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THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERATURE
IN THE UNITED STATES
RECORDED BY THE MEN
WHO MADE IT

EDITED BY
EDMUND WILSON

VOLUME I
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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GROSSET & DUNLAP • NEW YORK

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For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round.

HERMAN MELVILLE

FOREWORD

THIS BOOK is not a critical anthology, but a collection of literary documents. It is an attempt to present a chronicle of the progress of literature in the United States as one finds it recorded by those who had some part in creating that literature.

But this statement requires qualification. I have had to exclude general discussions, even where these were interesting, of literary principles and tendencies, and to confine myself to pieces which deal with particular writers, because I should not have had space to cover both kinds of criticism in a manageable volume. The best way to understand the general is, in any case, to study the concrete; and in the course of these examinations of individual writers, one gets, though by glimpses, a fairly complete view of the larger backgrounds and movements. But even within these limitations I have restricted the scope further by excluding essays and reviews by professional literary critics. There would, of course, be a large field to choose from in this department, but a collection of critical essays would be quite another kind of anthology. I was aiming to show the effect on one another of the first-rate American figures; and these writers,

though, like Poe or Howells, they have sometimes practiced criticism, have never simply been scholars or reviewers, but have always expressed themselves in literature in some more direct way. What I am trying to present, in fact, is the developing self-consciousness of the American genius from the moment in the middle of the last century when we first really had a literature worth talking about to the moment toward the end of the second decade of ours when it was plain that, following the cultural slump of the period after the Civil War, a new movement had got under way.

For this purpose I have brought together materials of the most varied shapes and styles: essays, monographs, memoirs, journals, letters, satires, dialogues, poems. And I have violated my American canon by admitting a few pieces by foreigners that show the repercussions of American books thrown back to us from abroad and the consciousness of Europe of *us*. I have also departed from the program suggested by my title of showing only the moments when genius becomes aware of its kin by including a few examples of the shock of recognition which occurs when the very good writer is confronted by the very bad. It requires gifts just as rare—since they are just the same gifts—to be fully aware of the bad as to be fully aware of the good.

As a hater of extracts and omissions, I have printed the whole of everything.

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I have especially to thank the authorities of the Harvard University Library, who have greatly facilitated my researches; Mr. Clifton Joseph Furness of Cambridge, who has generously advised me out of his immense knowledge of Walt Whitman, and who has loaned me materials and allowed me to quote from his own unpublished manuscripts; Mr. Ferris Greenslet and Mr. R. N. Linscott of Houghton Mifflin, to whom I am indebted for loan of materials and help of other kinds; and Miss Helen Gould, who has worked with me with expert skill on the mechanical side of the book.

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

I HAVE ADDED, in this new edition, with the permission of Harper and Brothers, a second section of Mark Twain's essay, *Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses,* discovered recently among the Mark Twain papers by Mr. Bernard De Voto and published in the *New England Quarterly.* I may also take this opportunity to mention another piece which I should have liked to include in *The Shock of Recognition* but for which I was unable to get permission: the essay called *Mark Twain: An Inquiry,* which stands as the last chapter of Howells' book *My Mark Twain* and which should stand here beside the personal memoir. This essay, which first appeared in the *North American Review* of February, 1901, was written to celebrate the occasion of Mark Twain's return to the United States, after his five years spent abroad, and of the first publication of his collected works. Mark Twain had left the States a popular humorist and had come back a great public figure, who had been praised and made much of in Europe, and who was now taken seriously at home by the younger generation as he had hardly ever been by his contemporaries. This essay is the most extensive critical study that Howells devoted to the work of his friend, and it has a unique interest in attempting to explain this work in terms of Mark Twain's Western origins, which Howells was in a position to understand so much better than the Eastern critics.

I should like to recommend, also, as supplementary reading, Thomas Beer's little book on Stephen Crane: *Stephen Crane: A Study in American Letters*—to which, on rereading it since *The Shock* was compiled, I have felt that I have done something less than justice in my introduction to the section on Crane. The more recent and scholarly writers on Crane complain that Beer is most unreliable, that his book is full of errors of fact; but it will serve to fill in, by its picture of Crane's period, a chapter of our literary history which I have otherwise rather slighted: the Bohemian "end of the century," when people like Stephen Crane and Harold Frederic and Henry Harland would begin as American realists, champions of Art and Truth, fighting the genteel tradition, and end up in Paris or London as journalists or fashionable novelists. Thomas Beer—not himself a writer on a level with the figures in this book—had a special relish for the nineties and the early nineteen hundreds and has given the sense of this moment of Mouquin's and *M'lle New York,* of Hearst papers and President McKinley, of *Yellow Book* writers and of young correspondents conducting themselves gallantly in minor wars, of efforts to grow in American soil the windblown seeds from Europe of Aestheticism and Naturalism, as no other non-contemporary has been able to give it.

I have taken the occasion, also, to correct a number of errors of the kind that can be easily corrected; but I shall have to explain here—to avoid more extensive changes in the plates—that Mr. Ferris Greenslet of Houghton, Mifflin has been able to set me right in my account, in the last paragraph of page 743, of the biography of John Hay that Herbert Croly was discouraged from wr'ting by an interview with Henry Adams. It was the publishers, it seems, not the Hay family, who had selected Herbert Croly to do the biography of Hay, and he had actually signed a contract and been at work for some time on Hay's papers when his desolating meeting with Adams had the effect of making him throw up the job.

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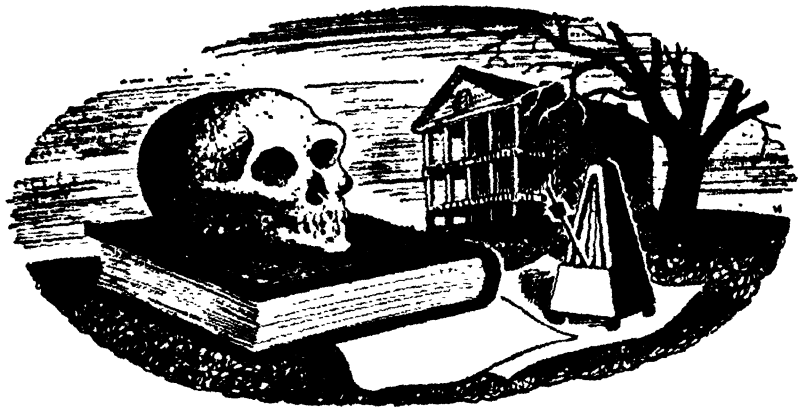
NOTE: Volume II of *The Shock of Recognition* is UL–18 in Grosset's Universal Library. It is devoted to twentieth-century essays and includes pages 659–1290.

THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION



THIS ESSAY BY LOWELL on Poe was written at Poe's request for a series called *Our Contributors* in *Graham's Magazine*. It appeared in the issue of February 1845. Poe at that time was thirty-six and Lowell was twenty-six. They had both briefly in the early eighteen forties been editors of magazines and had published one another's writings; and their letters to one another had been cordial and full of appreciation. This essay is characteristic of the generous early Lowell. But when Poe died in 1849 and Rufus Griswold, his literary executor, was getting out his edition of Poe's work, this article of Lowell's appeared in it in a curiously different form. The praise of Poe as a critic in the early part of the essay had completely disappeared, and the original ending had been clipped, and a new and rather disparaging one substituted.

It is true that Poe had in the meantime persistently attacked Longfellow for plagiarism, that he had sneered at the Abolitionists, with whose cause the young Lowell had allied himself, and that he had finally published a review of Lowell's *Fable for Critics* in which he had characterized it as "an irrevocable *faux pas*" and said that it had "lowered" Lowell "at least 50 per cent in the literary public opinion."

On the other hand, it is possible, as Mr. A. H. Quinn, the biographer of Poe, suggests, that Griswold may have forged these alterations. Griswold detested Poe: he lied about him in his memoir, he circulated false scandals about him, and he completely rewrote those letters of Poe's which he quoted in this edition, in such a way as to put himself in a favorable light and Poe in an unfavorable one. One of Griswold's chief sources of income was the editing of anthologies of American writing, and Lowell's sarcastic description of the "babble" that "is kept up about a national literature" and the feebleness of American criticism would have been contrary to Griswold's interests.

