family, Society, State, Church, School, were all to be over-

hauled and transformed in accord with the new doctrine. Such was the last outcome of the complete break with tradition.

This movement was thus a part of a great ferment of the time which was making a radical social protest against the old transmitted order. America long before the rise of Transcendentalism had been the free field for communistic experiments on account of the abundance of land, for the Community goes back primarily to the soil. Mr. Nordhoff some years ago counted more than a hundred such communities in America, having mainly a religious origin, but cutting loose from Church, State, and Family, in general a revolt from the regular social establishment. Indeed we have a communistic experiment in Plato's Republic, and in the earliest Christian community of the New Testament.

Thus the Transcendental Brook Farm has a very ancient pedigree with many cognate branches shooting down the ages. Still it had its distinctive character even as a community. For the communistic scheme is an autocracy, however mild this may be. Mr. Nordhoff, making a wide generalization from many instances emphatically declares that "the fundamental principle of communal life is the subordination of the individual will to the general interest or the general will," which is vested in the arbitrary power of one head. Hence communal government "takes the shape of unquestioning obedience of the members toward the elders or chiefs of their society." So it comes that this communal

consciousness was an American assertion of or reversion to the absolutism of Europe, perchance of the Orient. A little theocratic oligarchy or monarchy was witnessed sprouting up sporadically over our Occidental world of freedom in many rural spots, and living its atomic isolated life.

Now the Yankee Transcendental Community, Brook Farm, proposed to run directly counter to this transmitted communistic character. It was going to be democratic, yea individualistic, quite to the point of anarchy, for the first warning given to its people was against that insidious danger, *organization*, "which begins by being an instrument and ends by being a master"—and a master the Brook Farmers would not tolerate, even such an abstract bloodless boss as organization. "Nor shall any authority be assumed over individual freedom of opinion by the Association, nor by one member over another." Surely a new Community on our planet.

But herewith mark the counterstroke. This band calls itself an Association, hinting a form of associated man, namely an Institution, from which was the grand reaction. Then we read quite an elaborate Constitution with a prescribed form of Government, which we have to call organized authority over some dozens of people associated. Can this be our free society? Moreover there is "a general Directory, which shall be chosen annually by a vote of majority of the members of the Association." Verily we are falling back into the thing from which we thought to escape: organized government.

Thus the very scheme was contradictory, self-annulling, a colossal masterpiece of unconscious humor, a piece of irony in action. It went its round: after the first four years it was declared a success; after a second four years it acknowledged itself a failure and wound up. Never numerous, it averaged about seventy with only four married pairs. But it won a great name which has endured to the present. Perhaps the best remembered thing about it is the number of people it housed who afterwards became distinguished. One masterpiece of literature it called forth: Hawthorne's *Bliithdale Romance*.

The attitude of Emerson toward the Brook Farm was on the whole Emersonian. Out of his Concord Castle, safe from the economic fiend, he looked down and applauded, but did not quit his vantage-coign. So he writes in a letter when the uncertain craft or raft put out to sea: "What a brave thing Mr. Ripley has done!"—the starter and chief helmsman of the scheme. "He stands now at the head of the Church Militant," and is calling loudly for help from Mr. Emerson, the Transcendental High Priest, who refuses very appreciatively, and thus writes himself down: "At the name of a society all my repulsions play, all my quills rise and sharpen," evidently getting ready to stick somebody, or to shoot. One may hear Emerson's inaudible cachination at the whole comedy—for it is against his principle to laugh outright:—you ask me, who am anti-social, to join a society, which while opposed to all society

becomes a society; you pray me to join an organization which denies organization, and thus is self-damned from the start. No, I cannot play the head-clown in that circus.

At the same time Mr. Emerson has a better reason, though "I approve of every wild action of the experimenters." He knows that if he quits his lofty but solitary Belvedere he breaks up his vocation, which is that of the independent writer. In the bustle of that hustling if not stormy community the grand Hierophant would certainly be kept busy with delivering oracles to the consulting multitudes. Right he was to his Genius and to the future when he says: "I have a work of my own which I know I can do with some success. It would leave that undone if I should undertake——" this hits the nail on the head. Personal honor and perchance honey-eyed flattery he would be served with at the head of the table of Brook Farm, but it would be at the cost of his deepest call. During the present time (1840) he must have been spending his best hours upon his Masterpiece (Essays, First Series, published in 1841), and so he ejaculates in sweetest Emersonian accent: No time for that side-show now.

There is no doubt that Brook Farm called up in Mr. Emerson a very real and serious conflict—the inner warfare of two strong, yet opposing convictions. For he was at this time completely estranged from the entire institutional order of man, and writes: "I have the habitual feeling that the whole of our social structure—State, School, Religion,

Marriage, Trade, Science, has been cut off from its root in the soul," has become merely a prescribed habitude and traditional belief. Hence he would like to restore these fruits to their original source, "to accept no church, school, state or society which did not found itself in my own nature." Now Emerson would like to shake off these inherited fetters and show himself a free man, but "I allow the old circumstance of mother, wife, children, and brother to overpower my wish"—verily an old and entangling and enslaving circumstance, just that ancient institution called the Family, in which he has gotten himself badly embroiled and cannot pull out. So he dares not be tempted to come down from his impregnable Castle of Defiance, which insures his domestic and his vocational future, despite the enchantment, despite even his conviction. "So I stay where I am," he rather resignedly sighs, "even with the degradation of owning bankstock," which, however, has the power of putting to flight the wide-mouthed Dragon of Hunger, otherwise gaping and snapping to gulp down even the Castle of Defiance. He openly refuses to make the sacrifice though he hears how "the Universal Genius apprises me of this disgrace" of making the time's great refusal, and "beckons me to the martyr's and redeemer's office." But he does not propose to be nailed to that cross.

Of another community called Fruitlands, founded a year or so later by Mr. Alcott and some English friends in the town Harvard, not far from Con-

cord, he had to decline membership. It seems that it was easier for him to refuse this second invitation, though it brought on a word-battle with his God-inspired oracle, Mr. Alcott, whom he deemed a little wild in practical, earthly matters. So Emerson could not be induced to quit his Fortress of Freedom, with its domesticities. Still his conscience was ill at ease, he felt that he was sacrificing conviction to convenience. He proposed a kind of compromise: he would take dreamful, impecunious Mr. Alcott and family under his own roof, and we hear his belief that Alcott "is a man who should be maintained at public cost." But how about the two wives, the real sovereigns in one household? Mrs. Emerson consented though seemingly with reluctance; but Mrs. Alcott set her foot down squarely against the scheme of two queens in one little realm of authority. Still Emerson had to make some peace-offering to his violated conviction. So he resolved to begin at home, and to establish social reform at his own dinner-table. Accordingly he invited his two serving-women to eat at the same table with the family. "But Lydia the cook firmly refused," saying that was not her place. Thus Emerson tosses somewhat restlessly in his Castle of Defiance: he feels that he is living in deep contradiction with his doctrine; the Transcendental Community has challenged him and he dares not accept the challenge, but skulks to the rear of his own battle-line.

*Section C. Origination*

In the case of Emerson perhaps more than in that of any other great writer do we need to reach back to the first beginnings of his literary composition, so that we may trace the words of his spirit's evolution. Fortunately sufficient material has been printed to give some outline of the embryonic shapes of his writing, though such material may be expected to increase in the future. No author is so atomic even in his finished work—a trait which is deeply consonant with his doctrine as well as with his mental character. His stress is upon the individual even in the structure of sentence and paragraph.

Hence we shall here take note of a third line of Emersonian activity, running parallel with the two lines already set forth, namely, his Productivity and his Propagation. This third line moves through his whole Creative Decennium (1835-1845) and shows its elemental substrate, its protoplasmic forms at their first birth leaping from the author's brain. Here then we are to assist at the actual parturition of Transcendentalism, and see its primal or infantile shapes, at their earliest efflux from their divine fountain. We must recollect that it was just this efflux upon which Emerson puts such oft-repeated emphasis, as the very genesis and birth-point of his Transcendental world-view. Hence the importance of the present series of writings for the comprehension of the man and his work.

But the name of this strand of his Creative Decennium—that has given us some trouble, not yet altogether relieved. If it would help, we might coin a term and call our author in this phasis of his creative power the protomorphic Emerson, producing the first forms of his mentality and of his writ, which forms are to evolve and coalesce into his finished works. But as we are here dealing specially with the original and originative source of the man's greatness, we may name the present subject *Origination*, dwelling upon the embryonic, the atomic, the elementary in his life's achievement—verily the embryology of the writer Emerson.

Thus we pass from his practical outer activity of Propagation to his inner self-communion and first conception, such as we see in the most intimate form throughout his *Diary*. It is a return to Productivity, not now in its rounded and finished shape, as we have already noted in the *Essays and Addresses*, but in its primitive germination—the budding of the Emersonian tree of knowledge. It is creation, not the formful, but the unformed, or rather the pre-formed as yet; hence this stage is a very suggestive portion of the present Creative Decennium. In some respects it is the truly Emersonian part of all Emerson, showing his genius in its most immediate, directly inspired outbreaks. Often crude, disconnected, capricious, the present stage of primal *Origination* may well be deemed the substructure of the Emersonian temple.

What shall we include in this department of his

work? Without setting up too definite limits we shall take into it three leading kinds of his writing.

First, we shall class here his *Journals* or Diary, printed a few years ago in ten good volumes. The most rudimentary utterance of his brain-work, yet often the freshest; we put it at the base of his building.

Second, we arrange here the Letters of Emerson which have their special value in his biography and also in a literary estimate. Much of his correspondence still lies unprinted, possibly some future Emerson Society will take up its publication.

Third, we embrace in this section the poems of Emerson, which taken separately, are lyrical jets often of beauty and power; but taken together, are fragments of one great poetic structure never completed, perhaps never fully conceived, but certainly aspired for and wrought at in this creative part of his life. There will doubtless be some question about such a co-ordination of Emerson's verse; but it also has its spontaneous embryonic phase, like the prose *Journals*; then, too, it reaches its height of completeness in certain lyrics. Still as a whole it is diarial, a succession of separate moods and thoughts running through the days of his life—unconcentrated anywhere into one great organic work.

Such are the three main groups, as we conceive, of Emerson's germinal, atomic writ, as distinct from his more finished compositions. This part of his work has its peculiar interest and importance

in his psychical biography; he was the man of immediate intuition and inspiration, not so much of mediate reflection and organization. He disliked all system, he had indeed no deep sense of its significance in the mind or in the world. The moment's suggestion was the divine thing, or most likely to be such; hence its word was what was to be written down on the spot as the God's own oracle.

So it comes that these three kinds of Emersonian authorship—the Journal, the Letter, and the Poem—have the common characteristic: they are diarial, being a record of the successive upbursts of Emerson's inner life-experience. As such they are ultimately to be read and construed, becoming thereby an essential constituent of his biography. Indeed all of his works are directly or indirectly biographical; they form a kind of universal Diary of the Great Man, of which his Journals are the most immediate and spontaneous overflow.

It seems to us that Emerson had a presentiment of the significance of this somewhat submerged or subliminal part of his labors. Very little of it came to light during his life-time; still he carefully preserved the manuscripts of it in the Emerson Archives, of which there must be still a good deal remaining unpublished. Not till this be accessible, can a full biography of Emerson be written. Thought-worthy at this point is it to see Emerson (like Goethe) as the sedulous archivist of Emersoniana, so that he still, long after death, keeps publishing books.

## I.

## EMERSON'S JOURNALS

All Transcendentalists should be diligent diarists, if they would keep the faith; for their profession is that of God's reporters, ever alert to pick up an item from the supernal downflow into the human soul. Thoreau kept a daily record which has been published, and reveals the man more intimately than his regular books. Alcott is reported to have left the hugest Diary of all, overflowing into many volumes, from which only a few extracts have yet been printed. Possibly its turn will come. To be sure, many other people besides Transcendentalists have kept Journals. Nearly every person who likes to write and has needed self-expression has had his diarial period in life, especially in youth, when the moment's grand effluence into writ through the pen-point seems quite intoxicating, if not miraculous. In this regard Transcendentalism was a kind of life-long adolescence, which kept gushing from above down into a human Diary. And that has turned out one of the best and most lasting qualities, for which we at least are thankful, since it adds a fresh chapter to the value and meaning of psychological Biography.

When it was resolved to celebrate the centennial of Emerson by a new edition of his works, there rose a natural inquiry about his unpublished Journals, some notion of which had already reached

the public. The importance of Emerson had continued to loom larger in universal literature since his death, and the outlook indicated a still greater rise in his significance. Accordingly between the years 1909 and 1914, ten volumes of the book called Emerson's Journals were made accessible to the students of Emerson, who had been longing for some such fresh apparition of the master in print. These Journals extend through fifty-two years of the author's life, from 1820 to 1872, from adolescence till old-age, and thus form a kind of protoplasmic substrate to his whole career. It should be added these Journals have been edited and expurgated under certain scruples; they are "not the whole but selections" as the editor tells us, even if "the greater part of the contents" has been included in the present edition. Still too much sensitiveness about Boston and its old patriciate; after another fifty or hundred years, the world may hope for an uncensored Emerson, who, purest of classics, still needs some purification for Yankeeland.

On inspection of the ten volumes we find that the record of the Creative Decennium, which we are at present specially considering, may be deemed the culmination both as to quantity and quality. For instance, the years 1834-5 to 1844-5 have practically four volumes out of the ten, though it embraces not one-fifth of the time of the whole Diary. This is only another example of the enormous productive energy of Emerson during this his distinctively

genetic Epoch. He seems the mighty demiurge of creation on all sides. Whatever he takes hold of, there is something gigantic in the outcome. And this is true not only as regards amount, the excellence is of a higher order. Unless I deceive myself, this decennial Diary is the best of the whole—most interesting, most original, most deeply biographic and poetic. It corresponds with his present creativity, and reflects in hundreds of little facets his dawning world-view, which have all the freshness of first discovery.

Here, then, lies the embryology of Emerson's Genius more distinctively, more primordially manifested than anywhere else, than even in the rest of his Journals, which have records before this Epoch as well as after it. That is, we behold here his diarial mountain-top, to which there is quite a long ascent (say the first three volumes) and then quite a long descent toward the close (say the last three volumes). Still the entire work is essentially the extemporaneous Emerson welling up (or perchance down) into his first gushes of inspiration, the prime intimate revelation of the sovereign efflux to himself. From this point of view the Journals make the most transcendental part of Transcendentalism, giving not only the doctrine or content, but the very form and personal experience of it at first hand in the soul. Among the Emersonian apostolate one may look for a special study and perchance cult of this last book of the Emersonian Bible—indeed it is

in its way a Book of Revelations. And whatever one may think of its divine acclaim, it is a very human, soul-illustrating document, deeply suggestive in its psychological import.

But to return to the mentioned decennial portion of the Diary. We are to note that it is not all alike, it too has its differences of mood, of doctrine, yea of evolution. We may observe separate stages in these ten years of diarial records. During this Epoch Emerson had his most intense, most varied, his truly Titanic experiences. In the loss of his boy Waldo the discipline of death struck him a more poignant blow than he had ever before experienced, more than even in the passing of his dearly loved wife and brothers. That child he deemed the heir of his Genius and greater—the very proof and presence of the divine descent into human being. Thus young Waldo may be called his father's transcendental son and gave to the latter a living evidence of the truth of his doctrine before his eyes. Moreover in this crushing stroke Emerson again was made to feel the transitoriness of personality, which deep experience wrote itself into his conviction, whence it passed to his outer writing. Another possible influence of this evanishment may be noted: Emerson began to feel more acutely the decline of Transcendentalism itself with the passing of his promising child in January, 1842. We recollect that in this same month he gave a lecture called the Transcendentalist which shows more than one indication of the eclipse of his doctrine. We may

read also in the Diary of this time the tokens of a great hope shattered, which throws its shadow upon his speech and belief, even upon futurity.