Lowell did not repudiate this version of his essay, but on the other hand he never reprinted it. Touchy though he sometimes was, he seems, on the basis of his letters, to have preserved in relation to Poe a certain equanimity. He wrote to his friend Charles F. Briggs in January 1845, just before his notice had come out: "From a paragraph I saw yesterday in the *Tribune* I find that Poe has been at me in the *Mirror.* He has at least that chief element of a critic—a disregard of persons. He will be a very valuable coadjutor to you." (Poe and Briggs were both on the staff of the *Broadway Journal.*) His opinion of Griswold appears in a later letter to Briggs, who had written him that Griswold had been circulating "some abominable lies" about Poe: "The Rev. Mr. Griswold is an ass, and, what's more, a knave, and even if he had said anything against Poe, I should not have believed it. But neither he nor anyone else ever did. I remain of my old opinion about the allusion to Mrs. Longfellow.[1] I remain of my old opinion about Poe, and I have no doubt that Poe

[1]Poe had been attacking Longfellow and another poet named James Aldrich; and an anonymous writer who called himself "Outis" had made an attempt to defend them. In his *Reply to "Outis,"* Poe had just written: "There can be no doubt in the world . . . that 'Outis' considers me a fool: the thing is sufficiently plain; and this opinion on the part of 'Outis' is what mankind have agreed to denominate an idea; and this idea is also entertained by Mr. Aldrich, and by Mr. Longfellow—and by Mrs. 'Outis' and her seven children —and by Mrs. Aldrich and hers—and by Mrs. Longfellow and hers —including the grandchildren and great grandchildren, if any, who

estimates Longfellow's poetical abilities more highly than I do perhaps, but I nevertheless do not like his two last articles. I still think Poe an invaluable contributor, but I like such articles as his review of Miss Barrett better than these last." Later, Lowell called on Poe in New York. Poe had been drinking, says Briggs, and Lowell seems to have got rather a bad impression of him: "Poe, I am afraid," he wrote Briggs on August 21, 1845, "is wholly lacking in that element of manhood which, for want of a better name, we call character. It is something quite distinct from genius—though all great geniuses are endowed with it. Hence we always think of Dante Alighieri, of Michelangelo, of Will Shakespeare, of John Milton—while of such men as Gibbon and Hume we merely recall the works, and think of them as the author of this and that. As I prognosticated, I have made Poe my enemy by doing him a service.

"In the last *Broadway Journal* he has accused me of plagiarism, and misquoted Wordsworth to sustain his charge.

> Armor rustling on the walls,
> On the blood of Clifford calls,

he quotes, italicizing *rustling* as the point of resemblance. The word is really *rusting*—you will find the passage in Wordsworth's *Song Sung at Brougham Castle,* etc. My metaphor was drawn from some old Greek or Roman story which was in my mind, and which Poe, who makes such a scholar of himself, ought to have known. There is a similar incident in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale,* probably from the same source. Anyone who had ever read the whole of Wordsworth's poem would see that there was no resemblance between the two passages. Poe wishes to kick down the ladder by which he rose. He is welcome. But he does not attack me at a weak point. He probably cannot conceive of anybody's writing for anything but a newspaper reputation or for posthumous fame, which is much the same thing magnified by

will be instructed to transmit the idea in unadulterated purity down an infinite vista of generations yet to come."

Lowell had complained to Briggs of what he called "the grossness and vulgarity" of this.

distance. I have quite other aims." In the *Fable for Critics,* though he still speaks of Poe's "genius," he deals with him perfunctorily and briefly, and he makes the same kind of criticism—"the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind"—as in the new ending to the *Graham's* article. Since, however, the *Fable for Critics* had come out in 1848, Griswold might have been echoing this.

The version of Lowell's article published in the Griswold edition of Poe has been reprinted in the Woodberry and the Stoddard editions; but the original, as far as I know, though it is quoted by Mr. Quinn in his biography, is here reprinted for the first time in full. I have indicated the later changes and made only a few corrections of what are obviously typographical errors. Poe had substituted *Lenore* for another poem quoted by Lowell. He wrote Lowell that he was making this change: one wonders whether it was Poe himself who added: "How exquisite, too, is the rhythm!"

The essay, though it did not appear till February 1845, had been written in 1844, so that Lowell does not mention *The Raven,* which had come out the month before and created a considerable sensation.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE SITUATION of American literature is anomalous. It has no center, or, if it have, it is like that of the sphere of Hermes. It is divided into many systems, each revolving round its several sun, and often presenting to the rest only the faint glimmer of a milk-and-watery way. Our capital city, unlike London or Paris, is not a great central heart, from which life and vigor radiate to the extremities, but resembles more an isolated umbilicus, stuck down as near as may be to the center of the land, and seeming rather to tell a legend of former usefulness than to serve any present need. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, each has its literature almost more distinct than those of the different dialects of Germany; and the Young Queen of the West has also one of her own, of which some articulate rumor barely has reached us dwellers by the Atlantic. Meanwhile, a great babble is kept up concerning a national literature, and the country, having delivered itself of the ugly likeness of a paint-bedaubed, filthy savage, smilingly dandles the rag baby upon her maternal knee, as if it were veritable flesh and blood, and would grow timely to bone and sinew.

But, before we have an American literature, we must have

an American criticism. We have, it is true, some scores of "American Macaulays," the faint echoes of defunct originalities, who will discourse learnedly at an hour's notice upon matters, to be even a sciolist in which would ask the patient study and self-denial of years—but, with a few rare exceptions, America is still to seek a profound, original, and aesthetic criticism. Our criticism, which from its nature might be expected to pass most erudite judgment upon the merit of thistles, undertakes to decide upon

The plant and flower of light.

There is little life in it, little conscientiousness, little reverence; nay, it has seldom the mere physical merit of fearlessness. It may be best likened to an intellectual gathering of chips to keep the critical pot of potatoes or reputation a-boiling. Too often, indeed, with the cast garments of some pigmy Gifford, or other foreign notoriety, which he has picked up at the ragfair of literature, our critic sallies forth, a self-dubbed Amadis, armed with a pen, which, more wonderful even than the fairy-gifts in an old ballad, becomes at will either the lance couched terribly at defiant windmills, or the trumpet for a halfpenny pæan.[1]

Perhaps there is no task more difficult than the just criticism of contemporary literature. It is even more grateful to give praise where it is needed than where it is deserved, and friendship so often seduces the iron stylus of justice into a vague flourish, that she writes what seems rather like an epitaph than a criticism. Yet if praise be given as an alms, we could not drop so poisonous a one into any man's hat. The critic's ink may suffer equally from too large an infusion of nutgalls or of sugar. But it is easier to be generous than to be just, though there are some who find it equally hard to be either,[2] and we might readily put faith in that fabulous direction to the hiding-place of truth, did we judge from the amount of water which we usually find mixed with it.

[1]This paragraph and the last sentence of the paragraph before are omitted in the text of 1850. E. W.

[2]*Though there are some who find it equally hard to be either* is omitted in the text of 1850. E. W.

We were very naturally led into some remarks on American criticism by the subject of the present sketch. Mr. Poe is at once the most discriminating, philosophical, and fearless critic upon imaginative works who has written in America. It may be that we should qualify our remark a little, and say that he *might be*, rather than that he always *is*, for he seems sometimes to mistake his phial of prussic-acid for his inkstand. If we do not always agree with him in his premises, we are, at least, satisfied that his deductions are logical, and that we are reading the thoughts of a man who thinks for himself, and says what he thinks, and knows well what he is talking about. His analytic power would furnish forth bravely some score of ordinary critics. We do not know him personally, but we suspect him for a man who has one or two pet prejudices on which he prides himself. These sometimes allure him out of the strict path of criticism,[1] but, where they do not interfere, we would put almost entire confidence in his judgments. Had Mr. Poe had the control of a magazine of his own, in which to display his critical abilities, he would have been as autocratic, ere this, in America, as Professor Wilson has been in England; and his criticisms, we are sure, would have been far more profound and philosophical than those of the Scotsman. As it is, he has squared out blocks enough to build an enduring pyramid, but has left them lying carelessly and unclaimed in many different quarries.[2]

Remarkable experiences are usually confined to the inner life of imaginative men, but Mr. Poe's biography displays a vicissitude and peculiarity of interest such as is rarely met with. The offspring of a romantic marriage, and left an orphan at an early age, he was adopted by Mr. Allan, a wealthy Virginian, whose barren marriage bed seemed the warranty of a large estate to the young poet. Having received a classical education in England, he returned home and entered the University of Virginia, where, after an

[1]We cannot but think that this was the case in his review of W. E. Channing's poems, in which we are sure that there is much which must otherwise have challenged Mr. Poe's hearty liking. J. R. L.

[2]This paragraph is omitted in the text of 1850. E. W.

extravagant course, followed by reformation at the last extremity, he was graduated with the highest honors of his class. Then came a boyish attempt to join the fortunes of the insurgent Greeks, which ended at St. Petersburg, where he got into difficulties through want of a passport, from which he was rescued by the American consul and sent home.[1] He now entered the military academy at West Point, from which he obtained a dismissal on hearing of the birth of a son to his adopted father, by a second marriage, an event which cut off his expectations as an heir.[2] The death of Mr. Allan, in whose will his name was not mentioned, soon after relieved him of all doubt in this regard, and he committed himself at once to authorship for a support. Previously to this, however, he had published (in 1827) a small volume of poems, which soon ran through three editions, and excited high expectations of its author's future distinction in the minds of many competent judges.