Accordingly in these four diarial volumes of the present decennial Epoch we may trace a movement like that which we have already noted in his other writings of this time: a rise, a culmination, and a decline, especially as regards his doctrine of Transcendentalism. He shows himself critical of it, especially of its promulgators whose extravagances he satirizes with vigor and sometimes with venom. These private records also indicate his first stage of apostolic zeal and combat for the new idea; then he feels its crisis in himself, with many a little note of disillusion about reform and the reformers. The outcome of this Epoch was a profound contradiction and discord in his soul, to which he often gives brief sighs of utterance in his Journals. Sometimes he called it the inherent dualism between the Theoretical and the Practical; he could not harmonize his inner conviction with his outer conduct. He declares: "I approve every wild action of the experimenters;" still he refused to follow them and even assailed them. Note this: "I say what they say concerning celibacy, or money, or community of goods;" he did not believe in the family, or economic society, or property; but he never proposed to carry out his belief in the deed. What excuse? "My only apology for not doing their work is pre-occupation of mind." That is: I have other fish to fry besides obeying my principles. Emerson also

names this dualism as the conflict between Belief and Unbelief: "the believer is poet, saint, idealist," the foe of tradition; "the unbeliever supports the church, education," and institutions generally, is the friend of tradition. But which of the two is Emerson? Hear him define himself: "I am nominally a believer; yet I hold on to property, and eat my bread with unbelief." To such deepest discord has Emerson come seemingly through the inner evolution of his Transcendentalism. (See the confession in Journals, Vol. V, p. 482. The same note of unhappy inner struggle is heard in many another jotting of this time, 1843-5.)

What is he to do with himself? Emerson was famous for his outer calm on his quiet impassive Sphinx-like face, as well as for his reposeful speech even in describing his own un repose. His words remain in equilibrium, though he has on hand quite the mightiest seesaw of the human soul: that of conscience, which was in his case the direct command of deity, against the whole institutional world. Which is he to obey? Here is one of his statements: "My Genius (individual) loudly calls me to stay where I am, even with the degradation of owning bank stock and seeing poor men suffer"—bids me dwell in and uphold the established order. On the other hand, "the Universal Genius (here Conscience) apprises me of this disgrace and beckons me to the martyr's and redeemer's office." Thus he lets conscience slide, here somewhat disguised under the name of Universal Genius. But what is

to become of all those homilies on the worth and supremacy of the Moral Sentiment, in which Emerson particularly revels? And where is now our New England sovereign, the boasted Puritanic conscience? Seemingly eclipsed, if not dethroned for the nonce; still Emerson has some hope of his lost selfhood, and whispers for his own edification: "Obedience to a man's Genius is *the particular* of Faith," which is his case just in the present crisis; but "by and by I shall come to *the universal* of Faith" (Journals V. p. 483). Did he ever?

Thus Emerson does not despair of some future reconciliation of the present furious scission in his soul between his conviction and his conduct, or between his Theory and his Practice. And let it here be said that this presentiment or prophecy concerning himself will turn out true, but not till after many years when he has passed through the fiery furnace of the Civil War. Two decades must elapse with many intense, savage experiences ere he becomes reconciled with that world of institutions, especially with the highest, the State, which now strike such a blasting dissonance both into his thought and into his life. Of this later change we shall take note in its place.

Still this present dualism belongs not only to Emerson, but to his time and country. The contradiction between the established order and the individual's sense of right was getting acute in a number of directions, and was really driving forward to a violent rupture. Especially over the political field

Conscience and the Constitution were having a death grapple in many earnest spirits; the expression of this conflict as the battle between the two Laws, between the Higher Law and the Enacted Law, or between God's command and Man's ordinance was heard everywhere as the utterance of the deepest scission in the folk-soul of the time. Beneath this same spiritual collision Emerson was writhing at the present conjuncture, whereof he gives many a glimpse in his Journals.

Such is perhaps the profoundest note in these records, but they tell of many other things of varying import. Still it is of interest to watch these manifold stimulations or titillations of his under-self, as they bubble up from within through moods, caprices, intimations—or from without through events, experiences, talks with a very promiscuous lot of people. He is at best a kind of reporter to the Oversoul, gathering items for his spirit's newspaper. Thus he is here primarily a journalist, and his work is rightly named a Journal. Verily such momentary jets of his individuality are not all of them momentous, hence he will in time make a selection. The richest spears of grain he takes and binds into a sheaf or paragraph, and then stacks these sheaves together into the Essay. Still in this last shape we can pick out the original wheat-stalk which first gushed up singly from the mother-soil.

Moreover this Diary shows Emerson's inborn delight in writing, his absolute need of self-expression. He is his own best listener; he has received his re-

ward, though not a soul ever hears what he has said. Really this is the primary test of the writer, whereby he finds out whether he is truly so called. Emerson declares that he would get sick unless he could create, of course through his pen-point. Then also he would be disobedient to the God who was the direct source of his creativity, according to his doctrine. Such was surely the Transcendental injunction.

In these Journals we may trace his life-long aspiration to finish what to him was the unfinishable. "I endeavor to announce the laws of the First Philosophy" (III, 489). Such is one of many little pulsations of hope which throb his great ambition. But he never could quite realize that work of his Life-Essay, though he kept chipping at it to the last. And the many turns of his poetic longing we may follow with touches of interest and perchance of sympathy. One of the deepest and strongest heart-beats of Emerson, heard all through this Diary was for unity, organization. Looking backward long after the present Decennium he cries out almost in anguish: "I am tired of scraps. I do not wish to be a literary or intellectual chiffonier." Mark this violent wish in the same passage: "Away with this Jew's rag-bag of ends and tufts of brocade, velvet and cloth-of-gold; let me spin a cord to bind wholesome and belonging facts" (VIII, 463, in May, 1854). We may well hear in this passionate eruption a note of retrospect and self-dissatis-

faction. And he ends his review with a prayer often uttered before :

The Asmodean feat be mine  
To spin my sand-heaps into twine.

But the most pervasive drive of the Emersonian spirit in this record of self-communion is the religious. The problem is: How shall I win my true relation to God? That is the positive aim; but with it is connected a bitter and long-continued negative critique, which has to shear away the many intricate theological entanglements. Daringly he sets about the task; not through Socrates, St. Paul, Plato, or even Christ, not through any departed wisdom and virtue, are you to find deity, but through yourself immediately; you are the one to deal directly with "the Inconceivable Intellect, which kindles all and overwhelms all." Thus Emerson will in person "walk with God" in his promenades through his wood-lot and around Walden. Here is Emerson's germinal doctrine, reaching quite back to adolescent experience of religion—the early hint of his World-view and of his God-view, which will remain imbedded in his very being, to fructify his life and writ, as well as to pass through various grades of evolution.

Nor must we quit this topic without noting the many glimpses of the underlying Psychology which is to transcend and yet reconstruct both the old Metaphysics and the old Theology in a new uni-

versal science, or science of all sciences. This is properly Emerson's much-bedreamt *Philosophia Prima*, which he hopes still to realize.

## II.

### EMERSON'S CORRESPONDENCE

Another important strand of Emersonian Literature is his epistolary product. A good deal of this has not yet been published, but the future will probably see more of it brought to light. As the size of the man grows with time and the significance of his environment increases, there will be a call for every shred of his writing. Herein again his case suggests that of Goethe, whose extant letters have been estimated at 10,000, a stream of which has been pouring into print ever since the poet's death (see especially the Goethe *Jahrbuch*, which easily suggests the idea of an Emerson Yearbook or Annual, whose chief object would be to collect all these stray items of the man and his time).

Emerson's letters are necessarily more reserved and often more studied than his Diary; still they are to be placed among his more elemental and extemporaneous writings. They belong mainly to the occasion, and follow the moment, hence they reveal more or less distinctly the author's stages of evolution, as well as give glimpses of the age. So it comes that his Correspondence takes a diarial character, and must be classed alongside of his Journals by virtue of both style and contents. I imagine that

Emerson enjoyed his Letter-writing, quite as much as his Diary; indeed they are closely akin, and easily pass into each other. We find him sometimes transferring a letter bodily to his Journal; but the reverse probably took place oftener. A letter naturally permits or even calls for a more purposed and organized form than the moment's jotting. Still it lies near the primary and original sources of Emerson's writ; so we place it here under the head of Origination.

One work of the author's epistolary activity stands out in supreme value and distinction: this is his Correspondence with Carlyle, which alone we shall consider in the present connection. It has been long before the public and was published shortly after Emerson's death. It has also the merit of being a kind of parallel biography or rather autobiography of two men of genius in their reaction on one another and on the time. Thus it is a work unique of its kind in literature. It is much more vital, more original and far-reaching than any of old Plutarch's rather external parallels. It is self-unfolding and self-written, yea self-parallel-ing, and evolves through the active life of each of the mutually attracting and repelling personalities. The Correspondence between Goethe and Schiller has been likened to it, and undoubtedly has resemblances; but the spirit as well as the scope of the two works are very different, and highly characteristic of their respective authors and nations.

The first letter comes from Emerson and is dated

May, 1834; the last one is Carlyle's with the date of April, 1872. Thus the Correspondence lasted some thirty-eight years, from ripe manhood in both cases till old-age. Which of the two is the better man? In worth of character Emerson is certainly the superior; in literary power Carlyle takes the prize; in permanent influence, Emerson; in immediate effect, Carlyle.

It will be observed that the Correspondence begins just about with that most important Epoch of Emerson's life which we have called his Creative Decennium (1834-5). He has taken lodgment at Concord in his Castle of Defiance to which he is soon to bring a wife. This date tells also the time of a very significant change in Carlyle's career: he has left his isolated hermitage of Scotch Craigenputtock, and has betaken himself to the most populous center on the globe: the city of London, of which huge wen (as he calls it) he is henceforth to be a sprightly corpuscle. Thus in the same year about, and at the turn of a pivotal Epoch in both their lives, they take a local sweep (which is also spiritual) in opposite directions. It may be said that Carlyle quits his Castle of Defiance in the country, where he lived and wrote some six or seven years, and directs his flight to the city, "for bread and work," he says. But Emerson moves the other way, from city to country, where he will remain and do his task in freedom, for by an almost miraculous intervention he finds his bread already given him in advance for his whole life.

First is to be observed that altogether the largest, and to our mind the best and most zestful portion of this Correspondence is found in the present Creative Decennium. Of the two equal volumes containing these letters, the first embraces about eight years of this Epoch, the second stretches through thirty years. A significant difference in quantity is this, and there is also a difference in quality though by no means proportionate. A similar distinction we noticed in Emerson's Journals, whose bloom of excellence and productivity takes place in the present Decennium. The two men were now at the height of their powers together, though Carlyle was toward seven years older than Emerson, who matured at an earlier age than his friend, and declined sooner. Thus we may watch, in this Correspondence the two geniuses at their best in the best time of life. Significant is it that both of them write and publish their respective masterpieces not very far apart during this prolific Decennium; Carlyle's *French Revolution* was completed in 1837, while Emerson's *Essays*, First Series appeared in 1841, though mostly written several years before, since it was edited in the main from his Journals and his Lectures.

And now upon what fact, statement, passage in these Letters can we put our finger, and say: That is the most important item in this book, yea the very turning-point and determining event of these two mighty lives? We shall cite it, for it has remained vividly stamped upon our memory, since

we read it more than a generation ago when this Correspondence first appeared in print (1883, we believe). Emerson is writing to Carlyle, who is in a furious struggle with poverty, from whose last pinch he has already been rescued by his American friend. The latter offers to share hearth and heart with him under the following inducements: "My house is a very good one for comfort and abounding in room. Besides my house, I have 22,000 dollars whose income in ordinary years is six per cent." This was the divinely sent inheritance through his first wife—no wonder that Emerson believed in that incalculable efflux from above—is not here the actual visible proof of it, truly life-encompassing? To this mass of Heaven-dropped manna is to be added the product of personal activity, "the income of my winter lectures, which was last winter 800 dollars." All this in a little country-town before the Civil War; well may he exclaim: "With this income here at home I am a rich man. I stay at home and go abroad at my own instance." Thus Emerson celebrates his freedom with no little triumph, if we catch his mood; economic freedom it is, the primal basis of all other freedoms, especially of literary freedom. Surely here is abundance for the two families not large; so Emerson shouts across the ocean to his hunger-dreading comrade: Come over hither, eat your fill and ban that infernal spectre of your stomach; then mount with me to the topmost of my Castle of Defiance, and without any fear of the three first

Fates—food, raiment, shelter—we can do battle with the hosts of darkness.

Carlyle did not see his way to accept the generous invitation—which was doubtless in his case a wise conclusion. Still Emerson continued his financial favors, looked after the publication of Carlyle's books in America, and gave himself untold trouble in soliciting readers. Carlyle's first pay and first appreciation must be credited to Emerson backed by his Transcendental disciples, who found in Carlyle much aliment for their faith and perchance the first source of their movement, especially in *Sartor*. One gets decidedly the impression from these letters that Carlyle would have been lost to Literature if it had not been for the timely and persistent aid of Emerson. No other rescue seems anywhere in sight. And Emerson could not have lent this help, unless he had been economically independent, and able to fling his challenge to any fortune. This bonanza of 22,000 dollars dropping into Emerson's lap may well be deemed the most profitable investment of money ever made in America; no mine, bank, railroad ever produced any such return, for its six per cent rendered possible the careers of both Emerson and Carlyle, as far as foresight in vouchsafed to us in such matters.

In the same letter (Emerson to Carlyle, number XXIII) is a passage which we shall insert here, since Emerson indicates by it rather more distinctly than anywhere else in our recollection, the spiritual relation of his wife to himself and to his doctrinal

tendencies: "My wife Lidian is an incarnation of Christianity—I call her Asia—and keeps my philosophy from Antinomianism." From this and some other hints we infer that the wife was the institutional anchor in that theoretically unstable household of which the husband was inclined to fly off into many social vagaries. We fancy that Lidian Emerson set her foot down with some energy against Brook Farm and many other wild schemes of the time floating rainbow-like everywhere and very seductive to Waldo Emerson. I have often tried to fancy why he called his wife Asia—I do not know that he ever explained the term himself—she was perchance to his mind the embodiment of that oldest, most conservative and traditional part of our globe, and also a primordial Puritan from the original fountain at Plymouth rock itself, whence he took her in marriage. On the whole she stands somewhat in the background of Emerson's life, yet with decision; she plays no such outspoken part in her husband's history as does Jane Carlyle in that of her darling Scotch tyrant; nor has she so much cause to make herself famous. Note too the light-throwing expression: "she keeps my philosophy from Antinomianism," in general from revolt against law and institution. Practically she did this doubtless, but surely not in theory, as many of Emerson's Essays and Addresses prove. Perhaps too his pet name of her, *Queenie*, hints some sort of sovereignty. Thus she appears the ever-steadying

though noiseless balance-wheel in that somewhat centrifugal household.

The prime fact in these early Letters is the pervasive, even if somewhat muffled cry of Carlyle: Help me, Cassius, or I sink. Then follows the generous and continued succor given by Emerson to his submerging friend. The turning-point toward final deliverance seems to be indicated in a letter of Carlyle (1839): "I am no longer poor, but have a reasonable prospect of existing. Not for these twelve years, never since I had a house to maintain, have I had as much money in my possession as even now." All of which is due to friend Emerson—verily the greatest of all gifts, that of economic freedom, for the future. Carlyle confesses: "at bottom this money was all yours, not a penny of it belonged to me." But he has it, and with it the choicest object money can buy—that thunder-bolted Castle of Defiance located in London on Cheyne Row.

From a purely literary point of view probably the best part of this Correspondence is Carlyle's portrait-painting of men whom he had seen—sketches memorable not for their justice, but for their smiting off-hand vividness and vindictiveness. Suggestive too is the criticism made by each on the other's books. Says Carlyle of Emerson's Essays: "the sentences are very brief, and did not always entirely cohere for me . . . the paragraph not as a beaten ingot, but as a beautiful square bag of duck-shot held together by canvas." So he gently

touches up the Emersonian lack of organization. Then this: "I object that you are still a soliloquizer on the eternal mountain-tops."

More emphatic in its thrust is this urgent appeal: "You *tell* us with piercing emphasis that man's soul is great; *show* us a great soul of a man, in some work-symbolic of such . . . I long to see some concrete Thing well Emersonized, depicted by Emerson, filled with the life of Emerson." Carlyle here and in other places exhorts Emerson to quit his abstractions and to take up realities—to be a Carlyle, for instance. But that cannot and ought not to happen. Each has validity in his own field; let him express himself in his own way. Still one may be permitted to think that there is a sphere higher than either's, a synthesis over both yet including both. Each is a one-sided utterance of a greater Whole which still awaits its adequate voice.

### III.

#### EMERSON'S POETRY

The most questioned and questionable part of Emerson's total achievement: Is his verse really poetry? Indeed is he a poet at all? Such interrogations were often propounded during the author's life, and they have not wholly ceased yet. But it is now generally felt that any definition of poetry which excludes Emerson, would cut the poetic world in two and throw away a good half.

Then, having accepted these poems, how shall we

classify them, or it may be, organize them in the totality of Emerson's life-work, so that we may see them in place as an integral part of his biography? It would seem that the deepest, most persistent longing of Emerson was to be poet. He had other life-lasting aspirations, but probably the poetic aspiration was his strongest, though he painfully felt his shortcomings. When he was thirty-six years old, hence about the middle of his Creative Decennium, after he had often tested his wings, he expresses in a letter both his ambition and his disappointment. "I cannot believe but one day I shall attain to that splendid dialect, so ardent is my wish . . . But up to this hour I have never had a true success in such attempts." He planned a long organic poem about this time, but it flew into fragments, which we may now read in the last edition of his Works. The same old trouble: he could not organize his atoms in a living Whole, though that is just what he would. Still he kept thinking and saying: "I am more of a poet than anything else;" and one of his best appreciators has declared that he never wrote anything else but poetry, even in his co-called prose. Doubtless Emerson conceived his primal act of writing, the efflux from above, as the common inspiration of all his good work, metered or un-metered. Still on the whole there was a difference, internally as well as externally, between his prose and his verse.

Back in his boyhood we learn that Emerson read, memorized, recited, and wrote poetry. Through

his Journal snatches of verse keep rising to the surface and are recorded; they begin early in the first volume when he was seventeen years old, and push up still in the last. Thus a stream of poetry flows through Emerson's entire life welling forth spontaneously from the primordial sources. Hence we may classify it fundamentally as diarial, outbursts of the moment strown along all his years. Accordingly we set it down under the head of Origination, along with Emerson's Journals and Epistles—all of them showing the primary original forms of his composition.

In fact, the impression of the total volume of Emerson's verse, which has now been carefully collected, collated, and annotated, persists that it is a fragment and made up of fragments. It seems a part of a great totality never realized and ordered into a self-consistent unity. Yet all through it may be felt the aspiration for some such fulfilment of his poetic hope. We have noticed the same desire throbbing up in his Diary and in his Essays, and especially in the Essay on the Poet (Second Series). Undoubtedly some of Emerson's lyrics are complete as lyrics, which, however, are by their very nature momentary pulsations of something greater and deeper. Some such limitation Emerson himself felt and often confessed.

Still the advantage of just this atomic and incomplete character of his poetry, must not be forgotten. It is far easier taken in these homeopathic doses, often difficult to swallow as they are. Then

such a form accorded with the spirit of the time, which did not want and probably could not comprehend great poetic entreties. Only a little spurt of verse off in a corner would be tolerated by those grand vehicles of literature, the newspaper and the magazine. As the case stood, the appreciation of Emerson's poetry was slow, and has hardly yet fully arrived.

As before stated, Emerson versified through his entire life, pretty much in the same fashion and after traditional patterns, though of course he has his own peculiar note or timbre in singing the old meters. His ear was not very keen for rhythm; moreover his metrical range was quite limited, being mainly slight variations on the doggerel or iambic tetrameter, probably the easiest and most popular form in England, and in Teutonic poetry generally. His dissonances both of meter and of rhyme have been much censured, in my judgment over-censured; right discords have their place even in most musical Beethoven. Such a high-strung, perchance neuropathic ear for verse-tones, as that of Swinburne, to take an extreme instance, is not simply an affectation, rather it is a disease—sense quite dying away into sounding nonsense, intelligence vanishing into a jingling rigmarole of words. The same tendency is often heard in today's lyrical effusions. For such unhealthiness Emerson's verse is a good tonic, with his stress upon the thought and his neglect (often too great) of the measure.

But at present we are chiefly concerned, not with

Emerson's total output of verse, but with that of this Epoch, his Creative Decennium. There is no doubt of his poetical activity at this time, though it is not always easy to date his poems, as they stand in his Works. His Editor seems often puzzled. On the whole he appears somewhat secretive and hesitating about this phase of his productivity, though it lay nearest to his heart. One of his chief interests in the *Dial* was that he might have a way of trying his versicles, little by little on the public, for we have already heard him utter his doubt, yet his hope concerning this his dearest field of endeavor. The result was, as he records, that he received encouragement, and he resolved with some hesitancy, to publish an edition of his Poems. Already in 1843 he states that he received two requests from publishers. But such was his doubt of himself or his timidity that the first appearance of the little volume was deferred till 1847. Still it belongs in the main to the present Decennium (1835-1845), and it continues to form the basis of Emerson's poetical reputation. It is stamped with the original creative power of this Epoch, and in it can be often traced the Transcendental doctrine, and still more Emerson's personal states of mind and confessions.

Here, then, concludes that line of Emerson's activity which seeks to put together the more rudimentary forms of his genius—his Journals, his Letters, and his Poems. Each of them runs through his whole life, but they all culminate both as to

quantity and quality in the present Decennium. But now we have touched the point in Emerson's advance where we are to recall that these three embryonic forms, as we may name them relatively, constitute but one part or phase of this Creative Epoch's total accomplishment. Accordingly it is here in place to throw a short sweeping glance backward at the ground passed over.

#### RETROSPECT OF THE EPOCH

Emerson has at present reached the central summit of his career, to which he has been hitherto ascending, and from which he is henceforth to descend. Never again will he have such another Creative Epoch as that which he has just completed. When we look back at it, we are lost in wonder at so much and so great excellence in so brief a time.

Without repeating the details, we may well recall its three parallel lines of effort, each of which in itself seems more than one very busy man's work: Productivity, Propagation, Origination. It is truly the Great Deed of Emerson taken by itself and regarded singly as a human achievement. So it should be contemplated by the discriminating reader, being the author's greatest monument, erected by himself at the heart of his total life-work. We may call it his epical act, heroic in its proportions, the poet's own personal Iliad, not sung indeed, but done.

Emerson is forty-two years old at the close of

this Epoch; nearly half of his days remain to him, but they are quite different from those which he has just gone through with such abounding genetic energy. Having done the colossal deed at its topmost, he henceforth seems slowly going down hill into the dark valley, his creative light gradually spending itself to the limit. Emerson still continues to write Essays, Journals, Letters, Poems; he keeps propagating his ideas, especially by lectures; but such work is largely, though not wholly, that of repetition, illustration, amplification. In the deepest sense his literary creation is now complete, though by no means concluded.

And yet a very important original element is still to be added to Emerson's full achievement. If he had died at the close of his overfull creative Decennium, he would have missed the better portion of his destiny. He would never have left us his finished life, which is his greatest work, greater than his literary production which is indeed but a phase or part thereof. He would never have realized his ideal Biography, which, of course, he was not to write but to live.

Accordingly, Emerson is to round out the rest of his years not simply with a creative doing, but with a creative living which is the man's true wholeness. For life is larger than the deed, underlying it, directing it, fulfilling it. That is, Emerson has now to complete his Biography, so that it will reveal the full process of his individual life, and therein mirror the movement of all Biography.

Such was, indeed, Emerson's own conception, for he has told us that the interest of Biography lies in the fact that in it "this particular man represents the idea of Man." Hence this particular Emerson must be so portrayed in his life as to show it to be universal, representing "the idea of Man." Emerson has likewise declared that "the picture of the Standard Man" is what must be seen in a right Biography. These were some of his sudden but very suggestive divinations upon this subject. Such is his prophecy or instinct, which he often stresses, whereof we may set down one of his latest examples: "We have all of us a certain divination and parturient vaticination in our minds of some higher good and perfection" lying beyond our power of achievement and even our knowledge. Wherein he takes another little peep at his biographic soul.

Henceforth the original Emerson is not to be found in his literary activity, which becomes at bottom chiefly a re-affirmation and repetition, often with new Emersonian sentences and metaphors, but he is to be grasped in the entire compass of his life. His doing sinks away into his living, of which it turns to one phase or strand, important, but not the whole man, whose creative power now is to express his fully rounded Self, as it moves forward to the close.

So much for the general outlook over his entire future Biography. But just at present we are to take a smaller step to the next stage, or Epoch, which we have already designated as showing a de-

cided reaction against the Epoch which we have just been considering. Moreover this stage is to reveal Emerson moving in the regular order of his psychical evolution. Accordingly, now follows the second stage of the great middle Period of his career, the revolutionary, whose special characteristics we shall set forth in a new chapter which will show no small contrast with the one just gone before.

## CHAPTER FIFTH

### THE RE-ACTIONARY DECENNIUM (1845-1855)

To mark off and to condense in a word, as well as we can, a new ten years of the grand Emersonian discipline, is our present effort. In what other way can we take up and appropriate the man in his truth and final wholeness? We have already observed Emerson turning aside from his distinctive Transcendental bent and its expression to something different, if not opposite. He has also become estranged from his doctrinal disciples, being repelled by what he deems their puerilities, their antics, their extravagances. Emerson disgusted with Emersonianism is his present self-dissolving condition. So he deflects from abstract doctrine to concrete life, especially as it is represented in Great Men whom he now calls representative. Hence a dominating biographic impulse seizes him (doubtless with considerable influence from Carlyle), and drives him to write biographies typical or representative. Thus he shows himself in reaction against his preceding Epoch, and will build in his temple of life a new apartment which we name the Re-actionary Decennium. That is, he will react against the immediate Transcendental efflux, seeking now to mediate it through a second or representative mind, or the Great Man.

Such, then, is the best adjective which we have been able to find, after some search and several changes, in order to designate the pervasive character as well as the place of this coming ten years' Epoch in Emerson's Life-Essay. It is on the whole re-actionary, the counter-stroke in a number of ways to the foregoing Creative Decennium, even if the great total river of the man's activity still sweeps onward to its goal. So we are to see that this Epoch now at hand is but a part or stage of a larger movement, which we have named the Period. And this latter again is one of the great arcs which make the entire round of his career.

Moreover we shall find that this Epoch falls pretty well within a given framework of time from its start till its close—the ten years lying between 1845-6 and 1855-6, undoubtedly with strands reaching out before and after these dates, which may be stretched here and there, though not broken. For they suggest the temporal bounds of a great spiritual experience in the total Emersonian evolution, and thus indicate essential landmarks of his biography.

In general, then, the forthcoming Epoch has in it a separative, reactionary cast; Emerson turns away, within limits, from what he has thought, done, and been; he reveals in his spirit a decided breach with his immediate Past, which, he feels, must at least be overhauled, even if not altogether rejected. The culmination of this reaction may be deemed his flight to England during the greater

part of a year. Moreover, the present Decennium is a time of subsidence for Emerson's genius, which declines both in the quantity and quality of its creative power. Is such a cessation merely a breathing-spell for rest and recuperation, or is the lapse permanent? Will he ever regain his former genetic energy after the present submergence? So we may with interest ask ourselves, casting an outlook upon the man's future.

Yes, he will come back, but he can never be again the same Emerson. So much we may premise. As already indicated, he has creatively delivered his message, and it is printed, planted, propagated. Still Emerson has much to carry out and finish in the coming time. He is only forty-two years old at the start of the new Epoch, just a little beyond the middle year of his entire life. And now he seems to be put under some dark discipline as if for another and later task. Of the change he is himself aware; we have already noted in his writings certain indications of its presence to his mind. But does he give any hint of what he aspires to make out of himself next? Here is a look backward and forward belonging to 1847: "I think I have material enough to serve my countrymen with thought and music, if only it was not in scraps." Fragments of philosophy and poetry (thought and music) he has in abundance, if he could only endow them with some inner order. But he feels: "Men do not want handfuls of gold-dust but ingots." This last word recalls the criticism of Car-

lyle, which seems to have struck home: "the paragraph not as a beaten ingot but as a bag of duck-shot held together by the canvas" is what Emerson gives us in his best work, the *Essays*, according to his Scotch friend. Hence we find him lashing himself in his *Diary* (1846): "The one good in life is concentration, the one evil is dissipation." Then we hear him praising continuity, and hinting his own lack of it in life and work. These words we can hardly interpret as momentary fits of despondency, which creep at times upon all human kind; rather do they signify a stern self-criticism, with resolution to overcome the limitation. Of this he has now become completely, even painfully aware, for the criticism has reached him from friend and foe, as well as from himself.

But he will seek henceforth not only to organize, he will study also to systematize—a word which seems strange in the mouth of Emerson, who so often, especially in later life, scouted all system in thinking. Listen to him in his present stage: "The scholar's courage may be measured by his power to give an opinion on Aristotle, Bacon . . . If he has nothing to say to these systems, let him not pretend to skill in reading." Emerson often indirectly calls himself the scholar, it was his name for his present vocation. I believe that he here touches upon his secret ambition for the coming years. In the next sentence he turns to himself with a sort of self-reproach: "But here I am with so much all ready to be revealed to me, as to others,

if only I could be set aglow." Which seems to mean: if I only could fuse my scattered, amorphous material in the fires of concentration. But what is he to do? "I have wished for a professorship," to focus my distracted mind and diffuse labors; but no College in New England would take Emerson even as tutor after that iconoclastic Divinity School Address. And the Transcendental Academy appears to have dreamed itself into non-entity, with so many other things Transcendental of the recent glorious Decennium.

Certainly Emerson is in a searching crisis with himself at this conjuncture. He shows his deep inner breach, his complete estrangement from his past self as well as from his past work. He hardly knows which way to turn, and we may hear him ruminating to himself in his Diary: "In this emergency, one advises Europe, and especially England." There is little doubt that this adviser is Emerson himself, and he will soon take his own advice, as the only feasible plan. Still he at first revolts, and will flee, not to the more civilized but to the less civilized: "If I followed my own advices, if I were master of a liberty to do so, I should sooner go towards Canada." So he thinks of flight to the woods of the North-West, but alas! he has not liberty; the institutions of society fetter him: "I should withdraw myself for a time from all domestic and accustomed relations, and command an absolute leisure with books—for a time." Thus Emerson reveals himself tossing feverishly in life's bed

from this side to that, fantasizing what to do with himself in this new stage of his existence which has indeed dawned, but which keeps tarrying dimly in the twilight.

However, we can catch out of these unsettled shiftings what Emerson longs to do: he will smelt to unity his hitherto fragmentary life and work, which he is inclined to deem a failure; or at least a verdant and elementary stage of his discipline. This is what must now be transcended as soon as possible. Such is verily the bitter irony of immediate fame; really Emerson has won his eternal laurels in the past Decennium, but time only can place them on his brow. Still the deficiency which he feels in himself is none the less genuine, and we may well admire his resolution to overcome it by new studies, new self-discipline, even by flight, if that may be.

So we construe Emerson at the beginning of the present re-actionary Decennium, where we may trace not only his estrangement from the past but his aspiration for the future. (See his Journals, Vol. VII, *passim*, but especially pp. 252-3.) But how will he look at himself toward the close of this Epoch, say some eight or ten years later? Here is a very striking paragraph jotted down under the date of May, 1854: "If Minerva offered a gift and option, I would say give me continuity. I am tired of scraps. I do not wish to be a literary or intellectual chiffonier." Evidently another thrust homewards; with a kind of disgust he deems him-

self but a spiritual rag-picker. Fragmentary he still regards his work, in this decennial retrospect, for such it seems. Then follows the hot contemptuous address to somebody: "Away with this Jew's rag-bag of ends and tufts of brocade, velvet, and cloth-of gold!" Is not that an allusion to the bright, detached sentences of Emerson's prose, and also of his verse? His longing even if somewhat despairful, is still for unity, which he expresses in the biographic couplet:

The Asmodean feat be mine  
To spin my sand-heaps into twine.

So he states the grand Emersonian problem of authorship, as it came home to the author himself. Those separated grains of sand (or gold), can he not forge them into some shape of unity? It would seem, by his own confession, that he has not succeeded after this fresh trial of ten years, and the productive forties of life have all sped away into the sunken abysm of the past without the fulfilment of his heart's deepest desire.

It is true that Emerson often takes an opposite turn and expresses his disapproval of all organization and system. In another mood he will declare: "In writing my thoughts I seek no order, harmony, or result." And this sort of composition he sometimes defends as the highest. Hence the question comes up: Which method was Emerson's deeper, **more** fundamental conviction? He had a right to

esteem well and to uphold what he had done; therein the world has approved his achievement. Still he had begun to feel the impassable limit to his grander ambition. Perhaps for this reason, along with others thinkable, he puts so much stress upon Fate.

Such, however, we may deem the sweep of the present Epoch: it tells Emerson's desperate struggle with the limits developed by his previous life, of which limits he has become conscious. It was a kind of subsidence, a purgatorial discipline, which partially hamstrung his power both in writ and action. After a time of extraordinary productivity the Powers sent him back into himself, there in secret to reconstruct his Genius for a new original work, if this be possible. What thwarted him? Something internal doubtless, but also something external, something in the time and its interfering events. But all that belongs beyond the present Epoch, to which we must specially return and mark some of its distinctive characteristics.