That no certain augury can be drawn from a poet's earliest lispings there are instances enough to prove. Shakespeare's first poems, though brimful of vigor and youth and picturesqueness, give but a very faint promise of the directness, condensation, and overflowing moral of his maturer works. Perhaps, however, Shakespeare is hardly a case in point, his *Venus and Adonis* having been published, we believe, in his twenty-sixth year. Milton's Latin verses show tenderness, a fine eye for nature, and a delicate appreciation of classic models, but give no hint of the author of a new style in poetry. Pope's youthful pieces have all the sing-song, wholly

[1]This trip to Europe was a myth, invented by Poe to cover up the fact that, after quarreling with Allan, his foster father, in 1827, he had enlisted in the United States Army as "Edgar A. Perry" and had, first as private, then as sergeant major, served from May 26, 1827, to April 15, 1829, in Boston Harbor and Charleston Harbor. E. W.

[2]Poe announced his intention of getting himself dismissed from West Point in a letter of January 3, 1831; John Allan's first child by his second wife was not born till August 23. Mr. A. H. Quinn says that it is nevertheless true that Allan's second marriage had something to do with Poe's decision to give up his military career. E. W.

unrelieved by the glittering malignity and eloquent irreligion of his later productions. Collins' callow namby-pamby died and gave no sign of the vigorous and original genius which he afterward displayed. We have never thought that the world lost more in the "marvelous boy," Chatterton, than a very ingenious imitator of obscure and antiquated dullness. Where he becomes original (as it is called) the interest of ingenuity ceases and he becomes stupid. Kirke White's promises were endorsed by the respectable name of Mr. Southey, but surely with no authority from Apollo. They have the merit of a traditional piety, which, to our mind, if uttered at all, had been less objectionable in the retired closet of a diary, and in the sober raiment of prose. They do not clutch hold of the memory with the drowning pertinacity of Watts'; neither have they the interest of his occasional simple, lucky beauty. Burns, having fortunately been rescued by his humble station from the contaminating society of the "best models," wrote well and naturally from the first. Had he been unfortunate enough to have had an educated taste, we should have had a series of poems from which, as from his letters, we could sift here and there a kernel from the mass of chaff. Coleridge's youthful efforts give no promise whatever of that poetical genius which produced at once the wildest, tenderest, most original and most purely imaginative poems of modern times. Byron's *Hours of Idleness* would never find a reader except from an intrepid and indefatigable curiosity. In Wordsworth's first preludings there is but a dim foreboding of the creator of an era. From Southey's early poems, a safer augury might have been drawn. They show the patient investigator, the close student of history, and the unwearied explorer of the beauties of predecessors, but they give no assurances of a man who should add aught to [the] stock of household words, or to the rarer and more sacred delights of the fireside or the arbor. The earliest specimens of Shelley's poetic mind already, also, give tokens of that ethereal sublimation in which the spirit seems to soar above the region of words, but leaves its body, the verse, to be entombed, without hope of resurrection, in a mass of them. Cowley is generally instanced as a wonder of precocity. But

his early insipidities show only a capacity for rhyming and for the metrical arrangement of certain conventional combinations of words, a capacity wholly dependent on a delicate physical organization, and an unhappy memory. An early poem is only remarkable when it displays an effort of *reason,* and the rudest verses in which we can trace some conception of the ends of poetry are worth all the miracles of smooth juvenile versification. A schoolboy, one would say, might acquire the regular seesaw of Pope merely by an association with the motion of the playground tilt.

Mr. Poe's early productions show that he could see through the verse to the spirit beneath, and that he already had a feeling that all the life and grace of the one must depend on and be modulated by the will of the other. We call them the most remarkable boyish poems that we have ever read. We know of none that can compare with them for maturity of purpose, and a nice understanding of the effects of language and meter. Such pieces are only valuable when they display what we can only express by the contradictory phrase of *innate experience.* We copy one of the shorter poems written when the author was only *fourteen!*[1] There is a little dimness in the filling up, but the grace and symmetry of the outline are such as few poets ever attain. There is a smack of ambrosia about it.

To Helen

Helen, thy beauty is to me
  Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
  The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
  To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
  Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
  To the glory that was Greece
  And the grandeur that was Rome.

[1]The first version of *To Helen* may have been written when Poe was a boy, but it was included only in his third book of poems, published in 1831, and then in a form much inferior to the final version

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand!
The agate lamp within thy hand,
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

It is the *tendency* of the young poet that impresses us. Here is no "withering scorn," no heart "blighted" ere it has safely got into its teens, none of the drawing-room sansculottism which Byron had brought into vogue. All is limpid and serene, with a pleasant dash of the Greek Helicon in it. The melody of the whole, too, is remarkable. It is not of that kind which can be demonstrated arithmetically upon the tips of the fingers. It is of that finer sort which the inner ear alone can estimate. It seems simple, like a Greek column, because of its perfection. In a poem named *Ligeia,* under which title he intended to personify the music of nature, our boy-poet gives us the following exquisite picture:

Ligeia! Ligeia!
My beautiful one,
Whose harshest idea
Will to melody run,
Say, is it thy will
On the breezes to toss,
Or, capriciously still,
Like the lone albatross,
Incumbent on night,
As she on the air,
To keep watch with delight
On the harmony there?

John Neal, himself a man of genius, and whose lyre has been too long capriciously silent, appreciated the high merit of these and similar passages, and drew a proud horoscope for their author. The extracts which we shall presently make from Mr. Poe's later poems fully justify his predictions.[1]

Mr. Poe has that indescribable something which men

given by Lowell. This version was not published till 1843, when Poe was thirty-four. E. W.

[1]This sentence is omitted in the text of 1850. E. W.

have agreed to call *genius*. No man could ever tell us precisely what it is, and yet there is none who is not inevitably aware of its presence and its power. Let talent writhe and contort itself as it may, it has no such magnetism. Larger of bone and sinew it may be, but the wings are wanting. Talent sticks fast to earth, and its most perfect works have still one foot of clay. Genius claims kindred with the very workings of Nature herself, so that a sunset shall seem like a quotation from Dante or Milton, and if Shakespeare be read in the very presence of the sea itself, his verses shall but seem nobler for the sublime criticism of ocean. Talent may make friends for itself, but only genius can give to its creations the divine power of winning love and veneration. Enthusiasm cannot cling to what itself is unenthusiastic, nor will he ever have disciples who has not himself impulsive zeal enough to be a disciple. Great wits are allied to madness only inasmuch as they are possessed and carried away by their demon, while talent keeps him, as Paracelsus did, securely prisoned in the pommel of its sword. To the eye of genius, the veil of the spiritual world is ever rent asunder, that it may perceive the ministers of good and evil who throng continually around it. No man of mere talent ever flung his inkstand at the devil.

When we say that Mr. Poe has genius, we do not mean to say that he has produced evidence of the highest. But to say that he possesses it at all is to say that he needs only zeal, industry, and a reverence for the trust reposed in him, to achieve the proudest triumphs and the greenest laurels. If we may believe the Longinuses and Aristotles of our newspapers, we have quite too many geniuses of the loftiest order to render a place among them at all desirable, whether for its hardness of attainment or its seclusion. The highest peak of our Parnassus is, according to these gentlemen, by far the most thickly settled portion of the country, a circumstance which must make it an uncomfortable residence for individuals of a poetical temperament, if love of solitude be, as immemorial tradition asserts, a necessary part of their idiosyncrasy. There is scarce a gentleman or lady of respectable moral character to whom these liberal dispensers of the laurel

have not given a ticket to that once sacred privacy, where they may elbow Shakespeare and Milton at leisure. A transient visitor, such as a critic must necessarily be, sees these legitimate proprietors in common, parading their sacred enclosure as thick and buzzing as flies, each with "Entered according to act of Congress" labeled securely to his back. Formerly one Phœbus, a foreigner, we believe, had the monopoly of transporting all passengers thither, a service for which he provided no other conveyance than a vicious horse, named Pegasus, who could, of course, carry but one at a time, and even that but seldom, his back being a ticklish seat, and one fall proving generally enough to damp the ardor of the most zealous aspirant. The charges, however, were moderate, as the poet's pocket formerly occupied that position in regard to the rest of his outfit which is now more usually conceded to his head. But we must return from our little historical digression.[1]

Mr. Poe has two of the prime qualities of genius, a faculty of vigorous yet minute analysis, and a wonderful fecundity of imagination. The first of these faculties is as needful to the artist in words, as a knowledge of anatomy is to the artist in colors or in stone. This enables him to conceive truly, to maintain a proper relation of parts, and to draw a correct outline, while the second groups, fills up, and colors. Both of these Mr. Poe has displayed with singular distinctness in his prose works, the last predominating in his earlier tales, and the first in his later ones. In judging of the merit of an author, and assigning him his niche among our household gods, we have a right to regard him from our own point of view, and to measure him by our own standard. But, in estimating[2] his works, we must be governed by his own design, and, placing them by the side of his own ideal, find how much is wanting. We differ with[3] Mr. Poe in his opinions of the objects of art. He esteems that object to be the

[1]The latter part of this paragraph, from the sentence that begins, *There is scarce a gentleman or lady . . .*, is omitted in the text of 1850. E. W.