I. The first peculiarity noticeable during this Decennium is the partial paralysis of Emerson's creative power, when compared with his previous affluence. His zest for writing droops, though it does not cease. We mark the diminution at the fountain-head; his Diary, measured by the printed volumes before us, falls away one-half, the spontaneous gush from the Over-Soul is by no means so copious as it was, nor is it so ebullient and racy, to our mind. What is the cause of this break, not sud-

den but gradually creeping over the man's brain-work? That is the matter which we have already tried to elucidate.

Still further, we may note the same shrinkage in his published letters; in fact, the Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence now shrivels to nearly one-third of its size during the previous Epoch. And there is certainly a decline in its interest and value as well as style; it is staler, having lost its first fresh pulsation, and it has no longer its earlier mutual warmth of personality. The truth is, Emerson has completed his task for Carlyle, having practically lifted him into economic freedom. Moreover the two friends are growing asunder in their views of life and of the times. Their friendship remains and will remain, but it slows up a good deal and for good reasons. Raying hot from their first incandescent center, their life-lines diverge more and more to cooler zones.

In Emerson's literary production during this Epoch, there is no such original work as the Essays. Here again we observe a falling-off both in amount and excellence. I think, too, that the careful reader will now observe a re-action against the literary form which he had been employing, namely the Essay. Nothing under that title will be written during this Epoch, he seems trying to unify himself and what he calls his scraps. Still he cannot well change his skin; the Essay is his most natural art-form, or the proper body to the soul of

Transcendentalism. It will persist under diverse outer masks to his last printed book.

And in regard to the new doctrine, Emerson drops into a state of relative quiescence; the propagandism wanes, though he by no means abjures the faith. Already we have seen how he shrinks from the cohorts of fanatical reformers, who at least belong to the same movement, and are classed with him by the great public in spite of his protests, often satirical. Nor could his writings be called successful; the fate of the *Dial* with its unpaid bills which he had to meet from his own purse, was a poignant lesson of disillusion.

II. Accompanying this paralysis, and in part causing it, rises the next fact: with his total American environment Emerson is now at odds. His disgust we might almost call continental—he berates his city Boston, his State Massachusetts, and his whole Nation along with its government. We are to remember that in this Epoch took place the annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise. To the entire national trend of the time Emerson, the anti-slavery man, was opposed, though nature gave him little political bent; indeed he disliked specially the State as such as well as other institutions, which it secured by its law. This had never been Emerson's world in heart or head, though he acquiesced in it from the outside. But now he begins to hate it, to antagonize it, and will flee from its baleful presence.

One of the hardest strokes for him was that the most famous Bostonians had fallen from their pedestals through an inglorious betrayal of principle. Daniel Webster, once his ideal, sank to the very bottom, in Emerson's view, during these ten years. Edward Everett, whom Emerson as a boy studying oratory had followed from place to place in admiration, went the same downward way. Thus the home heroes of his youth had failed at the supreme test. If we may trust certain expressions in his Diary, he begins to think that America can produce no worthy manhood, as it has produced no worthy writ. He affirms: "As far as the purpose and genius of America is yet reported, it is a sterility and no genius." (Editor's Address, 1847.)

Still Waldo Emerson is ever the surpriser, who delights to take a sudden whirl counter to what he has just said and done. The following insertion in his Journals (1845) gives one of his farthest-reaching glimpses not only into the future of his own time, but into the historical process of all time: "the annexation of Texas looks like one of those events which retard or retrograde the civilization of the ages. But the World-Spirit is a good swimmer, and storms and waves cannot drown him. He snaps his finger at laws." This flash from the Highest abruptly darts down upon the reader, and then quits him for good, while the author runs off into his carpings, though he knows and says that "criticism misleads," especially the critic. But where did he pick up that word and conception, World-Spirit?

It is not one of his terms, and we hear little or nothing of it again. Possibly some student of German Philosophy, even of Hegel, had flung it at him in a discussion.

III. Accordingly we are not surprised when we learn that Emerson starts for Europe after pondering over the matter for some two or three years. Indeed we have to hold that in such decision he followed at last his basic trend, which turned him away from migration to the West. This latter he entertained only in theory, while he would not or could not realize it practically. His ancestors had not seriously stirred from the one locality for quite two centuries, forefather Peter Bulkeley seems to have exhausted the migratory spirit in the Emersonian line of descent. Rather the movement will be now backward, to the earliest fountains of his people's tradition. Again we have to ruminate: a singular turn in the anti-traditional Emerson. But we have never failed to find a deep strong undercurrent of prescription beneath his furious torrent of defiance of all transmitted social order.

On October 5, 1847, Emerson sailed from Boston, and in a little over a fortnight landed at Liverpool, and thence proceeded soon to London, where he at once betook himself to the Carlyle house. It was ten o'clock at night when "the door was opened to me by Jane Carlyle, and the man himself was behind her with a lamp in the entry. They were very little changed from their old selves of fourteen

years ago," when Emerson had left them at Craigenputtock in Scotland.

Thus the traveler had reached the first goal of his voyage. He sees the man who gave him the primal push toward Transcendentalism, even if the seed fell upon fertile and well-prepared soil. Since that early visit in 1833 Emerson has passed through his Creative Epoch, with memorable result; also he has distinctly moved out of that Epoch and has entered upon another: what is it to be? He was well aware of his partial paralysis in creative power, or let it be called his quiescence; can he not receive perchance a fresh impetus from that old Carlylean source? Some such hope doubtless hovered faintly in the mind of Emerson; certainly a strong, if not the strongest wish of his journey was to see Carlyle again.

It is true that each must have known of the other's divergence from that first stage. The fact had been privately written and publicly printed; Emerson had criticized Carlyle and Carlyle had criticized Emerson, gently but penetratingly in both cases. Still each remembered of the other something greater than their books; for each was endowed with a unique compelling personality. Could not that be tapped for a renewed creative effluence? Let the result be stated after the test of months of intercourse: both were disappointed, the former act of inspiration could not be repeated, only once was it possible. Indeed what else could be expected after so many years? Each is reported as saying

of the other: I looked for greater things of him, my hopes he has not realized. They called each other names, not venomous indeed, but pointed: you are a fatalist, says one; you are a gymnosophist says the other. Still they remained friends and wound up by taking a trip together to Stonehenge, of which pre-historic monument both knew nothing, and so could agree.

Such was the event of main biographic interest in this visit of Emerson. The other things were not without import, but seem relatively external. He saw many literary people of distinction, ate numerous English dinners, was gratified to find himself famous in old ancestral England, caught some glimpses of its society, especially of its ancient aristocracy; in general he drank with relish of the time-honored traditions of the most traditional people in Europe—he the anti-traditionalist. Such was his new experience which he will tell in a book. But how different from what he had been and done hitherto! Surely a dip into the past was just what he must have needed most.

In the foregoing account we have given what was the inner propulsion of Emerson back to England, as we regard the event. He, however, states the matter somewhat differently: "The occasion of my second visit to England was an invitation . . . to read a series of lectures" in certain of its cities. Thus the Emersonian Lyceum had been called backward to Europe. His success was good in some places, less good in other places. The last course

in London he deemed disappointing, and he was quite ready to start for home.

Still he failed not to touch upon the strong ambition of his life: to organize a First Philosophy, which would be "an enumeration of the laws of the world"—laws common to both Nature and Mind. For in physical science he seeks "a universal cipher in which we read the rules of the Intellect" as well as of the Will or "moral practice." Again we cry out in eagerness: Give us that universal cipher, O Emerson, which runs through all things spiritual and physical, and unifies them into one universal science, verily the science of all science. Let that be the grand new departure for the present Epoch, which will then overtop thy Creative Decennium, great as it is. In thy human brain lies the universe "with all its opulence of relations;" eject it into form for us, that we may know it too.

Will he do it—can he? That is probably the most insistent present problem of Emerson's evolution. We have already seen it rise to the surface years ago, and it will again come up in the future when the final answer can be given. But greater, more convincing is his personality than anything he writes or says. Miss Martineau alludes to this very elusive but quite all-subduing element in the presence of the man who cannot be truly "apprehended till he is seen. He conquers minds as well as hearts wherever he goes." Yet he does not seem to convert anybody to his doctrine; it is the man, the whole of him, that captivates. Wherein we may

catch a hint for his biography. The total career of Emerson must be seen and felt irradiating every separate work of his; the round of his entire life must integrate every arc of it, even the smallest: thus we may still restore in thought and feeling the magic of his vanished personality. Such is the true function of biography: it reproduces the total man as he is in his allness and truth; it may bring him back more completely, if not more vividly than he could be seen in actual life strung along the slow-stepping years.

IV. Emerson took a returning ship at Liverpool July 15, 1848, and reached home near the close of the same month after a whirling panorama of rapid experiences for some nine months. As we read him, he was glad to get back in spite of all his love for England. At once he starts with his traveling University, which he now sees to be his chief practical vocation for the future. He was, however, still internally occupied, laboring at his destiny, while writing books. He had by no means yet wrought himself free of his reactionary Epoch. His trip abroad may have brought him respite, but not recovery. Through all his admiration, he shows signs of re-action against England, for re-action was his pervasive mood underneath all his optimism.

The wandering lecturer with his Lyceum keeps moving westward, imparting his message both by his speech and by his presence. Well may we stop and meditate over the following record dated, Springfield, Illinois, January 11, 1853. "Here I

am in the mud of the prairies. My chamber is a cabin, my fellow-boarders are legislators. Two or three governors or ex-governors live in the house." So Emerson has given a lecture about this date at the mud-burg where then lived the supreme coming man of destiny, Abraham Lincoln, as yet a fameless country lawyer. One queries: Did the latter go to hear Emerson's discourse, which must have been something of an event in the little town? Very likely. In mid winter the Illinois mire was deepest, and Lincoln at this time was probably at home from the circuit. Of course the matter is not vouched for by any document, as far as we know. But so much can be affirmed: Here for some hours on the same spot Fate has filliped together the two most representative men of America, even if they belong to wholly different spheres of human endeavor. One is sprung of the old North-East, the greatest man of thought; the other belongs to the new North-West, the greatest man of action; the first finds his ultimate in Morals, the second rests upon the bed-rock of Institutions. Time will show that they both have a supreme gift in common: to write down the eternal word for their people. Looking back through more than half a century, they may be acclaimed the two sovereign wielders of the pen, the greatest that America has produced—each of them being highly characteristic of his own section of the country.

Now comes to light a significant fact which also belongs to both of them at this date: each is in his

own way struggling through a peculiar purgatorial discipline, each is living in a breach with himself and his country and his time, each has sunk down from a previous higher activity into what we have called a state of subsidence—an Epoch of outer reaction but also of inner self-criticism and of consequent self-reconstruction. Lincoln has been in Congress for one term, then through his course on the Mexican War he has been practically set aside by his constituency; he has returned from the National Capital to his little town, and resumed his little practice of the law, in a mood of deep spiritual scission and humiliation. He reflects the double Nation in his own doubleness, and through a sexennial labor he must knead anew himself into unity, till he can proclaim out of his own oneness: this Nation cannot remain half-slave half-free. Let it here be said that this part of Lincoln's life is apt to be neglected, since it receives almost no notice from our popular Lincoln biographers; but rightly it forms a great spiritual turning-point of his career.

Such is the surprising co-incidence in the evolution of the two supreme American contemporaries. And now let us cast our glance forward to the fact that these two men, so far apart in space, vocation, and culture, make the same turn at the same time through the same national events—the recovery from their re-action and subsidence through the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise and its consequences (1854-5). This is the striking parallelism which now begins between their lives, indicating

that a common supernal current, that of the Spirit of the Age, is pouring through both and determining their biography, be the outer circumstances as diverse as can be in their totally different spheres of action.

Accordingly somewhere about 1855 we shall behold Emerson moving across old limits into a new Epoch after a decennial experience in a kind of underworld. To be sure, this change has already shown many signs of its coming. He will rise from his submergence, re-act against his re-action, and start over again with a fresh outlook.

But at present our task is to consider a few of the more important works of this Decennium, and to let some kind of order gleam through them and thereby illustrate the entire Epoch. It was peculiarly a Plutarchian biographic time with Emerson; his mind was turned to writing the concrete lives of Great Men instead of the abstractions of the Essays. That is, he would now take Plato himself instead of Plato's virtues. There is no doubt that the influence of Carlyle upon his present direction was important and helped him enter upon this new stage of his life's evolution. Hence it is less original, being determined more from the outside than his previous Epoch, being indeed a re-action against his own transcendental creation as directly effluent to him from above.

It has been already noted that Emerson's creative power undergoes a great lessening during the present Epoch—verily a kind of writer's paralysis.

This was in part a physical backstroke from the prodigious outpour of the preceding ten years; surely Emerson deserves a rest. But of course the deeper fact of it was the spiritual re-action. Still Emerson continued to write, and to write in a somewhat changed vein. For reasons already given he sought a new art-form for his writ. Four significant works (leaving out minor compositions) we set down here.

I. *Representative Men*—All European.

II. *The Representative Woman*—American, Margaret Fuller.

III. *The Representative Nation*—the book known as *English Traits*.

IV. *The Representative Man*—American, Daniel Webster, who is held up not as an exemplar but as a warning, or rather as the Great American Failure, verily the New England Judas or Ichabod.

The reader will notice running through all these four pieces the term *representative*, which is used by Emerson himself in each case, though only once in the actual title. Evidently his interest during this entire Decennium is in persons who *represent* something, and he is going to tell what. Such a theme, we may re-insist, is different, both in its general scope as well as in its literary presentation, from what the author has written in the foregoing Epoch, even if the style, the mannerisms as well as the soul, be still Emersonian. Through his work he becomes himself representative, no longer so variously and spontaneously generative as before; we

may well think him a speaking representative who represents in his work these different representative characters.

### REPRESENTATIVE MEN

Such is the printed caption of the new book, which may be taken as a kind of overture to the new Epoch, with its key-note struck in the word *representative*. We are to make clear to ourselves that such a subject and such a title indicate in Emerson a re-action from his antecedent time and work, even if long ago in his Diary the word and thought may be found along with his conception of the biographic Standard Man.

We behold here, accordingly, a collection of the biographies of Great Men who are representative; thus Emerson suggests in advance his task. Representative of what? Of important eras in thought and action; these men have to bring down "from the supersensible regions" things otherwise not accessible to us here below, and thereby "acquaint us with new fields of activity." Almost in spite of himself Emerson here describes the Representative Man as the mediator between the two worlds, supersensible and sensible. But what does he say is the object of such supernal impartation? This is what he adds: such knowledge is not for its own worth, but "it cools our affection for the old," for the transmitted, for tradition, being an antidote against

the Emersonian devil. Such is the chief use of the Great Man, as we read it in Emerson's introduction on the *Uses of Great Men*.

Here we observe that this book with its theme indicates a re-action against the previous Epoch of Emerson and its doctrine. For if Transcendentalism insisted upon anything, it was the immediate transmission of the Upper Power or the Over-Soul to the communing individual, of the Alone to the alone, without any intermediary, however great. But now Emerson writes a work which implies some such intermediary, even if he pares him down as much as he can. Though he employs the term *Great Men*, he re-acts against his own usage with a protest, crying: "But *Great Men!* the word is injurious!" Then he proceeds to point out its dangers which are summed up in that infernal power, the insidious influence of the Past. Hear him admonish: "True genius seeks to defend us against itself . . . will not impoverish but will liberate and add new senses." So he shouts a danger-signal, but in that note of warning lies subtly ensconced the very mediation of Genius against which he warns us, since through its interposition we win us a new liberty. What more does any person want of Genius, of a Shakespeare, of a Goethe, yea of an Emerson whose whole influence has now become also traditional, that of a mediator through his writings?

Again we see him raise his finger: "There is a speedy limit to heroes," which seems to be a hit at

Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-worship*, against which this book of Emerson strikes often an antagonistic undertone. "All men are at last of a size; there are no common men." True enough in a sense, all men are selves, Egos, yet they are likewise very diverse, and Emerson is wrestling with that diversity in its supreme manifestation, called Genius. The fact is, he hardly knows what to do with it, since it has the power of transmitting itself through time, whereby it becomes a mighty tradition, Emerson's Satanic evil-worker. He can even cite profanity: "Damn George Washington," for the fame of his tyrannical virtues. So Emerson with a curse leaves him out of his Representative Men as well as every other well-known American. If we must have a hero, we shall take him from afar.

Thus Emerson makes a wry face at individual Genius, even while writing about it, for it is a bulky fact in the race's record. However he takes a peculiar refuge in "the Genius of Humanity," and he claims this to be what he intends to discourse upon, "the real subject whose biography is written in our annals." So he will wing his flight "to an elemental region where the individual is lost, or wherein all touch by their summits." In such way he will get rid of that troublesome individual Genius, source of so much evil, especially in the matter of tradition. Still we have to note that in the execution of his work he adheres very closely to said individual Genius, using the latter's name and deeds. It is, accordingly somewhat surprising that

we do not hear more of the universal Genius, the presiding Spirit of History, or the World-Spirit, to which he has proclaimed his allegiance.

Hardly does Emerson appear at one with himself in this book. The theme in its essence runs counter to his most cherished doctrine of the immediate efflux of the divine into the human soul, which act allows as we have already often marked, no mediation, not even the Mediator Himself. The Great Man may be toned down into the Representative Man, but the difficulty inheres. Still there are glimpses of the highest worth in this book, and Emerson remains grandly Emersonian. The individual Genius "appears as the exponent of a vaster mind and will." So far, so good; but the reader asks, exponent to whom of this lofty sovereignty? No distinct answer. Then follows another flaming sentence to the same purport: "The opaque Self becomes transparent with the light of the First Cause." Nobly conceived and worded; but again we beg: transparent to whom? The response is not heard, though the implication probably is: to the people who have no such light, to the folk without genius. But alack! that would also imply the acceptance of authority, of a mediating principle, yea of that diabolic tradition, which must not be uttered.

So Emerson, do what he may, cannot get rid of the intermediary between the Over-Soul and his Under-Soul. Indeed just this intermediary is the Great Man at his best; his supreme function is to mediate the universal Spirit with the individual

man who otherwise may not have the gift to participate. Many hints and implications of such a potency of the Great Man we may find in Emerson, but they remain partial—Emersonian glimpses, intimations, prophecies.

When we come to look at his six Representative Men, they all represent Europe, not one from his own country or from the Orient. No Washington or Franklin for him, though they are of the least tradition; such a fact we have to take as one sign of his re-action. He had also spoken of a common principle running through and integrating all Biography; but it is certainly not explicit in these examples, of which each goes pretty much its own way. Still they are all Emersonian, not only in style but also in the author's own soul-portraiture. Holmes has put this with insight: "Emerson holds the mirror up to them at just such an angle that we see his own face as well as that of his hero"—we might say, in that of his hero. Thus the present book is ultimately biographical—a fact known and even formulated by Emerson. He says tersely that "Shakespeare is the only biographer of Shakespeare," which means also that Emerson is the only biographer of Emerson.

The first three of his heroes—Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigné—are his favorites by inner choice; the second three seem rather external to him—Shakespeare, Napoleon, Goethe—he took these more from tradition than from himself. Goethe he accepted largely on Carlyle's word; Shakespeare really

meant less to him than Beaumont and Fletcher, or perhaps than Ben Jonson; Napoleon's military and political sphere lay quite outside of Emerson's world. Still he weaves around these names many suggestive and beautiful sentences, almost as if each might be a moral theme or abstract title of an Emersonian essay. Still not altogether so; for Emerson is trying here to change his previous method of expression and to employ a new art-form.

Regular biographies they are not, but decidedly irregular—the immediate and often capricious downflow of the writer's inspiration stimulated by certain events of the hero's life. We get no conception of Plato's work as an ordered whole; it is the Emersonian Plato, or rather the Platonic Emerson, whom by the way it is well worth while to know—if not so much for Plato's sake, at least for Emerson's. Farthest-reaching is the glimpse which makes Plato "the germ of that Europe we know so well, in its long history of arts and arms . . . already discernible in the mind of Plato." Equally profound and subtle is his distinction of "free, active, creative Europe" from Asia, which is an "immense fate;" moreover, "if the East loved infinity, the West (Europe) delighted in boundaries," whereof the start is in sculptured Hellas the beautiful, divinely bounded in Art.

Thus we ride on flashes of lightning through this book, often with dizzying, intoxicating headiness. Then the luminous line leaps into darkness and drops us querying: Where are we now? What

next? For instance, after reading and digesting that last thought about Orient and Europe, we beg: Tell us now, dear Emerson, somewhat of that third stage in the sweep of the World's History, the American or Occidental, as different from Europe as the latter is from Asia, which new offspring of Time was long ago prophesied by Bishop Berkeley, and of which you have given many a gleam in the Dial and elsewhere during your former Creative Epoch. But no such turn seems now possible with Emerson, it is his time of re-action against the West and his new sweep toward the Eastern and the old.

The book in its present form and trend was first published in 1850, somewhere about the middle of his Re-actionary Epoch. But Emerson had for many years been lecturing on the lives of eminent men in various places; during 1845 he reports himself to Carlyle as giving at Boston a course on this same group of Representative Men, with the exception of Goethe, who was afterward added, and remains in the book a somewhat questionable tail-piece, for which Emerson himself shows lack of sympathy, and we think, of right appreciation. But in this case Carlyle and also Margaret Fuller doubtless overwhelmed his self-determination. The whole work, however, was the product of a long evolution, probably colored variously at different times, but finally taking on its present peculiar tone of reaction as its true fulfilment. Since he gave this course also in England (1847), that antique land

may have helped to ingrain its tinct of recoil from West to East, from progress to regress indicated primarily in the choice of subject as well in its treatment.

So we construe this representative book of the representative Man, Emerson, in which he may be said to represent specially his representative Epoch in his own life-work. That is, he now becomes aware of himself on this side, in this phase of his career, and writes the same out into other Great Men's biographies. He is himself representative in the present book. Moreover, all these Great Men are distant from him, on a different continent, yea in quite another world from his own. Such is his present grand act of self-estrangement, needed, in fact imperative as the course of life itself, though he has been much blamed for his choice by critics, even by Carlyle, who wished him to portray some American frontiersman or Indian. But Emerson was no Fennimore Cooper. He mildly says: "I wanted a change and a tonic;" Europe was his right medicine, where he could take a far plunge into the first fountains of that Tradition, against whose barriers he finds himself breaking his head here in America. And so he represents not only a stage of himself, but of you and me, yea also of this American people, who sorely need to take some such cultural dip into Europe's and even the Orient's past, in order to find out something eternally worth while about their immediate present selves.

## II.

## THE REPRESENTATIVE WOMAN

Scarcely had Emerson finished and was publishing his *Representative Men* (1850), when Fate bore down on him with a new yet correlative task: the biography of the Representative Woman, an American now, Margaret Fuller Ossoli. She had been a central figure in the Emersonian Renaissance; but she, too, had fled to Europe at the end of its Creative Epoch, a year or so before Emerson set sail thither. On her return as soon as she struck the American sea-coast, she perished by shipwreck.

Her peculiar tragic lot made a strong impression upon Emerson, so that he resolved to tell of her story what he knew. Accordingly he has devoted to her memory what we may call a book in the collection known as the *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*. It is longer than an Essay, more detailed than an Address, such as he wrote in honor of his friend Thoreau or of his Aunt Mary. Miss Fuller, for the unmarried maiden it was whom Emerson knew and dealt with, appeared to him the supreme Representative Woman. He says, Margaret (so he familiarly calls her) "seemed to represent them all," all her friends and all her environment. The super-woman of his world he deems her, "all the art, the thought, and the nobleness of New England seemed at that moment related to her, and she to it." The central shining figure everywhere she could make herself. "who brought wit, anecdotes,

love-stories, tragedies, oracles with her—the queen of some parliament of love, who carried the key to all confidences, and to whom every question had been finally referred.” A demonic personality she regarded herself, somewhat after the pattern of her highest literary oracle, Goethe, whom she knew better than did any other New Englander, better, we think, than did Carlyle, for she actually lived on deeper lines that poet’s genius.

Significant is the fact that she circled around Emerson during his entire Creative Decennium, shooting a radiance in which he basked with every power alert, and of which he absorbed—how much who can tell? He states: “I knew her intimately from July, 1836, till August, 1846, when she sailed for Europe.” In many warm grateful sentences he celebrates her transcendent ability: “The day was never long enough to exhaust her opulent memory—I never saw her without surprise at her new powers.” Moreover she was well aware of her supremacy, from her infancy “she idealized herself as sovereign.” Overwhelming loads of egotism she would dump even upon friends, saying to them coolly: “I now know all the people worth knowing in America, and I find no intellect comparable to my own.” So Emerson records of her with a smile playing in his words. Thus she ranged great Emerson beneath herself to his face with all the other great New Englanders of her time, not a few of whom have repaid her with many a stinging sarcasm. And as a rule women were her quarry, not

men; she was the representative woman among women, not a little defiant of tyrant man despite her Oceanic love-swells, for undoubtedly she had these too.

The fact is that Emerson was somewhat afraid of her when those cyclonic upheavals of emotion which always lay seething in the dark recesses of her underworld, would break up and overflow and even threaten, as we may judge from some of his intimations. He fully recognized that hers was a stronger personality than his own, against which he had always to fortify himself, and from which at times his familiar warned him to take flight. Thus he confesses: "I foreboded rash and painful crises, and had a feeling as if a voice cried: *Stand from under!*" In such manner Emerson distinctly intimates his peril, and once says openly that he knows much more than he will tell. So he compels his reader to suspect according to ability.

As the female Prometheus (so she construes herself in a certain mood) of Emerson's life, she appears to have been the successor of his Titanic Aunt Mary Moody Emerson. But her power over him faded not by absence; he seems to have cherished some plan for her activity after her return. The news of her death drew from him this sad note: "I have lost in her my audience, and I hurry now to my work admonished that I have a few days left." So interwound was his soul with hers that he appeared for a while to feel that her tragic fate prefigured his own.

Margaret Fuller remained long the ideal of the more aspiring and talented women of Yankeeland, and her influence has by no means vanished today. To many she is still the Representative Woman, as pedestaled by Emerson.

### III.

#### THE REPRESENTATIVE NATION

Such may be taken as the deeper underlying designation of the book whose title-page reads *English Traits*. This Representative Nation, however, is not his own America, but his ancestral home-folk, the English. Herein we are to mark another stage of his re-action, the national; he drops back with admiration and love to his original stock. Moreover we should note him turning away from the Present, which he had so strongly emphasized in the foregoing Epoch, to the Past, to Tradition incorporate in a whole people—in their outer customs as well as their inner consciousness.

England, then, is the lofty theme, her spiritual portrait is what he proposes to paint; or, since he is in the biographic mood during this Decennium, he will top it out by writing the biography of the Great Nation, the greatest on the globe as he declares. Hitherto he has given us only the lives of Great Individuals, now he will rise to the portrayal of the total life of a people, and that the most excellent. For he sums up tersely the result in his last section: "England is the best of nations." Such is the con-

centrated essence of his two visits as well as of life-long intimate studies. He fails not to make the contrast with his own country: "The American system is more democratic, more humane; yet the American people do not yield better or more able men, or more inventions, or books or benefits than the English"—yea, it is really behindhand just in these excellences as well as otherwise, says Emerson often pointedly. "We prefer one Shakespeare to a million foolish democrats," affirms the literary aristocrat, re-directing a famous thunderbolt of his friend, hero-worshipping Carlyle.

Surely, then, England is this Earth's Representative Nation, the best producer of the best, verily the greatest creator of Representative Men, whom we have considered apart and singly hitherto. But now we must get back to their source; hence Emerson proclaims: "No one man and no few men can represent them—it is a people of myriad personalities." So Emerson comes home impressed with the Great Nation supereminent over and indeed productive of Great Individuals, to whom singly his eye hitherto has been limited. It is for him a great new outreach, which will have its effect upon him when he gets back to his own Nation, rather neglected in his view heretofore.

This book, *English Traits*, was published in 1856, and thus concludes the present Decennium, through the whole of which it is fermenting and maturing. Indeed it goes back farther according to Emerson's retrospective statements: "I have been twice in

England," first in 1833, whereof he gives here some account; then he takes up his "second visit to England in 1847," which furnishes the main content of the book. Thus the first germ of the work is thrown back some-twenty-three years from the date of publication. Strictly, however, it belongs to this Reactionary Epoch of the author's life. It shows decisively his estrangement from his own people and the backflow to his ancestral land. Undoubtedly there is often sharp criticism of the English, but they always come out on top. Their power of superb man-building is what he justly celebrates. And the Nation does it—which view is an important point in the evolution of Emerson, since he is now getting to see associated Man in the institution, not merely the individual man. We may forecast that he will yet come round to his own Nation.

A very appreciative book is the *English Traits*, written with much epigrammatic point, and frequent meteoric sentences blazing across its sky. Still we cannot help noting that the author betraying his own-limitation, has left out England's greatest, most universal trait: she has been the chief institution-maker to the world in these recent centuries. Especially of the State, of the political institution she has furnished the working model to all striving, freedom-pursuing peoples. The English method of governing men, English Law and Constitution, are still going the round of the Earth, and have pushed far beyond her territorial sovereignty, vast as it is. This to our mind, is the great

est thing that England has done. But Emerson, bonded to his thought's institutional limit, has little sense for such a national characteristic. It is true that he knows of Runnymede and Magna Charta; but fully to realize them and their place in the World's History is another matter. Emerson, indeed, remembers Britain "as an island famous for immortal laws, for the announcements of original right, which make the stone tables of liberty" (Ch. XVIII). But this remains to him rather an external fact than a profoundly assimilated conviction. The Representative Nation is to prove itself not only the builder of men, but the builder of institutions, which associate men for the supreme goal of humanity, especially associate men unto the end of freedom.

Here, then, lies for us the missing part of this book, yea the missing part of Emerson himself—a fact which we have elsewhere often noticed. The American political fabric is quite as alien to him as is the English. Indeed the whole institutional world is or has been not only a stranger to Emerson but a downright goblin, which he has sought to ban from himself and indeed from existence. Still we believe that he is now beginning to get a glimpse of a new aspect of this subject. There are hints of a re-action in this otherwise Re-actionary Epoch against his former anti-social trend. But they are as yet largely unconscious, we have to dig for them; just as at present in his separative title, *English Traits*, we seek out the connecting under-current

which not only unifies his book within itself, but also with all his other works of the present Decennium.

Having thus set forth in writ three positive forms of Representation, he turns to the negative Representative Man and People, finding them in one of his countrymen and in his country.

#### IV.

#### THE REPRESENTATIVE AMERICAN

Daniel Webster more than any other American was Emerson's ideal of the Great Man, during youth and also middle age. It is true that the radical Transcendentalist became aware of the chasm between his consciousness and that of the conservative Statesman; still across the ever widening and deepening rift which parted them, he gazed with admiration at the grandiose form of the greatest New Englander of the time. Through the whole line of Emerson's Journals from the first volume rises at intervals Webster's imposing figure bewrit with rapturous comments. As an instance, we may cite his description of Webster entering incidentally the audience at Cambridge while Edward Everett was making an address: "The house shook with new and prolonged applause, and Everett sat down, and the old Titanic Earth-Son was alone seen." (Journals, Vol. VII, p. 167.) Such was the overawing effect upon Emerson at least. Later when he was wholly estranged from his hero, he

says: "I remember his appearance at Bunker Hill. There was the Monument and here was Webster—and the whole occasion was answered by his presence. His splendid wrath when his eyes became lamps, was the wrath of the fact and the cause he stood for."

But in the course of years came the Compromise of 1850 enacting its Fugitive Slave Law, which Emerson deemed the quintessential sin of the ages. Although the measure was introduced by Clay and bears his name, still Webster was held accountable for it by New England, and especially by Emerson. Hence we read this scathing insertion (*Journals*, VIII, p. 216): "Webster truly represents the American people just as they are, with their vast material interests, materialized intellect and low morals. Heretofore their Great Men who have led them have been better than they, as Washington, Hamilton, Madison. But Webster's absence of moral faculty is degrading to the country. Of this fatal defect, of course, Webster himself has no perception." Really he must be worse than his country if he can so degrade it from what it was. Emerson strongly echoed the mighty damnation of Whittier's *Ichabod*, which catches the trumpet-voice of the avenging angel as it proclaims the Last Judgment to the guilty sinner.