[2]In the text of 1850 this phrase reads, *in estimating the amount of power displayed in his works.* E. W.

[3]*With* has been changed to *from* in the edition of 1850. E. W.

creation of Beauty,[1] and perhaps it is only in the definition of that word that we disagree with him. But in what we shall say of his writings we shall take his own standard as our guide. The temple of the god of song is equally accessible from every side, and there is room enough in it for all who bring offerings, or seek an oracle.

In his tales, Mr. Poe has chosen to exhibit his power chiefly in that dim region which stretches from the very utmost limits of the probable into the weird confines of superstition and unreality. He combines in a very remarkable manner two faculties which are seldom found united: a power of influencing the mind of the reader by the impalpable shadows of mystery, and a minuteness of detail which does not leave a pin or a button unnoticed. Both are, in truth, the natural results of the predominating quality of his mind, to which we have before alluded, analysis. It is this which distinguishes the artist. His mind at once reaches forward to the effect to be produced. Having resolved to bring about certain emotions in the reader, he makes all subordinate parts tend strictly to the common center. Even his mystery is mathematical to his own mind. To him x is a known quantity all along. In any picture that he paints, he understands the chemical properties of all his colors. However vague some of his figures may seem, however formless the shadows, to him the outline is as clear and distinct as that of a geometrical diagram. For this reason Mr. Poe has no sympathy with *Mysticism*. The Mystic dwells *in* the mystery, is enveloped with it; it colors all his thoughts; it affects his optic nerve especially, and the commonest things get a rainbow edging from it. Mr. Poe, on the other hand, is a spectator *ab extra*. He analyzes, he dissects, he watches.

> ——with an eye serene,
> The very pulse of the machine,

for such it practically is to him, with wheels and cogs and piston rods all working to produce a certain end. It is this that makes him so good a critic. Nothing balks him, or

[1]Mr. P.'s proposition is here perhaps somewhat too *generally* stated. Editor of *Graham's Magazine*.

throws him off the scent, *except now and then a prejudice.*[1]

This analyzing tendency of his mind balances the poetical, and, by giving him the patience to be minute, enables him to throw a wonderful reality into his most unreal fancies. A monomania he paints with great power. He loves to dissect one of these cancers of the mind, and to trace all the subtle ramifications of its roots. In raising images of horror, also, he has a strange success; conveying to us sometimes by a dusky hint some terrible *doubt* which is the secret of all horror. He leaves to imagination the task of finishing the picture, a task to which only she is competent.

> For much imaginary work was there;
> Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind,
> That for Achilles' image stood his spear
> Grasped in an armed hand; himself behind
> Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind.

We have hitherto spoken chiefly of Mr. Poe's *collected* tales, as by them he is more widely known than by those published since in various magazines, and which we hope soon to see collected. In these he has more strikingly displayed his analytic propensity.[2]

[1]The last two sentences of this paragraph are omitted in the text of 1850. Lowell was evidently referring to Poe's prejudice against New England. E. W.

[2]Since the publication of the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque,* Mr. P. has written, for this and other journals, the following *tales,* independently of essays, criticisms, etc.: *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt, Never Bet Your Head, A Tale of the Ragged Mountains, The Masque of the Red Death, The Colloquy of Monos and Una, The Landscape Garden, The Pit and the Pendulum, The Tell-Tale Heart, The Black Cat, The Man of the Crowd, The System of Doctors Tarr and Fether, The Spectacles, The Elk, The Business Man, The Premature Burial, The Oblong-Box, Thou Art the Man, Eleonora, Three Sundays in a Week, The Island of the Fay, Life in Death, The Angel of the Odd, The Literary Life of Thingum-Bob, The Descent into the Maelstrom, The 1002d Tale of Scheherazade, Mesmeric Revelation, The Murders in the Rue Morgue, The Purloined Letter,* and *The Gold-Bug.* He is also the author of the late *Balloon-Hoax.* The *Grotesque and Arabesque* included twenty-five tales.

This paragraph with its note is omitted in the text of 1850. E. W.

Beside the merit of conception, Mr. Poe's writings have also that of form. His style is highly finished, graceful, and truly classical. It would be hard to find a living author who had displayed such varied powers. As an example of his style we would refer to one of his tales, *The House of Usher,* in the first volume of his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque.* It has a singular charm for us, and we think that no one could read it without being strongly moved by its serene and somber beauty. Had its author written nothing else it would alone have been enough to stamp him as a man of genius, and the master of a classic style. In this tale occurs one of the most beautiful of his poems. It loses greatly by being taken out of its rich and appropriate setting, but we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of copying it here. We know no modern poet who might not have been justly proud of it.

The Haunted Palace

In the greenest of our valleys,
  By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
  Radiant palace—rear'd its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion—
  It stood there!
Never seraph spread a pinion
  Over fabric half so fair!

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
  On its roof did float and flow,
(This—all this—was in the olden
  Time, long ago,)
And every gentle air that dallied,
  In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
  A winged odor went away.

Wanderers in that happy valley,
  Through two luminous windows, saw
Spirits moving musically,
  To a lute's well-tuned law,

Round about a throne where, sitting
(Porphyrogene!)
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assail'd the monarch's high estate.
(Ah, let us mourn!—for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate!)
And round about his home the glory
That blush'd and bloom'd,
Is but a dim remember'd story
Of the old time entomb'd.

And travelers, now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms, that move fantastically
To a discordant melody,
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door,
A hideous throng rush out forever,
And laugh—but smile no more.

Was ever the wreck and desolation of a noble mind so musically sung?

A writer in the *London Foreign Quarterly Review,* who did some faint justice to Mr. Poe's poetical abilities, speaks of his resemblance to Tennyson. The resemblance, if there be any, is only in so sensitive an ear to melody as leads him sometimes into quaintness, and the germ of which may be traced in his earliest poems, published several years before the first of Tennyson's appeared.

We copy one more of Mr. Poe's poems, whose effect cannot fail of being universally appreciated.

LENORE

Ah, broken is the golden bowl!—the spirit flown forever!
Let the bell toll!—a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river.
And, Guy De Vere, hast *thou* no tear?—weep now or never more!
See, on yon drear and rigid bier, low lies thy love, Lenore!
Ah, let the burial rite be read—the funeral song be sung—
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young—
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young!

Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride,
And, when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her—that she died.
How shall the ritual then be read?—the requiem how be sung
By you—by yours the evil eye—by yours the slanderous tongue,
That did to death the innocence that died and died so young?

Peccavimus; but rave not thus! and let a Sabbath song
Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel no wrong.
The sweet Lenore hath "gone before," with Hope that flew beside,
Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride—
For her the fair and *debonair* that now so lowly lies,
The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes—
The life still there, upon her hair—the death upon her eyes.

Avaunt!—tonight my heart is light; no dirge will I upraise,
But wait the angel on her flight with a pæan of old days!
Let *no* bell toll!—lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed mirth,
Should catch the note as it doth float up from the damnéd earth.
To friends above, from fiends below, the indignant ghost is riven—
From Hell unto a high estate far up within the Heaven—
From moan and groan to a golden throne beside the King of Heaven.

How exquisite, too, is the rhythm!

Beside his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque,* and some works unacknowledged, Mr. Poe is the author of *Arthur Gordon Pym,* a romance, in two volumes, which has

run through many editions in London; of a system of Conchology, of a digest and translation of Lemmonnier's *Natural History,* and has contributed to several reviews in France, in England, and in this country. He edited the *Southern Literary Messenger* during its novitiate, and by his own contributions gained it most of its success and reputation. He was also, for some time, the editor of this magazine, and our readers will bear testimony to his ability in that capacity.

Mr. Poe is still in the prime of life, being about thirty-two years of age, and has probably as yet given but an earnest of his powers. As a critic, he has shown so superior an ability that we cannot but hope that he will collect his essays of this kind and give them a more durable form. They would be a very valuable contribution to our literature, and would fully justify all we have said in his praise. We could refer to many others of his poems than those we have quoted, to prove that he is the possessor of a pure and original vein. His tales and essays have equally shown him a master in prose. It is not for us to assign him his definite rank among contemporary authors, but we may be allowed to say that we know of *none* who has displayed more varied and striking abilities.

In the text of 1850 the sentence which here introduces The Haunted Palace *is changed to read as follows:* In this tale occurs, perhaps, one of the most beautiful of his poems; *and it is made to end the paragraph. The following new ending has been substituted:*

The great masters of imagination have seldom resorted to the vague and the unreal as sources of effect. They have not used dread and horror alone, but only in combination with other qualities, as means of subjugating the fancies of their readers. The loftiest muse has ever a household and fireside charm about her. Mr. Poe's secret lies mainly in the skill with which he has employed the strange fascination of mystery and terror. In this his success is so great and striking as to deserve the name of art, not artifice. We cannot call his materials the noblest or purest, but we must concede to him the highest merit of construction.