Here, then, is declared Emerson's supreme estrangement from his Hero and from his Nation. Both he damns to eternal infamy. This may well be regarded the extreme point of his reaction

against his environing world, his turn from its leading man and its leading institution. Previously he had reacted against Transcendentalism and took flight to Europe; also he communed with her Representative Men, and wrote about them his representative book. But he has returned to America, and what does he find? His Representative Man has become the universal curse of mankind, having authorized "the most detestable law that was ever enacted by a civilized state."

Two documents we may select for this peculiar Emersonian turn, which brings to a close the present Reactionary Decennium. These are the two speeches on The Fugitive Slave Law which are quite different in style from his former addresses. Less discursively sentential, more unified, they radiate more warmth but less metaphor; not so much the speaker's intellectual as his emotional nature now wells up to the surface and overflows his discourse.

1. *Address at Concord, May, 1851.* He notices the great change brought about by the Compromise of 1850. "The last year has forced us all into politics, and made it a paramount duty to seek what it is often a duty to shun." That marks the Emerson of the past, his aloofness from political activity. The State as an institution he never liked, never really believed in, but now it makes itself felt with a new, yea vengeful power. No wonder he cries out: "I have a new experience." What is it? That world which he has always tossed aside with some contempt theoretically and practically, the

regnant social order of man, is now brought home to him with a retributive violence. "I wake in the morning with a painful sensation, which I carry about all day," caused by the conduct of his own commonwealth Massachusetts as well as of the Nation. "There is infamy in the air," an altogether novel sensation for him. So he describes a kind of world-pain which creeps snakily through all his hours. The Higher Law, which he has hitherto so easily taken for granted, has indeed met its supreme challenge, and has now to fight for its very existence. So he turns over the whole problem anew, and even cites legal authorities—a very unusual thing in his prelections.

But the bitterest pill, the most heart-wrenching fact is the part of Daniel Webster in the ignominious business. Emerson writhes at the reminiscence: "The fairest American fame ends in this filthy law." He looks backward and tells with sorrowful fervor how much he has enjoyed Webster's "fame in the past." He was the one eminent American of our time whom we could produce "as a finished work of Nature." Truly our hero, our Representative Man; his was the best head in Congress, yea in the land, as well as the most eloquent tongue. Still Emerson sets sharply this limit upon him: "Mr. Webster is a man who lives by his memory, a man of the past." That is it, the Emersonian curse, tradition; such is the all-corrupting Websterian malady. "He praises a past Adams and

Jefferson, but a present Adams and Jefferson he would denounce."

Moreover dim notes of prophecy drop from the speaker's lips. He darkly forecasts: "The Nemesis works underneath again, and draws us on to our undoing;" so will it be with Daniel Webster; just wait. Accordingly we look out for the fulfilment in the second discourse delivered nearly three years later.

2. *Address at New York City, March 7, 1854.*

The date is ominous, being the fourth anniversary of Webster's Compromise Speech of March 7, 1850. In the meantime the great orator, "the Titanic Earth-son," has passed off the stage of life, the most colossally tragic American character of his age. He had been rejected by his city, by his section, by his party both in the North and in the South. The final stroke of Fate was the utter defeat of his last Presidential hope by the Whig Convention at Baltimore in 1852. Not long afterwards death smote him, it may be said, with the whole American people looking on his fall at the end of a grand drama of Nemesis, as Emerson would interpret it. And what has happened to Webster, the fallen mightiest, is certain to happen to slavery itself: "slowly, slowly the Avenger comes, but he comes surely."

This address of Emerson marks an epochal transition in his life, the movement out of his Reactionary Decennium into a new stage. He mentions this change at the opening of his speech; he has

hitherto shunned public questions, as no proper part of his task, which has been confined "to the well-being of students or scholars." But such aloofness must give way in the present crisis. Till the passage of this Fugitive Slave Act, he was not aware of "suffering any inconvenience from American Slavery;" but now it intrudes through his very door, and thrusts itself even into his conscience whose dictates it challenges in his soul's own home. Thus a new and intense conflict has burst forth right in his Holy of Holies: that between the enacted Law and Constitution on the one hand and on the other the divine efflux from above into his conviction. It will not be hard to foretell which side in this battle Emerson will take, if we may now judge of him by his past.

Not only will he henceforth obey the Higher God-born Law against the Lower man-made Law, but he will proclaim it, and propagate it as his prime duty. Thus that former Propagation of doctrinal Transcendentalism, which was so marked in the former Creative Epoch, and then lapsed so strikingly in the present Re-actionary Epoch, is next to be taken up in a new shape and to become one of Emerson's main activities. From theory to practice will be the dominant sweep, and Emerson will stress the doer more than the writer, whose literary productivity now falls decidedly into the background.

## CHAPTER SIXTH

### THE PRACTICAL DECENNIUM (1855-1865)

Let it be said again with increased stress, that Emerson now passes from theory to practice, from an activity chiefly intellectual to his direct grapple with the real world at present driving in upon him and challenging him to open public combat. The change was not agreeable to him, as he intimates; still he had to compass it, since it was in fact the next great stage in his life's unfolding, which he could not shun without losing his career. Thus he moves into what we may label his Practical Decennium, a new Epoch, and the concluding one, of his long Second Period which shows all through its course a deep continued estrangement from his environing world, especially from its institutional element.

Still, as compared with the preceding Epoch, the present one marks a stage of recovery—a restoration out of his re-actionary time through public activity, which continues to broaden and deepen till its close. Hitherto, as he declares, he has held aloof from "public questions," and has clung to the intellectual tasks of "the scholar." However he is still in a mood of protest especially against the political order, out of which protest he is slowly to evolve during the present Decen-

niun, along with the painful but healing evolution of the Nation itself. Accordingly the present Epoch sweeps toward an institutional recovery within the man and outside him in the State. From this point of view, which is fundamental, his chief interest now circles about the American Nation; though at first he turns bitterly negative and hostile, he unfolds out of that attitude, mainly through the all-testing experiences of the Civil War, into a positive, reconciled relation to his people and their fulfilment. That is, from being strongly anti-national at the start of this Epoch, he becomes strongly pro-national at its close.

I. Here at the beginning let us make a brief survey of the time-boundaries of this Epoch, which we again confine to ten years. But they now lie between the dates 1855 and 1865. To be sure the present Decennium has tentacles pushing forth before and after these dates, it has lines of prelude as well as of epilogue.

Already we have noted Emerson marking emphatically his time of transition in his speech of March 7, 1854. But we hear of him starting his active anti-slavery crusade in 1855. He had long been theoretically an opponent of slavery, flinging down an occasional word and deed from his Hermitage. But we have observed how he got to disliking and even satirizing the whole horde of New England reformers, including the abolitionists. Now, however, he is resolved to act in the great practical movement of the time, yea to devote his life chiefly,

though not wholly, to action, to war, instead of peaceful contemplation. We hold that here lies his grand work of self-redemption from his previous partial paralysis both of intellect and will. We may well recall what was doing in the Nation about this time: Enforcements of the Fugitive Slave Law, the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the universal uproar in consequence, the Kansas conflict, which started in 1855 and kept stirring up both the North and the South—Massachusetts being specially active through her Emigrant Aid Society. Certainly the political hubbub was enough to drive Emerson and every other scholar out of his seclusion into the fighting ranks. The great national alignment for the coming struggle was taking place, and Emerson volunteered.

But how long did this Emersonian war last? It closed with Appomattox, with 1865, the year of national victory and restored supremacy of the Union. Through this outcome Emerson felt himself also restored to his Nation as never before in his whole life, during which he quite from his youth had been indifferent, if not hostile, to the central government, constructed and dominated as it was by Southerners. In fact we shall find that his reconciliation runs deeper, and will include not the State alone, but the whole institutional world against which has been launched his deep and abiding protest. This protest, we recollect, reaches back to his early church-conflict, and furnishes the spur and the

ground-work of his supreme literary achievement during his Creative Decennium.

II. Thus about the year 1855 Emerson changes or has changed from his hitherto passive, local, theoretical resistance ending in final practical submission, and now he turns his theory into an active hostility against national authority. He will employ both word and deed. To be sure, he can not wholly abandon his former literary and speculative interests, but they will become subordinate, yea, largely a repetition of his former stages, often of his former sentences as set down in his Diary. The Fugitive Slave Law, for instance, he will not only nullify passively, but he will challenge it directly in actual combat with executive officials. It was indeed a "nasty law," though upheld by Webster and the great constitutional lawyers of the Senate. But Emerson goes further, a good deal further: he assails the Judiciary for not taking the law into their hands and making it what it ought to be. Thus Emerson would have the judge of the law to be its maker, and to usurp the place of the legislator. In this way the judge would be an absolute monarch, exercising legislative, judicial, and executive functions. Nothing could be more un-American, if we hold by the Constitution of the United States.

Let us listen to him making a speech January 26, 1855. He declares that "Justice is poisoned at the fountain," since the Judge insists upon enforcing not the Moral Law of his own conscience but the En-

acted Law of the Nation. Undoubtedly here is called up the great spiritual collision of the Epoch, that between the Moral and the Institutional, of which two sides Emerson at present chooses unconditionally the first, in accord with his long cherished doctrine of the final authority of the Moral Sentiment in every individual conscience. But let us not forget that heretofore this doctrine was held by him simply in theory; if a clash came through it in practical life, he shunned the fight, paid his taxes legal but immoral, kept his bankstock with its interest of some twelve hundred dollars and more a year—a great social wrong in his conviction, but an indispensable help for uttering that conviction. Thus he fought sin by means of his own sinning. Acquiesce in his own guilt he might formerly, but he will do it no longer. Such is his present new resolution starting another Epoch, and a new Emerson.

In the same speech he amplifies the national situation as regards the Judiciary: "In our Northern States no judge appeared of sufficient character and intellect to ask, not whether the slave law was constitutional but whether it was right." Again in this sentence we hear the furiously battling dualism of the time evoked by the Fugitive Slave Act: Shall we obey Conscience or the Constitution? And which shall the judicial tribunal follow? Emerson gives his decisive answer to the otherwise crushing problem: "The first duty of a judge was to read the law in accordance with equity, and if it jarred with equity, to disown the law." (Cited in Cabot's

Emerson II, p. 598.) In the most literal practical sense, he now becomes a real Antinomian, to which doctrine he always had a tendency, by his own confession.

Such is the Emersonian solution of the mighty national conflict ever getting more intense during this Epoch till it finally breaks out into open war. Many were the provocations on both sides during these tumultuous years; we find Emerson echoing them in speech and act. He, with the whole country and especially New England, was deeply stirred by the assault on Senator Sumner in the Federal Senate chamber (May, 1856). Upon this subject he makes a warm speech to his fellow-citizens of Concord, and states in fresh form the conflict: "I do not see how a barbarous community and a civilized community can form one State." Here is Lincoln's famous "House divided against itself"—the present ever-rasping dualism of our two-principled Nation. But Emerson adds: "I think we must get rid of slavery or get rid of freedom." This again recalls Lincoln's utterance: "This Union cannot endure half-slave half-free, it will become all one thing or all the other." Thus we behold Emerson profoundly sharing-in and expressing the scission of the Nation.

The outcries of "bleeding Kansas" also drove him to a sympathetic speech (September, 1856) in which he proclaims with emphasis that "every immoral statute is void." But who is to decide? Then he asks: "What are the results of Law and

Union?" His answer runs that "there is no Union and no Law," both have become self-destroying. That would seem to be a condition approaching social dissolution; but it is what he seems to long for, saying "I am glad that the terror at disunion and anarchy is disappearing," and he claims history to be on his side: "Massachusetts in its heroic day had no government, was an anarchy," in which "every man was his own governor." That is, when the tea was thrown overboard and the Concord shot was fired. Thus he dissolves all society back into its constituent atoms without association. It would appear that the anti-institutional Emerson is about to see his long-ago dream realized in "the New Revolution of the Nineteenth Century," which is destined to be far vaster and more glorious than the old American Revolution. Nor does he propose to stop with mere glorifying words, for his peroration advises quick, strong deeds in a flaming appeal which certainly sounds revolutionary: "Fellow citizens, in these times full of the fate of the Republic, I think the towns should hold town meetings, and resolve themselves into Committees of Safety, go into permanent sessions . . . stop every American about to leave the country." Thus we seem to behold Emerson turning Jacobin orator and addressing his Club of Revolutionaries, as if he were re-enacting some vivid Parisian scene out of his friend Carlyle's French History, which must have become very real to him during these passionate months.

Rapidly, fiercely our mild-mannered, excess-shunning Emerson appears to be turning about to a practical revolutionist, of course as yet unbloody. Still he brushes the sanguinary side of the movement. In 1857 John Brown, most famous and goriest of ~~the~~ million John Browns, came to Concord and gave a lecture which urged the sending of men and arms to settlers in Kansas, where already the battle-line of the opening Ten Years' War had been drawn in human crimson. Emerson records that John Brown in said speech "gave a good account of himself to a meeting of citizens," and we are emphatically told that "one of his best points was the folly of the peace party in Kansas, who believed that their strength lay in the greatness of their wrongs, and so discountenanced resistance." Our interest is not that John Brown uttered this war-like note—such we would expect from him—but that Emerson selects it and emphasizes it, indicating his present militant practical tendency. Brown later complained of the elegant rhetorical Abolitionists of Boston that they were all talk and no action. But Emerson seems advancing toward the deed; so is the Nation, could he but see the inner working of its spirit; thus he is representative of his time even if unconscious of the fact. For the American people, during these Kansas years were on both sides steadily making up their minds to fight, but the thing must be done in the right way in the fullness of time.

It is declared that Emerson knew nothing of

John Brown's raid into Virginia, which took place two years later. Still he had met in the old Puritan the heroic soul of his present tendency—the man who was ready to assail in open fight the Institutional, and die for the Moral, if need be. In a lecture delivered at Boston (November, 1859), while Brown was in a Virginia jail, having been condemned to death for his deed, Emerson wreathes one of his golden crowns and sets it triumphantly on his hero's brow, canonizing him as "that new saint than whom none purer or more brave was ever led by love of man into conflict and death—the new saint awaiting his martyrdom, and who if he shall suffer, will make the gallows glorious like the cross." Thus Brown is hallowed and more: his suffering and death will make him the modern Christ, and alongside the cross of Christendom will be borne the new holy symbol, the gallows of a universal John-Browndom.

Such we may take as the extreme of Emerson's anarchic moralism, certainly destructive of Law and Constitution. These, we may grant, are seriously defective, and ought to be changed; but is this the right way to change them—the way of John Brown? Decisively the American People—the party most deeply concerned—said No a few years later. But the interesting biographic fact for us is that Emerson now shouting Yes, also said No a few years later—said it in a number of ways, whereof the reckoning will be made hereafter when the time arrives. But it is proper at present to set

down this one significant point: Emerson publishing the present Address after the Civil War in his book called *Society and Solitude* (see Essay entitled *Courage*) omitted the foregoing apotheosis of John Brown, and pruned the daring passage down to a very conciliatory allusion, in which he appears to praise Governor Wise and the Virginians quite as he once did his former hero. What has brought about such a decisive change of speech in Emerson indicative of a fresh spiritual transformation? Between the dates of these two utterances, say between 1860 and 1870, he has indeed undergone a great new experience, we believe, the greatest of his life. He has made the turn from his anti-institutional to his pro-institutional stage, and therewith has quite reversed the trend of his whole previous career. Now, if we were to select the two individuals who may be taken as the best representatives of this change not only in Emerson but in the time, we would name John Brown and Abraham Lincoln. We shall see Emerson passing from Brown to Lincoln during this Decennium.

III. Emerson seems to have given little or no attention to Lincoln till the latter was nominated for the Presidency in 1860, and then he was distrustful and somewhat contemptuous of the ungainly Western sucker for having beaten cultured Eastern Seward in the Republican Convention, the man of the Higher Law and of the Irrepressible Conflict. Really, therefore, Lincoln had triumphed over the Emersonian attitude in the present crisis.

For Lincoln, though he morally condemned and hated slavery, was still an intensely national man, and stood at his deepest and best for the Union, about which Emerson at this time had grown very shaky. Lincoln did not let his moralism undermine his nationalism, as did John Brown, in whose boat Emerson has now taken passage. While Brown was preparing his first raid into Virginia, Lincoln was having his epochal debate with Douglas on the Illinois prairies, proposing to limit the growth of slavery, and thereby, as he says opening the way to its ultimate peaceful extinction, which he then believed, would slowly come to pass.