As a critic, Mr. Poe was aesthetically deficient. Unerring in his analysis of dictions, meters, and plots, he seemed wanting in the faculty of perceiving the profounder ethics of art. His criticisms are, however, distinguished for scientific precision and coherence of logic. They have the exactness, and, at the same time, the coldness of mathematical demonstrations. Yet they stand in strikingly refreshing contrast with the vague generalisms and sharp personalities of the day. If deficient in warmth, they are also without the heat of partisanship. They are especially valuable as illustrating the great truth, too generally overlooked, that analytic power is a subordinate quality of the critic.

On the whole, it may be considered certain that Mr. Poe has attained an individual eminence in our literature, which he will keep. He has given proof of power and originality. He has done that which could only be done once with success or safety, and the imitation or repetition of which would produce weariness.

LOWELL'S *A Fable for Critics* was published anonymously in 1848. It presents a panorama of the American writers as they appeared by the middle of the century to an alert and well-read man of letters. We had by this time been a nation long enough and had produced enough respectable writing so that a taking of stock was in order. The time for mere boosting was past, and the moment had come to discriminate. Lowell's *Fable* appears logically and naturally at a time when Edgar Allan Poe was near the end of his career as a critic, his effort month by month in his reviews to establish comparative values, and it does its best to supply the summary which Poe never lived to make.

In the *Fable,* as in all Lowell's writing, the wit is sometimes clumsy or silly, and the learned illusions a bore. It is true, also, as Poe was to complain, that Lowell's ear was rather defective, so that some of the versification is rocky. Yet the *Fable* was of the best of the early Lowell, and the early Lowell was the best. He is capable of straight thought, of bold utterance, and of intellectual exhilaration. He wants a native American literature just as he wants the slaves to be freed, and in the *Fable* the first of these causes calls forth

his full shrewdness and enthusiasm and humor, as the second was to do in the *Biglow Papers*. Poe is probably right, however, in insisting that political and regional prejudice made Lowell unfair to the writers of the South.

The following prefatory note appeared with the second edition:

This *jeu d'esprit* was extemporized, I may fairly say, so rapidly was it written, purely for my own amusement and with no thought of publication. I sent daily instalments of it to a friend in New York, the late Charles F. Briggs. He urged me to let it be printed, and I at last consented to its anonymous publication. The secret was kept till after several persons had laid claim to its authorship.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Reader! walk up at once (it will soon be too late),
and buy at a perfectly ruinous rate

A FABLE FOR CRITICS:

OR, BETTER,

(I LIKE, AS A THING THAT THE READER'S FIRST FANCY MAY STRIKE,
AN OLD-FASHIONED TITLE-PAGE,
SUCH AS PRESENTS A TABULAR VIEW OF THE VOLUME'S CONTENTS),

A GLANCE AT A FEW OF OUR LITERARY PROGENIES

(MRS. MALAPROP'S WORD)

FROM THE TUB OF DIOGENES;

A VOCAL AND MUSICAL MEDLEY,

THAT IS,

A SERIES OF JOKES

By A Wonderful Quiz,

WHO ACCOMPANIES HIMSELF WITH A RUB-A-DUB-DUB, FULL OF SPIRIT AND GRACE, ON THE TOP OF THE TUB.

Set forth in October, the 31st day,
In the year '48, G. P. Putnam, Broadway.

It being the commonest mode of procedure, I premise a few candid remarks

To the Reader:

This trifle, begun to please only myself and my own private fancy, was laid on the shelf. But some friends, who had seen it, induced me, by dint of saying they liked it, to put it in print. That is, having come to that very conclusion, I asked their advice when 'twould make no confusion. For though (in the gentlest of ways) they had hinted it was scarce worth the while, I should doubtless have printed it.

I began it, intending a Fable, a frail, slender thing, rhyme-ywinged, with a sting in its tail. But, by addings and alterings not previously planned, digressions chance-hatched, like birds' eggs in the sand, and dawdlings to suit every whimsey's demand (always freeing the bird which I held in my hand, for the two perched, perhaps out of reach, in the tree),—it grew by degrees to the size which you see. I was like the old woman that carried the calf, and my neighbors, like hers, no doubt, wonder and laugh; and when, my strained arms with their grown burthen full, I call it my Fable, they call it a bull.

Having scrawled at full gallop (as far as that goes) in a style that is neither good verse nor bad prose, and being a

person whom nobody knows, some people will say I am rather more free with my readers than it is becoming to be, that I seem to expect them to wait on my leisure in following wherever I wander at pleasure, that, in short, I take more than a young author's lawful ease, and laugh in a queer way so like Mephistopheles that the Public will doubt, as they grope through my rhythm, if in truth I am making fun *of* them or *with* them.

So the excellent Public is hereby assured that the sale of my book is already secured. For there is not a poet throughout the whole land but will purchase a copy or two out of hand, in the fond expectation of being amused in it, by seeing his betters cut up and abused in it. Now, I find, by a pretty exact calculation, there are something like ten thousand bards in the nation, of that special variety whom the Review and Magazine critics call *lofty* and *true,* and about thirty thousand (*this* tribe is increasing) of the kinds who are termed *full of promise* and *pleasing.* The Public will see by a glance at this schedule, that they cannot expect me to be over-sedulous about courting *them,* since it seems I have got enough fuel made sure of for boiling my pot.

As for such of our poets as find not their names mentioned once in my pages, with praises or blames, let them SEND IN THEIR CARDS, without further DELAY, to my friend G. P. PUTNAM, Esquire, in Broadway, where a LIST will be kept with the strictest regard to the day and the hour of receiving the card. Then, taking them up as I chance to have time (that is, if their names can be twisted in rhyme), I will honestly give each his PROPER POSITION, at the rate of ONE AUTHOR to each NEW EDITION. Thus a PREMIUM is offered sufficiently HIGH (as the magazines say when they tell their best lie) to induce bards to CLUB their resources and buy the balance of every edition, until they have all of them fairly been run through the mill.

One word to such readers (judicious and wise) as read books with something behind the mere eyes, of whom in the country, perhaps, there are two, including myself, gentle reader, and you. All the characters sketched in this slight *jeu d'esprit,* though, it may be, they seem, here and there, rather free, and drawn from a somewhat too cynical standpoint, are *meant* to be faithful, for that is the grand point, and none but an owl would feel sore at a rub from a jester who tells you, without any subterfuge, that he sits in Diogenes' tub.

A Preliminary Note to the Second Edition,

though it well may be reckoned, of all composition, the species at once most delightful and healthy, is a thing which an author, unless he be wealthy and willing to pay for that kind of delight, is not, in all instances, called on to write, though there are, it is said, who, their spirits to cheer, slip in a new title-page three times a year, and in this way snuff up an imaginary savor of that sweetest of dishes, the popular favor,—much as if a starved painter should fall to and treat the Ugolino inside to a picture of meat.

You remember (if not, pray turn backward and look) that, in writing the preface which ushered my book, I treated you, excellent Public, not merely with a cool disregard, but downright cavalierly. Now I would not take back the least thing I then said, though I thereby could butter both sides of my bread, for I never could see that an author owed aught to the people he solaced, diverted, or taught; and, as for mere fame, I have long ago learned that the persons by whom it is finally earned are those with whom *your* verdict weighed not a pin, unsustained by the higher court sitting within.

But I wander from what I intended to say,—that you have, namely, shown such a liberal way of thinking, and so much aesthetic perception of anonymous worth in the handsome reception you gave to my book, spite of some private piques (having bought the first thousand in barely two weeks), that I think, past a doubt, if you measured the phiz of yours most devotedly, Wonderful Quiz, you would find that its vertical section was shorter, by an inch and two tenths, or 'twixt that and a quarter.

You have watched a child playing—in those wondrous years when belief is not bound to the eyes and the ears, and the vision divine is so clear and unmarred, that each baker of pies in the dirt is a bard? Give a knife and a shingle, he fits out a fleet, and, on that little mud-puddle over the street, his fancy, in purest good faith, will make sail round the globe with a puff of his breath for a gale, will visit, in barely ten minutes, all climes, and do the Columbus-feat hundreds of times. Or, suppose the young poet fresh stored with delights from that Bible of childhood, the *Arabian Nights*, he will turn to a crony and cry, "Jack, let's play that I am a Genius!" Jacky straightway makes Aladdin's lamp out of a stone, and, for hours, they

enjoy each his own supernatural powers. This is all very pretty and pleasant, but then suppose our two urchins have grown into men, and both have turned authors,—one says to his brother, "Let's play we're the American somethings or other—say Homer or Sophocles, Goethe or Scott (only let them be big enough, no matter what). Come, you shall be Byron or Pope, which you choose: I'll be Coleridge, and both shall write mutual reviews." So they both (as mere strangers) before many days send each other a cord of anonymous bays. Each, piling his epithets, smiles in his sleeve to see what his friend can be made to believe; each, reading the other's unbiased review, thinks—Here's pretty high praise, but no more than my due. Well, we laugh at them both, and yet make no great fuss when the same farce is acted to benefit us. Even I, who, if asked, scarce a month since, what Fudge meant, should have answered, the dear Public's critical judgment, begin to think sharp-witted Horace spoke sooth when he said that the Public *sometimes* hit the truth.