Accordingly Lincoln is already to be seen as the reconciler of the chief conflict of the time, the conflict between the Moral and Institutional, as far as it could be then reconciled. He has moralized the issue with slavery in contrast with Douglas who said he did not care whether it were voted up or down in Kansas. On the other hand he has institutionalized this same issue in contrast with Seward of the Higher Law, besides whom we have here to place Emerson, who may now be deemed at his anti-national apogee in his idolatry of John Brown. We can thus see why Lincoln is the chosen leader of the future, who is destined in his career to save both morality and nationality from their furious, mutually destroying dualism, and reconcile them in new unity which is just the restored Union with its purified Constitution. Such was the great problem not only in the Nation, but in the World's His-

tory which he successfully solved, and hence he has become a supreme exemplar not only to his own but to all peoples.

And now we are to premise that Emerson, having touched the extreme point of his estrangement will begin, through the discipline of the time, to turn back toward the Nation. To use his own words in another connection, his centrifugence having reached its last limit, begins to pass over into his centripetence. We may well hold that Lincoln through his leadership performed a great act of spiritual liberation for Emerson. Though the latter may have deemed himself adequately emancipated, he really needed a new emancipation in his present condition as well as the slave, even if he were the white man and New Englander. Well, who did not then need to be enfranchised? The whole North, we believe, as well as the South, though in a different way. But it is curiously instructive; the Proclamation of Emancipation appears to have struck the limits from Emerson as it did the fetters from the slave. For that act seems to have been just the luminous node at which he wheeled about from his anti-national to his pro-national faith. In one sense Emerson may say that his work is done, his long protest has borne fruit in the correction of a great institutional wrong. But in a deeper sense he has discovered his own spiritual obstruction, yea his own wrong, and begins to transcend it to a new order.

IV. Hence this Epoch witnesses the greatest

transition of Emerson's life, we might name it also his transitional Decennium, since it shows him moving to his farthest extreme of social negation, and then bending around in his return sunwards. But it also concludes his creative energy, which was primarily inspired by his denial of established authority as transmitted from the aforesaid. Spiritually he deemed himself an Antinomian, if not practically; non-conformity made him dance with delight, while all forms of association soured his stomach. So we have often noted him hitherto in the course of this biography. But now behold his grand orbital circumgyration!

Moreover the present Epoch was one of conflict ever increasing till it came to the point of downright battle; and it lasted inwardly in the man and outwardly in the Nation for ten years (not four), beginning with first hostile invasion of Kansas (1855) and continuing till the surrender at Appomattox (1865). From this point of view it may be called Emerson's warring Decennium, since in his way he was enlisted in the long fight. The American Ten Years' War it was, and also the Emersonian, with final victory for both the man and the Nation. In this mighty movement Emerson sweeps and is swept along with the multitude, and thereby becomes unified and reconciled with the people, from whom he had always stood aloof with a kind of distrust and even disgust. Thus he gets truly democratized for the first time, and his political note undergoes a corresponding change.

Another result is that he turns his approving look away from England and Europe back to America. Hence he is now a different man from the one who wrote *English Traits* and *Representative Men*; at least he is in a different stage of his career, having reacted from his Re-actionary Epoch to his native land and its institutions, in regard to which he had previously shown such a deep alienation. He can give a smart rap to his friend Carlyle (*Correspondence* 1864) for the latter's hostility to American freedom. "Ten days' residence in this country would have made you the organ of the sanity of England and Europe to us and to them, and have shown you the necessities and aspirations which struggle up in our Free States." This indicates Emerson's new attitude, but it also implies his misconception of England and Europe as well as of Carlyle. The truth is, the European consciousness was very diverse from the American, indeed quite the opposite politically; it would not and perhaps could not understand the real moving principle of our Civil War. We see today that there was required another great war to teach England and Europe the deeper meaning of that national struggle of ours and of its victory. They have come to know that we in our Civil War were fighting for them and for their future quite as much as for ourselves. If the Union had been dissolved, we would probably have had our own wars, and certainly our own national jealousies, which would have given us enough to do at home, with little ability or inclina-

tion to send help abroad. In fact we would have dropped back into Europe's separative, ever-clashing State-system (the so-called European Polyarchy), instead of advancing to the self-harmonizing American Federation.

Already in the preceding Epoch Emerson found during his trip to Europe that Carlyle, however stimulating, could no longer be his spiritual father, such as he met in the early visit of 1833. Both were disappointed with each other and mutually critical. Says Carlyle of Emerson: "I think his talent is not quite so high as I anticipated," for it has evidently gone its own way, different from Carlyleism. Emerson says of Carlyle: "How much more he might do than he ever has done—so you think when you see him." A reciprocal indifference took place then, which now has been intensified to reciprocal opposition. The crude, immediate, tyrannic power of the strongest blow has become Carlyle's gospel of the Great Man, from which Emerson revolts. He will not write any more representative lives during this Epoch; he seems rather disgusted with Biography, which was the favorite subject of his previous Re-actionary Decennium, influenced not a little by Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* and *Cromwell*. On the contrary he is inclined to return to the Transcendental time of his Essays, to his supremely creative era. The only important book which he prints during the present Epoch (1855-1865) is his *Conduct of Life* which is no connected organic work, but a collec-

tion of separate Essays, nine in number, each with its own abstract title as in his first series of Essays. And for the matter he recurs largely to the insertions in his earlier Diary. We note that a thread of his present activity both in writing and lecturing turns back to his first Epoch of the present Period. This thread or strand runs quite opposite to what we have emphasized as the practical or national tendency of this Decennium—the latter sweeping forward to the new goal of his life, the former turning backward and reiterating with fresh force and illustration his earlier achievement.

Accordingly we are to see first in this Epoch two streams of Emersonian activity, in a kind of counter movement, sometimes intermingling yet mostly separate, which we may name after him the two Emersons, the regressive and the progressive, or the returning and the advancing currents of the man's existence. Of course the latter is the distinctive work of this time, and to it the main stress must be given. Still both are to be noted as organic parts of this Practical Epoch, rounding out the whole of it to one complete cycle of the author's Life-Essay. Each part we shall sum up in a brief statement, adding, however, a third resultant complementary portion which gives the final outcome and fulfilment of Emerson in his reconciliation with the institutions of his country. Which three phases we shall entitle Emerson the Regressive (1), the Progressive (2), the Institutional (3).

## I.

## THE REGRESSIVE EMERSON

We are not to forget, then, that the mighty overflow of the new Emerson into his National interest, did not supplant, though it subordinated, his old Transcendental interest. This he still kept alive by a continuous propagandism, even during the distracting times of the anti-slavery agitation in which he also took part. We even hear of lectures on "The Natural Method of Mental Philosophy" in 1858, and similar ones in the later years of this Epoch (See Cabot's Memoir, p. 763-791). Thus it is manifest that Emerson amid all his political excitements and activities never dropped his plan of writing a *Prima Philosophia*, which was to be his great organic system of thought.

He journeyed far and wide giving lectures which scattered the Emersonian spirit and doctrine in many a mental seedfield where they have not failed to sprout and to bear fruit. He remained the chief and for a time almost the only Professor in the traveling Emersonian University, which to our mind is a great educational prophecy as yet unfulfilled. So Emerson keeps propagating his world-view, and what is better, his personality through his presence, which was to many more convincing than his words.

His purely literary creativity during the present Epoch fell off more than ever, if we measure it by the shrinkage in his Journals, Letters, and

Books. Still he was not idle; as already indicated, his activity turned outward, his speeches for occasions increased both in number and in warmth, and expressly in inner coherence. One literary book only he printed during these ten years, and it has altogether more of the past Emerson in it than of the present Emerson, more of the regressive than of the progressive man. This is the book above designated, *The Conduct of Life*, which strikes the reader as something of a reminiscence, in spite of its new points and illustrations. Carlyle gives it the highest praise, "reckoning it the best of all your books." Certainly not the most original; we hear in it the echo of the Essays both as to form and matter.

The Regressive Emerson, therefore, turns back to his previous creative Self and keeps it alive by the written and spoken word. He rightly felt it to be the best and most lasting part of his achievement, and so Time has decreed. But mark the difference: the former anti-traditional Emerson has become a tradition, yea a tradition to himself. His old doctrine shouted: No prescription, no adoption of the old, away with the past; but now the ageing Emerson has lived to be his own past, to which he regresses and which he repeats, re-inforces, and re-propagates. But this phase is not his only or his best Self; he also sweeps forward in a distinctively new path, or better, in a new arc of his total orbit of life.

## II.

## THE PROGRESSIVE EMERSON

Such he is essentially during the present Decennium, progressive, moving with the largest and even startling stride, performing the world-encompassing somersault from hostility against all instituted order to reconciliation with the same as the last spiritual fruition of a long life. This change was wrought in him by a great national experience which also became personal. The Emersonian Civil War runs parallel to the National Civil War, and has quite the same outcome at about the same time.

The progressive Emerson we have already seen moving in his national experience from emphatic hostility to the Nation through an intermediate time of inner and outer discipline doubtless somewhat penitential, to his final reconciliation with and loyalty to the Nation. In his *Diary and Speeches* and also in his *Poems* there are many flashes of a spiritual change taking place within him as regards the political and indeed the whole institutional order. One of the salient examples is the following citation: "We can see that the Constitution and Law in the United States must be written on ethical principles so that the entire power of the spiritual world can be enlisted to hold the loyalty of the citizens." This passage, written in Emerson's *Journal* toward the end of 1863, implies that the moral conviction of the time must be embodied in Law and Constitution if the American

State is to be upheld and perpetuated by its citizens. Here lies also a great node in the evolution of Emerson brought about by the movement of the Nation. Already the necessity of an amendment to the Constitution abolishing slavery had been declared by Lincoln after his decree of Emancipation, which must become a part of the organic Law of the land, ere the old feud between Conscience and the Constitution can be pacified. The Moral taken by itself is not only insufficient but self-undoing till it is institutionalized. Emerson now sees and hints the method of freeing himself from his lifelong dualism, that between the Moral and the Institutional which has so tormented him in the past, but just thereby has been the mainspring of his literary utterance. Still he will occasionally lapse, and again we shall find him asserting the absolutism of the moral or subjective viewpoint.

Already in the first year of the Civil War (August, 1861) he declares: "The War goes on educating us to see the bankruptcy of all narrow views," which we may well take as a personal confession. Then the following sentence also describes himself: "War for the Union is broader than any State policy, so that we are forced still to grope deeper for something catholic and universal, wholesome for all." Is he not questioning his former narrowness? What an overhauling of the past! So he imagines: "The war is a new glass to see all our old things through, how they look." Verily our entire life is being thrown into this melting-pot of

battle to be poured afresh. Listen to the new note of reconciliation: "We will not again disparage America, now that we have seen what men it will bear." A repentant touch also may be felt in this confession, for has not Emerson often slighted and even abused his country and its people with its institutions? Surely he is getting over his furious anti-nationalism, and even his scholarly indifference.

That is certainly the progressive Emerson. Still he is not yet fully evolved. He has become indeed a strong Unionist, but the Union is not first with him, not the end but the means. The abolition of slavery has the primacy to his mind. So he at the start gets very impatient with Lincoln, whom he has yet to understand, crying out: "Happily we are under better guidance than that of statesmen. We are drifting in currents, and the currents know the way." But Lincoln is just the statesman who communes with this supernal guidance, and gets to know its way—a fact which Emerson has yet to find out and to acknowledge. Hence he can still flame up: "See to it, not that the Republic receives no detriment, but that liberty receives no detriment." But without the Republic how can liberty (or emancipation) be won and then secured? Union exists for Emancipation, says Emerson; Emancipation exists for Union, says Lincoln, especially in his famous letter to Greeley, one of the most telling victories of the War, though political and not military. But Emerson keeps snarling his

disapproval at the delay of Emancipation. (See his Journals for 1861-2, in numerous passages.)

So we construe, in general, our progressive Emerson in the early years of the war, deviously advancing, but not yet arrived. Still after the Proclamation of Emancipation, which went into effect January 1, 1863, we note a forward movement with some fluctuations. Toward the close of this year (1863) he is looking back: "Fremont was superseded in 1861 for what his superseders are achieving in 1862," when the time is ripe. And Napoleon is cited as an example, saying: "If I had attempted in 1806 what I had performed in 1807, I had been lost." Lincoln's name is not mentioned, but the example can only mean him as if he were declaring: "If I had done in 1861 what I did in 1862, not only I but the country would have been lost." Thus Emerson begins to comprehend Lincoln's delay of which he himself had so often complained. And he is not far from reproaching himself when he exclaims: "Not an abolitionist, not an idealist, can say without effrontery, I did it." To be sure, Emerson affirms that "this Revolution is the work of no man, but an effervescence of Nature, a surprise to the leaders," something elemental, truly a Supernal Energy. Still that Energy required some man to know it and to fetch it down to the people and to the occasion, and that man was Lincoln, whom Emerson did not yet fully recognize as the time's supreme mediator between that Supernal Energy and the formable but as yet protoplasmic People.

Such are the ups and downs of the soul recording itself in Emerson's Diary during this testful time. Perhaps the most distinctive statement about himself in relation to Lincoln is contained in his Address on the Emancipation Proclamation, September, 1862: "We begin to think that we have underestimated" him in his work hitherto as "an instrument" which "the Divine Providence" has employed. Let us "forget all that we thought his shortcomings, every mistake, every delay." A mellowed Emerson is this, expressing his own penitence. Moreover Lincoln "had the courage to seize the moment," the right psychologic moment, as it is now called, "and such was the felicity attending the action that he has replaced Government in the good graces of mankind"—that is, specially in the good graces of the once anarchic Waldo Emerson. A pivotal confession—Emerson converted by Lincoln to Government, to a faith in the Nation, or at least to the beginning of such a faith. Then he proceeds to a kind of defense of the institution of the State. Very gentle and somewhat veiled is the confession, for Emerson cannot help feeling that he is here unsaying the drift of his whole past life—or at least moving out of it to a great new conception of the Social Order. Here then we may stress the axial point at which Emerson turns away from his anti-institutional attitude to the beginning of his pro-institutional creed, yet not without some questionings and relapses.

## III.

## THE INSTITUTIONAL EMERSON

With such new title, representing the great spiritual change of his life, we may at this point crown Emerson, who has now gone through the school of the Civil War under Lincoln as head master and chief expositor both in word and work. We may say that Emerson has here arrived at a kind of commencement-day, when he receives a living diploma for a vast task done, which is nothing less than a long and busy Period of his entire career completed and indeed transcended. The time of such graduation may be set down in a general way at the close of the War and therewith of Lincoln himself, through whose sudden tragic evanishment Emerson felt uplifted to an insight which we would not be far from wrong in calling the sovereign of all his prophetic intuitions.

Some two years and a half after the last-mentioned address on Emancipation, Emerson makes another speech about Lincoln who had just been assassinated (April, 1865). Thus to the speaker a good stretch of time had been given for a new growth. And certainly he is now looking from his highest height. He calls Lincoln "the true history of the American people of his time," their very embodiment; "step by step he walked before them, slow with their slowness, quickening his march by theirs, the true representative of this Continent." Verily the Occidental Great Man was he, "the pulse

of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thought of their minds articulated by his tongue." Thus Emerson sees that Lincoln speaks to the Folk-Soul as none other, and voices its unworded aspiration. But what is the supreme thing which he imparts and whence? Hereupon Emerson has his word: "There is a serene Providence which rules the fate of Nations, makes little account of time, no account of disasters, conquers alike by what is called defeat or by what is called victory"—in this way Emerson seeks to construe the "serene Providence," which is the Supernal Power over History, often called in this book the World-Spirit; he names it passingly here the Eternal Nemesis. How does it function? "It creates the man for the time, trains him in poverty, inspires his genius, and arms him for his task." It has called forth and educated Lincoln, who is therefore its human vicegerent, who connects this upper Sovereignty with the People. Such is indeed the supremely Great Man—Emerson, the seer, being at his greatest in seeing him.

It is true that Emerson does not distinctly interconnect these three supreme elements of Universal History—his "serene Providence," his "Man for the time," and his "twenty millions of People." They are all three stated, but they lie quite disconnected in his statement, at least not psychically interrelated. This is indeed still the dominantly sentential, discursive Emerson, who does not yet fully see and realize the Great Man, as the incarnate Mediator between the World-Spirit and the Folk-Soul,

such as Lincoln was both in word and deed. Still we are not to forget that glimpses of all three are given in this uplifting, far glancing Address. Nor can we help thinking that Emerson, if he had it to do over again, would write a very different book on Representative Men after this tuition of Lincoln's career. Surely he has come to a new insight into the function of the Great Man. But his productive time is past, he is no longer able to re-construct his world.