In reading these lines, you perhaps have a vision of a person in pretty good health and condition; and yet, since I put forth my primary edition, I have been crushed, scorched, withered, used up and put down (by Smith with the cordial assistance of Brown), in all, if you put any faith in my rhymes, to the number of ninety-five several times, and, while I am writing,—I tremble to think of it, for I may at this moment be just on the brink of it,—Molybdostom, angry at being omitted, has begun a critique,—am I not to be pitied?[1]

Now I shall not crush *them* since, indeed, for that matter, no pressure I know of could render them flatter; nor wither, nor scorch them,—no action of fire could make either them or their articles drier; nor waste time in putting them down—I am thinking not their own self-inflation will keep them from sinking; for there's this contradiction about the whole bevy: though without the least weight, they are awfully heavy. No, my dear honest bore, *surdo fabulam narras,* they are no more to me than a rat in the arras. I can walk with the Doctor, get facts from the Don, or draw out the Lambish quintessence of John, and feel nothing more than a half-comic sorrow, to think that they all will be lying tomorrow tossed carelessly up on the waste-paper shelves, and forgotten by all but their half-dozen

[1]The wise Scandinavians probably called their bards by the queer-looking title of Scald, in a delicate way, as it were, just to hint to the world the hot water they always get into.

selves. Once snug in my attic, my fire in a roar, I leave the whole pack of them outside the door. With Hakluyt or Purchas I wander away to the black northern seas or barbaric Cathay; get *fou* with O'Shanter, and sober me then with that builder of brick-kilnish dramas, rare Ben; snuff Herbert, as holy as a flower on a grave; with Fletcher wax tender, o'er Chapman grow brave; with Marlowe or Kyd take a fine poet-rave; in Very, most Hebrew of Saxons, find peace; with Lycidas welter on vext Irish seas; with Webster grow wild, and climb earthward again, down by mystical Browne's Jacob's-ladder-like brain, to that spiritual Pepys (Cotton's version) Montaigne; find a new depth in Wordsworth, undreamed of before, that marvel, a poet divine who can bore. Or, out of my study, the scholar thrown off, Nature holds up her shield 'gainst the sneer and the scoff; the landscape, forever consoling and kind, pours her wine and her oil on the smarts of the mind. The waterfall, scattering its vanishing gems; the tall grove of hemlocks, with moss on their stems, like plashes of sunlight; the pond in the woods, where no foot but mine and the bittern's intrudes, where pitcher-plants purple and gentians hard by recall to September the blue of June's sky; these are all my kind neighbors, and leave me no wish to say aught to you all, my poor critics, but—pish! I've buried the hatchet: I'm twisting an allumette out of one of you now, and relighting my calumet. In your private capacities, come when you please, I will give you my hand and a fresh pipe apiece.

As I ran through the leaves of my poor little book, to take a fond author's first tremulous look, it was quite an excitement to hunt the *errata*, sprawled in as birds' tracks are in some kinds of strata (only these made things crookeder). Fancy an heir that a father had seen born well-featured and fair, turning suddenly wry-nosed, club-footed, squint-eyed, hair-lipped, wapper-jawed, carrot-haired, from a pride become an aversion,—my case was yet worse. A club-foot (by way of a change) in a verse, I might have forgiven, an *o*'s being wry, a limp in an *e*, or a cock in an *i*,—but to have the sweet babe of my brain served in *pi*! I am not queasy-stomached, but such a Thyestean banquet as that was quite out of the question.

In the edition now issued no pains are neglected, and my verses, as orators say, stand corrected. Yet some blunders remain of the Public's own make, which I wish to correct for my personal sake. For instance, a character drawn in pure fun and condensing the traits of a dozen in one, has been, as I hear,

by some persons applied to a good friend of mine, whom to stab in the side, as we walked along chatting and joking together, would not be *my* way. I can hardly tell whether a question will ever arise in which he and I should by any strange fortune agree, but meanwhile my esteem for him grows as I know him, and, though not the best judge on earth of a poem, he knows what it is he is saying and why, and is honest and fearless, two good points which I have not found so rife I can easily smother my love for them, whether on my side or t'other.

For my other *anonymi*, you may be sure that I know what is meant by a caricature, and what by a portrait. There *are* those who think it is capital fun to be spattering their ink on quiet, unquarrelsome folk, but the minute the game changes sides and the others begin it, they see something savage and horrible in it. As for me I respect neither women nor men for their gender, nor own any sex in a pen. I choose just to hint to some causeless unfriends that, as far as I know, there are always two ends (and one of them heaviest, too) to a staff, and two parties also to every good laugh.

A FABLE FOR CRITICS

PHŒBUS, sitting one day in a laurel-tree's shade,
Was reminded of Daphne, of whom it was made,
For the god being one day too warm in his wooing,
She took to the tree to escape his pursuing;
Be the cause what it might, from his offers she shrunk,
And, Ginevra-like, shut herself up in a trunk;
And, though 'twas a step into which he had driven her,
He somehow or other had never forgiven her;
Her memory he nursed as a kind of a tonic,
Something bitter to chew when he'd play the Byronic,
And I can't count the obstinate nymphs that he brought over
By a strange kind of smile he put on when he thought of her.
"My case is like Dido's," he sometimes remarked;
"When I last saw my love, she was fairly embarked
In a laurel, as *she* thought—but (ah, how Fate mocks!)
She has found it by this time a very bad box;
Let hunters from me take this saw when they need it:

You're not always sure of your game when you've treed it.
Just conceive such a change taking place in one's mistress!
What romance would be left?—who can flatter or kiss trees?
And, for mercy's sake, how could one keep up a dialogue
With a dull wooden thing that will live and will die a log,—
Not to say that the thought would forever intrude
That you've less chance to win her the more she is wood?
Ah! it went to my heart, and the memory still grieves,
To see those loved graces all taking their leaves;
Those charms beyond speech, so enchanting but now,
As they left me forever, each making its bough!
If her tongue *had* a tang sometimes more than was right,
Her new bark is worse than ten times her old bite."

Now, Daphne—before she was happily treeified—
Over all other blossoms the lily had deified,
And when she expected the god on a visit
('Twas before he had made his intentions explicit),
Some buds she arranged with a vast deal of care,
To look as if artlessly twined in her hair,
Where they seemed, as he said, when he paid his addresses,
Like the day breaking through the long night of her tresses;
So whenever he wished to be quite irresistible,
Like a man with eight trumps in his hand at a whist-table
(I feared me at first that the rhyme was untwistable,
Though I might have lugged in an allusion to *Cristabel*),—
He would take up a lily, and gloomily look in it,
As I shall at the ——, when they cut up my book in it.

Well, here, after all the bad rhyme I've been spinning,
I've got back at last to my story's beginning:
Sitting there, as I say, in the shade of his mistress,
As dull as a volume of old Chester mysteries,
Or as those puzzling specimens which, in old histories,
We read of his verses—the Oracles, namely,—
(I wonder the Greeks should have swallowed them tamely,
For one might bet safely whatever he has to risk,
They were laid at his door by some ancient Miss Asterisk,
And so dull that the men who retailed them outdoors

Got the ill name of augurs, because they were bores,)
First, he mused what the animal substance or herb is
Would induce a mustache, for you know he's *imberbis;*
Then he shuddered to think how his youthful position
Was assailed by the age of his son the physician;
At some poems he glanced, had been sent to him lately,
And the meter and sentiment puzzled him greatly;
"Mehercle! I'd make such proceeding felonious,—
Have they all of them slept in the cave of Trophonius?
Look well to your seat, 'tis like taking an airing
On a corduroy road, and that out of repairing;
It leads one, 'tis true, through the primitive forest,
Grand natural features, but then one has no rest;
You just catch a glimpse of some ravishing distance,
When a jolt puts the whole of it out of existence,—
Why not use their ears, if they happen to have any?"
—Here the laurel-leaves murmured the name of poor Daphne.

"Oh, weep with me, Daphne," he sighed, "for you know it's
A terrible thing to be pestered with poets!
But, alas, she is dumb, and the proverb holds good,
She never will cry till she's out of the wood!
What wouldn't I give if I never had known of her?
'Twere a kind of relief had I something to groan over:
If I had but some letters of hers, now, to toss over,
I might turn for the nonce a Byronic philosopher,
And bewitch all the flats by bemoaning the loss of her.
One needs something tangible, though, to begin on,—
A loom, as it were, for the fancy to spin on;
What boots all your grist? it can never be ground
Till a breeze makes the arms of the windmill go round;
(Or, if 'tis a water mill, alter the metaphor,
And say it won't stir, save the wheel be well wet afore,
Or lug in some stuff about water 'so dreamily'—
It is not a metaphor, though, 'tis a simile);
A lily, perhaps, would set *my* mill a-going,
For just at this season, I think, they are blowing.