This last thought calls up the fact that Emerson himself during the present Decennium seems to have become aware that his creative power was on the decline. In this speech he pensively exclaims while contemplating Lincoln's early death: "Far better this fate than to have lived to be wished away—to have watched the decay of his own faculties." A personal feeling seems to trickle out here, Emerson being now sixty-two. Covert allusions to his advancing eclipse we find in his Diary, for example this (1863): "Let not the old thinker flatter himself. You may have your hour at thirty (says Jove), and lay for a moment your hand on the helm, but not at sixty." Emerson was sixty when he wrote this, and evidently was looking backward at his thirties when he started his revolution known as Transcendentalism, and wrote then his most original productions. So he recurs retrospectively to his Creative Decennium which, he is aware, has gone from him forever; he feels that he is passing into old-age out of his Middle or Second Period. Still

Emerson knows that there are some old men who never lost their elemental energy, or relax their native grip on life till Death in person seems compelled to step in and cut them down still on the battle-line. Emerson finds an example of this sort in John Quincy Adams who can "lay an iron hand on the helm at seventy-five" (*Journal IX*, p. 573). Other faculties survive and can still work in Emerson, but genius has departed. We have to think that if Emerson could have adequately set forth this last supreme experience of himself and his time in a book, it would have been his greatest, having the greatest theme. Still he lived it if he did not write it, hence it is not lost, but remains a shining part of what is, in our opinion, his best work—his life.

Thus Emerson closes probably the most wrenching Epoch of all his years, which we designate his Practical Decennium, in which he has as it were to reverse the whole trend of his previous career, having to make a sharp turn from his more theoretical and contemplative habit of mind long ingrained, to an active participation in public affairs, especially in the political sphere, from which he has heretofore largely held aloof. This is truly his militant Epoch, showing quite a speck of actual belligerency in the hitherto pacific Emerson. Undoubtedly he has waged some hot word-battles in times past; defiant he has shown himself and revolutionary in theory, but he has rather shunned the consequent deeds, as has been repeatedly noticed. But now we are at

last to behold him in practice, obeying the call of the time to take his place on the fighting line of the Nation's conflict. As we reckon the Epoch, it may be deemed his Ten Years' War, running quite parallel to the soul-determining national struggle from 1855 to 1865, a fact already emphasized. This synchronism has, we believe, its deep and indeed universal significance, indicating how the great historic event of the time mirrors itself and unfolds in the great soul of the time, and disciplines the same to its highest vision and fulfilment.

But now we would beseech our order-seeking reader to recall that just here we are closing not only an Epoch, but a Period also, a much larger sweep, in fact one of the three great arcs which make the round of Emerson's life-work. We have named it his Revolutionary Period, with its keenly critical, we may say, negative attitude toward all those forms of associated Man which we call Institutions, and which have persisted from the human starting-point in remaining the most potent and enduring inheritance of the ages. Because of this their traditional character, Emerson, the fortified foe of Tradition during the present Period, put them daringly to the question, summoning them before the tribunal of his thought, interrogating their truth, and even denying their validity for human advancement, though he personally might have to accept them under present conditions of living.

Such is the pervasive leading theme of Emerson's writing, which, as a unique expression in

human dialect, or as mere literature, has proved itself to have an abiding value. But surely the main thing in Emerson is not his literary form, but his spiritual content, his message, which grapples with the deepest interest of humanity, past, present, and future, namely its Institutions, or Forms of Association, in which it is more and more extensively to be gathered and protected, to the goal of a greater freedom of thought and action. If we are able to dive down to the solid bottom of the time's ocean of lather and blather in newspaper, magazine, and other passing record, we shall find that the grand aspiration of the whole race is at present institutional, seeking new and better ways of association in Family, State, Economics, Church, and School. The earth-folk's push is now to be associated universally, with a far-off glimpse of its coming State universal.

It is to the lasting credit of Emerson that he has seized this theme and made it the underlying substrate of his profoundest spiritual activity. This is chiefly what has eternized him, both in his writ and in his life. The Middle Period just closing has shown him battling with the transmitted social order, deeply estranged from his own institutional world, almost ready at times to take flight from civilization, as evolved and handed down from the past. Purgatorial we may call such a discipline of life, really preparatory for the ascent to Paradise, to use a medieval Dantean conception. Or we may take a more modern turn of the same thought famil-

iar to the readers of the last great world-poem, Goethe's *Faust*, which also hints the final redemption of its ever-aspiring hero:

Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,  
Den können wir erlösen.

So the present Period may be said to show the striving Emerson who therein represents the mighty spiritual wrestle not merely of himself but of his people and of his age, till his final deliverance and redemption by that Upper Power, which rules in the movement of History, and which Emerson the thinker has at least once christened as the World-Spirit, glimpsing it now as a redeemer.

And the poet Emerson in his later verse has repeatedly touched upon this last and deepest transformation of himself, imaging it to be a return and renaissance like that of Nature's Spring-tide, a kind rejuvenescence in feeling and consciousness if not in creative intellect. The poem called *May-Day* (published 1867) is full of such exultant even if veiled suggestions, of which we may here catch up one which hints the return of the exiled Adam to his Eden after long separation and estrangement:

And so perchance in Adam's race,  
Of Eden's bower some dream-like trace  
Survived the Flight and swam the Flood  
And wakes the wish in youngest blood  
To tread the forfeit Paradise  
And feed once more the exile's eyes.

# Part Third

## The Reconciled Emerson

### 1865-1882

Such is the cheer-bringing title with which we may now laurel Emerson for the rest of his life. As already indicated, the close of the Civil War can well be taken as the node of his great new transition from his middle to his third and final Period. Or more definitely, we may consider his address on the Assassination of Lincoln as a kind of milestone at which he shows himself rounding out his former stage and pushing forward into a new phase of his total career. Of course the change was somewhat

gradual, and moved along upon the supreme national experience of the time, with which Emerson had the gift to identify himself in his own personal evolution.

Very delightful to us and soul-uplifting is the thought that Emerson passed over into his old-age reconciled with his country and its institutions, and more deeply with History and the World's Order. Thus his life in its whole circuit becomes an object of healing contemplation. In fact just this transition is one of Emerson's great works, if not his greatest, even if it be recorded only in his living and not in his writing. Again we have to think that his life in its completeness is better than his books, though these are by no means to be neglected, being necessary constituents of his total biography. Emerson's example, so worthy on many sides, seems to us at its loftiest in the present deed.

So we are now to leave behind us the unreconciled Emerson, with his long protest against the existent constitution of things, especially against the social order or the realm of associated Man. To voice this protest has been indeed his main creative task, as we have often noted. Many fine and many wise things he has flung us by the way, with gleams of many spiritual provinces; still the main line through all his variety, we may again reiterate, is his critique of Institutions, which, however, is now brought to a close. His career hitherto we have likened to a long purgatorial discipline for the estranged soul which finally reaches its haven of

peace and reconciliation. As an American Purgatory for the denier of Institutions, I see no reason why it should not have a lasting place in literature, as well as Dante's.

I. The present Period is, accordingly, a great stride forward; but we are also to see that it is an even greater sweep backward, as it were, to Emerson's very starting-point. We are, accordingly, to behold him here returning upon himself from the beginning; for this reconciliation with the institutional order is a reconciliation with the prime conditions of his existence, with the very postulates of human being. He was born into the Family, State, Society, even Church, which are thus the pre-suppositions of his life as a rational or civilized man. It has already been narrated how this established world of Institutions took him up quite as an infant, reared him, educated him and gave him a vocation.

But it lay deep in Emerson's individuality as well as in his time and place, as he grew up, to question these transmitted forms of the social order, even to deny them, and to rebel against them, theoretically at least. This he did in the name of freedom: he had no hand in making them, why should they make him? Such was his deepest note of discontent; and in his supreme defiance he challenged the very genesis of his social being, demanding what right have you to determine me even to be?

So we have followed the long career of the protesting, unreconciled Emerson, from his first explo-

sive breach with his traditional calling to his extreme negation, when he is met by the new regenerating experience of the Civil War. The point which we would now emphasize is that Emerson in this last phase moves forward into what may be called his Return, and interlinks with the first stage of his nascent self as the creature of the established order, and so justifies its existence in his own. Thus we behold his life's cycle rounded full and completed, and the man made harmonious out of his original discord of being born, especially born into a traditional world of institutions.

As we conceive it, this final Return is what makes Emerson's life in its basic movement concordant with itself, and most worthy of study and spiritual appropriation. Whatever may be said of his books, his achievement of a completely rounded existence is his final crown, and that is the right goal of all living for the individual man. Not only reconciled in himself, but reconciled in his nearly four score years of living—that is for us the Reconciled Emerson at his deepest and best.

II. Emerson has himself indicated this change from his Second to his Third Period in a number of passages, showing that he was well aware of it. Perhaps it is most directly expressed in his poem called *Terminus* which he read to his son (as the latter reports) in 1866, and which is a confession of his vanished creative power; he must now "economize the failing river," and also "mature the un-fallen fruit." And just that is what Emerson did:

he went back to his old stores and put them in order, "fault of novel germs." Here he recognizes himself as the regressive Emerson, in the matter of writing. The poem was probably written about 1865-6, and helps us date the present Period, the first line striking its key-note: "it is time to be old, to take in sail." So he hears the decree of *Terminus*: "the God of bounds came to me and said, No more." Invention is gone, and "fancy departs." So we may see the old Emerson looking at himself and versifying his look.

Moreover there is in the same poem a peculiar acknowledgment, or rather a kind of lament on the part of Emerson that his powers have gone into decline too early in life, for which he seems to blame with some vehemence his ancestors:

Curse, if thou wilt, thy sires  
 Who when they gave thee breath  
 Failed to bequeath  
 The needful sinew stark at once,  
 But left a legacy of ebbing veins.

III. This melancholy retrospect of waning senescence let us counter with the opposite mood of joyous rejuvenescence which also sings from the ageing poet, especially in his *May Day*, showing sharp contrast with the preceding *Terminus*. The two pieces mirror to us Emerson first gazing gloomily into the sunset of a past life and then scintillating in the sunrise of a new creative hope called up by the vernal glories before his eyes.

The exuberant and for aught Emerson somewhat lengthy downpour of verse called *May Day* was published as a whole in 1867, though it is a collection of poetic ecstasies on Spring's appearance reaching back through many years of the author's life. His son and editor, in the last edition of his Works, says that some lines of this poem are found in the Journals of 1845. In fact there are intimations in it which are traceable much earlier, for instance those on evolution. Thus it may be regarded as a string of beautiful pearls taken probably from all three of Emerson's Periods. It is an anthology of rapturous outbursts on the return of Spring seemingly during a poet's life-time splashing up more or less separately, being not welded together into anything like unity. Still we hear the one keynote sounding through it:

The world rolls round—mistrust it not—  
Befalls again what once befell;  
All things return, both sphere and mote,  
And I shall hear my bluebird's note.

As we construe the poem, the last page has special reference to this Third Period of Emerson, who now addresses Spring with a kind of personal appeal for renewal:

For thou, O Spring, canst renovate  
All that high God did first create.  
Be still his arm and architect,  
Rebuild the ruin, mend the defect.

Such is the affecting prayer of the old and decadent Emerson to the creative season of Nature's renascence, as he recalls the productive energy which Spring once brought him in younger days:

Not less renew the heart and brain,  
 Scatter the sloth, wash out the stain,  
 Make the aged eye sun-clear,  
 To parting soul bring grandeur near.

Emerson was sixty-four years of age when this poem appeared in print. It has many hints of life's renewal symbolized in the Spring; even the renewed Nation after the Civil War seems to be alluded to. But Emerson feels most deeply Spring's reproach to him personally:

Who can like thee our rags upbraid  
 Or taunt us with our hope decayed?

IV. What may we set down as the first and most suggestive instance of the Reconciled Emerson? As we interpret his words and actions, he would probably be most gratified over his reconciliation with Boston which had been during his creative years the chief fortress of his adversary. Undoubtedly he had always had friends and a following in that community; but the spirit of Boston he had hardly won till this last Period. In his middle time he repeatedly denounces the great city of the Puritans as unworthy of its ancestors, and he declares that his verse "shuns to name the noble sires because of unworthy sons." He can bitterly stigmatize its people:

Your town is full of gentle names,  
By patriots once were watchwords made ;  
Those war-cry names are muffled shames  
On recreant sons mislaid.

Still Emerson was a Bostonian, born, reared, and educated in Boston. Underneath all his reproaches, all his hate, there was a still deeper love. He reminds us of the banished Dante whose dearest Florence is the object the poet's furious curses shot through with caresses. So Emerson calls the Bostonians slaves wearing freedom's names, really degenerates of the old Puritanic stock. The ancient courage has disappeared in modern formalism, and he scoffs at "thy bane, respectability"—which mistake our Emerson will not commit though a Bostonian. Still we shall find that he too has a formal side of life, by no means eschewing respectability.

What is the ground of this falling-out with his city, we may say, with his world? The reader of the foregoing narrative has already the essential facts. It was the conservative rock-ribbed Boston spirit shown in his first conflict with his church, which threw the young minister out of his ancestral vocation. We may trace the after-throes of this early battle through his whole middle Period. And the soul of Boston did not take kindly to Transcendentalism. We have already considered how Harvard College, the spiritual center of the community, requited the audacities of Emerson's Divinity Class Address. The fact is that Emerson was banished from Boston, not politically, as Dante was from

Florence, but spiritually. And just that drew his battle-line. The whole middle Period, as already set forth, was first of all a struggle between Emerson and Boston.

So it came about that he would not go back to his native city for his permanent residence when he settled down to his life's task. Still he did not locate too far away from his antagonist, but built his Castle of Defiance at Concord whence he launched his ever-renewed Declaration of Independence, and flung down his gage of battle. So he put himself in line with the famous bellicose deed of the little town, in whose glory his forefathers had part. Concord was, therefore, his ancestral seat, to which he returned in spite of the advantage of having been born in Boston. Traditional Concord became the home and life-long fortress of the anti-traditional Emerson in his attack upon the traditions of Boston in Church, State, Society.

But now unto the world-reconciled Emerson reconciliation has also come with his native city. And Harvard has invited her most distinguished son after long estrangement to deliver the harmonious counterpart to his much decried and decrying Divinity Class Address of epoch-creating memory. And now we may hear the once anti-traditional Emerson, often repeating Boston's Motto, well preserved in antique crystallized Latin: *Sicut patribus, sit Deus nobis!* May that ancient Puritanic God of the fathers be ours still: such is his fervent new prayer of reconciliation. Finally in one of his

latest poems celebrating past fames of his city, the usually placid seer suddenly overflows into a seething gush of benediction, and you may almost hear him give a red-hot kiss to his darling Boston:

A blessing through the ages thus  
Shield all thy roofs and towers!  
*God with the Fathers, so with us,*  
Thou darling town of ours!

V. Some seventeen years may be assigned to this last Period—a long, beautiful sunset, slowly waning indeed yet shining to the close. He kept up his literary activity, though with mental grip continually relaxing, till finally he could no longer arrange his own papers but had to call in for help an editor. Several works of his appeared during this time; here we need mention only his *Natural History of the Intellect* as the sad expiring effort of his ambition to organize into writ his youthful *Philosophia Prima*—a pathetic failure. Thus his powers gradually ebbed away to the close, involving not only his productivity, but also his memory and to a certain extent his speech.

Still he had his reward. Honors flowed in upon him from many quarters, even from foreign lands, during this last Period. As he had become reconciled with the world, so the world had in its turn become reconciled with him, and gave him at last his due recognition. Two long journeys of grace he took—one to the far East, the other to the far West, to the Pyramids and to California, but they

left no record like those earlier trips to the old home. Still they were triumphal in their way.

Early one morning in July, 1872, his house took fire and Emerson was for the first time put to flight from his Castle of Defiance in his old-age. Friends and neighbors rebuilt it for him while he went abroad; when he returned he was welcomed with procession, band of music, arch of triumph, and speeches—an affecting tribute to Emerson the conqueror, having won a supreme victory in Life's long desperate battle, whereof the record is this Biography.

At home in his resurrected mansion, still the outer abode but therewith the strangely foreshowing symbol of his spirit's last transition, he passed away on the 27th day of April, 1882—and yet lives, even with a more fully consummated existence than ever, for he now rises before us in his entire manhood and fulfilment, over time as it were, and no longer eddying fitfully in the strown succession of his years and their scattered labors. Now he lives for us his whole life in its wholeness, and therein has won his immortal portion.



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