Here, somebody, fetch one; not very far hence
They're in bloom by the score, 'tis but climbing a fence;
There's a poet hard by, who does nothing but fill his
Whole garden, from one end to t'other, with lilies;
A very good plan, were it not for satiety,
One longs for a weed here and there, for variety;
Though a weed is no more than a flower in disguise,
Which is seen through at once, if love give a man eyes."

Now there happened to be among Phœbus's followers,
A gentleman, one of the omnivorous swallowers,
Who bolt every book that comes out of the press,
Without the least question of larger or less,
Whose stomachs are strong at the expense of their head,--
For reading new books is like eating new bread,
One can bear it at first, but by gradual steps he
Is brought to death's door of a mental dyspepsy.
On a previous stage of existence, our Hero
Had ridden outside, with the glass below zero;
He had been, 'tis a fact you may safely rely on,
Of a very old stock a most eminent scion,—
A stock all fresh quacks their fierce boluses ply on,
Who stretch the new boots Earth's unwilling to try on,
Whom humbugs of all shapes and sorts keep their eye on,
Whose hair's in the mortar of every new Zion,
Who, when whistles are dear, go directly and buy one,
Who think slavery a crime that we must not say fie on,
Who hunt, if they e'er hunt at all, with the lion
(Though they hunt lions also, whenever they spy one),
Who contrive to make every good fortune a wry one,
And at last choose the hard bed of honor to die on,
Whose pedigree, traced to earth's earliest years,
Is longer than anything else but their ears;—
In short, he was sent into life with the wrong key,
He unlocked the door, and stept forth a poor donkey.
Though kicked and abused by his bipedal betters
Yet he filled no mean place in the kingdom of letters;
Far happier than many a literary hack,
He bore only paper-mill rags on his back

(For it makes a vast difference which side the mill
One expends on the paper his labor and skill);
So, when his soul waited a new transmigration,
And Destiny balanced 'twixt this and that station,
Not having much time to expend upon bothers,
Remembering he'd had some connection with authors,
And considering his four legs had grown paralytic,—
She set him on two, and he came forth a critic.

Through his babyhood no kind of pleasure he took
In any amusement but tearing a book;
For him there was no intermediate stage
From babyhood up to strait-laced middle age;
There were years when he didn't wear coattails behind,
But a boy he could never be rightly defined;
Like the Irish Good Folk, though in length scarce a span,
From the womb he came gravely, a little old man;
While other boys' trousers demanded the toil
Of the motherly fingers on all kinds of soil,
Red, yellow, brown, black, clayey, gravelly, loamy,
He sat in the corner and read *Viri Romæ.*
He never was known to unbend or to revel once
In base, marbles, hockey, or kick up the devil once;
He was just one of those who excite the benevolence
Of your old prigs who sound the soul's depths with a ledger,
And are on the lookout for some young men to "edger-
cate," as they call it, who won't be too costly,
And who'll afterward take to the ministry mostly;
Who always wear spectacles, always look bilious,
Always keep on good terms with each *mater-familias*
Throughout the whole parish, and manage to rear
Ten boys like themselves, on four hundred a year:
Who, fulfilling in turn the same fearful conditions,
Either preach through their noses, or go upon missions.

In this way our Hero got safely to college,
Where he bolted alike both his commons and knowledge;
A reading machine, always wound up and going,
He mastered whatever was not worth the knowing,

Appeared in a gown, with black waistcoat of satin,
To spout such a Gothic oration in Latin
That Tully could never have made out a word in it
(Though himself was the model the author preferred in it)
And grasping the parchment which gave him in fee
All the mystic and-so-forths contained in A. B.,
He was launched (life is always compared to a sea)
With just enough learning, and skill for the using it,
To prove he'd a brain, by forever confusing it.
So worthy St. Benedict, piously burning
With the holiest zeal against secular learning,
Nesciensque scienter, as writers express it,
Indoctusque sapienter a Roma recessit.

'Twould be endless to tell you the things that he knew,
Each a separate fact, undeniably true,
But with him or each other they'd nothing to do;
No power of combining, arranging, discerning,
Digested the masses he learned into learning;
There was one thing in life he had practical knowledge for
(And this, you will think, he need scarce go to college for),—
Not a deed would he do, nor a word would he utter,
Till he'd weighed its relations to plain bread and butter.
When he left Alma Mater, he practiced his wits
In compiling the journals' historical bits,—
Of shops broken open, men falling in fits,
Great fortunes in England bequeathed to poor printers,
And cold spells, the coldest for many past winters,—
Then, rising by industry, knack, and address,
Got notices up for an unbiased press,
With a mind so well poised, it seemed equally made for
Applause or abuse, just which chanced to be paid for:
From this point his progress was rapid and sure,
To the post of a regular heavy reviewer.

And here I must say he wrote excellent articles
On Hebraical points, or the force of Greek particles;
They filled up the space nothing else was prepared for,
And nobody read that which nobody cared for;

If any old book reached a fiftieth edition,
He could fill forty pages with safe erudition:
He could gauge the old books by the old set of rules,
And his very old nothings pleased very old fools;
But give him a new book, fresh out of the heart,
And you put him at sea without compass or chart,—
His blunders aspired to the rank of an art;
For his lore was engraft, something foreign that grew in him,
Exhausting the sap of the native and true in him,
So that when a man came with a soul that was new in him,
Carving new forms of truth out of Nature's old granite,
New and old at their birth, like Le Verrier's planet,
Which, to get a true judgment, themselves must create
In the soul of their critic the measure and weight,
Being rather themselves a fresh standard of grace,
To compute their own judge, and assign him his place,
Our reviewer would crawl all about it and round it,
And, reporting each circumstance just as he found it,
Without the least malice,—his record would be
Profoundly aesthetic as that of a flea,
Which, supping on Wordsworth, should print, for our sakes,
Recollections of nights with the Bard of the Lakes,
Or, lodged by an Arab guide, ventured to render a
Comprehensive account of the ruins at Denderah.

As I said, he was never precisely unkind,
The defect in his brain was just absence of mind;
If he boasted, 'twas simply that he was self-made,
A position which I, for one, never gainsaid,
My respect for my Maker supposing a skill
In His works which our Hero would answer but ill;
And I trust that the mold which he used may be cracked,
or he,
Made bold by success, may enlarge his phylactery,
And set up a kind of a man-manufactory,—
An event which I shudder to think about, seeing
That Man is a moral, accountable being.

He meant well enough, but was still in the way,
As dunces still are, let them be where they may;

Indeed, they appear to come into existence
To impede other folks with their awkward assistance;
If you set up a dunce on the very North Pole
All alone with himself, I believe, on my soul,
He'd manage to get betwixt somebody's shins,
And pitch him down bodily, all in his sins,
To the grave polar bears sitting round on the ice,
All shortening their grace, to be in for a slice;
Or, if he found nobody else there to pother,
Why, one of his legs would just trip up the other,
For there's nothing we read of in torture's inventions,
Like a well-meaning dunce, with the best of intentions.

A terrible fellow to meet in society,
Not the toast that he buttered was ever so dry at tea;
There he'd sit at the table and stir in his sugar,
Crouching close for a spring, all the while, like a cougar;
Be sure of your facts, of your measures and weights,
Of your time,—he's as fond as an Arab of dates;
You'll be telling, perhaps, in your comical way,
Of something you've seen in the course of the day;
And, just as you're tapering out the conclusion,
You venture an ill-fated classic allusion,—
The girls have all got their laughs ready, when, whack!
The cougar comes down on your thunderstruck back!
You had left out a comma,—your Greek's put in joint,
And pointed at cost of your story's whole point.
In the course of the evening, you find chance for certain
Soft speeches to Anne, in the shade of the curtain:
You tell her your heart can be likened to *one* flower,
"And that, O most charming of women's the sunflower,
Which turns"—here a clear nasal voice, to your terror,
From outside the curtain, says, "That's all an error."
As for him, he's—no matter, he never grew tender,
Sitting after a ball, with his feet on the fender,
Shaping somebody's sweet features out of cigar smoke
(Though he'd willingly grant you that such doings are smoke);
All women he damns with *mutabile semper,*

And if ever he felt something like love's distemper,
'Twas tow'rd a young lady who spoke ancient Mexican,
And assisted her father in making a lexicon;
Though I recollect hearing him get quite ferocious
About Mary Clausum, the mistress of Grotius,
Or something of that sort,—but, no more to bore ye
With character-painting, I'll turn to my story.

Now, Apollo, who finds it convenient sometimes
To get his court clear of the makers of rhymes,
The *genus,* I think it is called, *irritabile,*
Every one of whom thinks himself treated most shabbily,
And nurses a—what is it?—*immedicabile,*
Which keeps him at boiling point, hot for a quarrel,
As bitter as wormwood, and sourer than sorrel,
If any poor devil but look at a laurel—
Apollo, I say, being sick of their rioting
(Though he sometimes acknowledged their verse had a quieting
Effect after dinner, and seemed to suggest a
Retreat to the shrine of a tranquil siesta),
Kept our Hero at hand, who, by means of a bray,
Which he gave to the life, drove the rabble away;
And if that wouldn't do, he was sure to succeed,
If he took his review out and offered to read;
Or, failing in plans of this milder description,
He would ask for their aid to get up a subscription,
Considering that authorship wasn't a rich craft,
To print the "American drama of Witchcraft."
"Stay, I'll read you a scene,"—but he hardly began,
Ere Apollo shrieked "Help!" and the authors all ran:
And once, when these purgatives acted with less spirit,
And the desperate case asked a remedy desperate,
He drew from his pocket a foolscap epistle
As calmly as if 'twere a nine-barreled pistol,
And threatened them all with the judgment to come,
Of "A wandering Star's first impressions of Rome."
"Stop! stop!" with their hands o'er their ears, screamed the Muses,

"He may go off and murder himself, if he chooses,
'Twas a means self-defense only sanctioned his trying,
'Tis mere massacre now that the enemy's flying;
If he's forced to 't again, and we happen to be there,
Give us each a large handkerchief soaked in strong ether."

I called this a *Fable for Critics;* you think it's
More like a display of my rhythmical trinkets;
My plot, like an icicle, 's slender and slippery,
Every moment more slender, and likely to slip awry,
And the reader unwilling *in loco desipere,*
Is free to jump over as much of my frippery
As he fancies, and, if he's a provident skipper, he
May have like Odysseus control of the gales,
And get safe to port, ere his patience quite fails;
Moreover, although 'tis a slender return
For your toil and expense, yet my paper will burn,
And, if you have manfully struggled thus far with me,
You may e'en twist me up, and just light your cigar with me:
If too angry for that, you can tear me in pieces,
And my *membra disjecta* consign to the breezes,
A fate like great Ratzau's, whom one of those bores,
Who beflead with bad verses poor Louis Quatorze,
Describes (the first verse somehow ends with *victoire*),
As *dispersant partout et ses membres et sa gloire;*
Or, if I were over desirous of earning
A repute among noodles for classical learning,
I could pick you a score of allusions, i-wis,
As new as the jests of *Didaskalos tis;*
Better still, I could make out a good solid list
From authors recondite who do not exist,—
But that would be naughty: at least, I could twist
Something out of Absyrtus, or turn your inquiries
After Milton's prose metaphor, drawn from Osiris;
But, as Cicero says he won't say this or that
(A fetch, I must say, most transparent and flat),
After saying whate'er he could possibly think of,—
I simply will state that I pause on the brink of

A mire, ankle-deep, of deliberate confusion,
Made up of old jumbles of classic allusion:
So, when you were thinking yourselves to be pitied,
Just conceive how much harder your teeth you'd have gritted,
An 'twere not for the dullness I've kindly omitted.

I'd apologize here for my many digressions,
Were it not that I'm certain to trip into fresh ones
('Tis so hard to escape if you get in their mesh once);
Just reflect, if you please, how 'tis said by Horatius,
That Mæonides nods now and then, and, my gracious!
It certainly does look a little bit ominous
When he gets under way with *ton d' apameibomenos.*
(Here a something occurs which I'll just clap a rhyme to,
And say it myself, ere a Zoïlus have time to,—
Any author a nap like Van Winkle's may take,
If he only contrive to keep readers awake,
But he'll very soon find himself laid on the shelf,
If *they* fall a-nodding when he nods himself.)

Once for all, to return, and to stay, will I, nill I—
When Phœbus expressed his desire for a lily,
Our Hero, whose homœopathic sagacity
With an ocean of zeal mixed his drop of capacity,
Set off for the garden as fast as the wind
(Or, to take a comparison more to my mind,
As a sound politician leaves conscience behind),
And leaped the low fence, as a party hack jumps
O'er his principles, when something else turns up trumps.

He was gone a long time, and Apollo, meanwhile,
Went over some sonnets of his with a file,
For, of all compositions, he thought that the sonnet
Best repaid all the toil you expended upon it;
It should reach with one impulse the end of its course,
And for one final blow collect all of its force;
Not a verse should be salient, but each one should tend
With a wavelike upgathering to break at the end;

So, condensing the strength here, there smoothing a wry
kink,
He was killing the time, when up walked Mr. D——;[1]
At a few steps behind him, a small man in glasses
Went dodging about, muttering, "Murderers! asses!"
From out of his pocket a paper he'd take,
With a proud look of martyrdom tied to its stake,
And, reading a squib at himself, he'd say, "Here I see
'Gainst American letters a bloody conspiracy,
They are all by my personal enemies written;
I must post an anonymous letter to Britain,
And show that this gall is the merest suggestion
Of spite at my zeal on the Copyright question,
For, on this side the water, 'tis prudent to pull
O'er the eyes of the public their national wool,
By accusing of slavish respect to John Bull
All American authors who have more or less
Of that anti-American humbug—success,
While in private we're always embracing the knees
Of some twopenny editor over the seas,
And licking his critical shoes, for you know 'tis
The whole aim of our lives to get one English notice;
My American puffs I would willingly burn all
(They're all from one source, monthly, weekly, diurnal)
To get but a kick from a transmarine journal!"

So, culling the gibes of each critical scorner
As if they were plums, and himself were Jack Horner,
He came cautiously on, peeping round every corner,
And into each hole where a weasel might pass in,
Expecting the knife of some critic assassin,
Who stabs to the heart with a caricature,
Not so bad as those daubs of the *Sun*, to be sure,
Yet done with a dagger-o'-type, whose vile portraits
Disperse all one's good and condense all one's poor traits.

Apollo looked up, hearing footsteps approaching,
And slipped out of sight the new rhymes he was broaching,—

[1]Evert Augustus Duyckink. E. W.

"Good day, Mr. D——, I'm happy to meet,
With a scholar so ripe, and a critic so neat,
Who through Grub Street the soul of a gentleman carries;
What news from that suburb of London and Paris
Which latterly makes such shrill claims to monopolize
The credit of being the New World's metropolis?"

"Why, nothing of consequence, save this attack
On my friend there, behind, by some pitiful hack,
Who thinks every national author a poor one,
That isn't a copy of something that's foreign,
And assaults the American Dick—"

"Nay, 'tis clear
That your Damon there's fond of a flea in his ear,
And, if no one else furnished them gratis, on tick
He would buy some himself, just to hear the old click;
Why, I honestly think, if some fool in Japan
Should turn up his nose at the *Poems on Man,*
(Which contain many verses as fine, by the bye,
As any that lately came under my eye,)
Your friend there by some inward instinct would know it,
Would get it translated, reprinted, and show it;
As a man might take off a high stock to exhibit
The autograph round his own neck of the gibbet;
Nor would let it rest so, but fire column after column,
Signed Cato, or Brutus, or something as solemn,
By way of displaying his critical crosses,
And tweaking that poor transatlantic proboscis,
His broadsides resulting (this last there's no doubt of)
In successively sinking the craft they're fired out of.
Now nobody knows when an author is hit,
If he have not a public hysterical fit;
Let him only keep close in his snug garret's dim ether,
And nobody'd think of his foes—or of him either;
If an author have any least fiber of worth in him,
Abuse would but tickle the organ of mirth in him;
All the critics on earth cannot crush with their ban
One word that's in tune with the nature of man."

"Well, perhaps so; meanwhile I have brought you a book,
Into which if you'll just have the goodness to look,
You may feel so delighted (when once you are through it)
As to deem it not unworth your while to review it,
And I think I can promise your thoughts, if you do,
A place in the next *Democratic Review*."

"The most thankless of gods you must surely have thought me,
For this is the forty-fourth copy you've brought me,
I have given them away, or at least I have tried,
But I've forty-two left, standing all side by side
(The man who accepted that one copy died),—
From one end of a shelf to the other they reach,
'With the author's respects' neatly written in each.
The publisher, sure, will proclaim a Te Deum,
When he hears of that order the British Museum
Has sent for one set of what books were first printed
In America, little or big,—for 'tis hinted
That this is the first truly tangible hope he
Has ever had raised for the sale of a copy.
I've thought very often 'twould be a good thing
In all public collections of books, if a wing
Were set off by itself, like the seas from the dry lands,
Marked *Literature suited to desolate islands*,
And filled with such books as could never be read
Save by readers of proofs, forced to do it for bread,
Such books as one's wrecked on in small country taverns,
Such as hermits might mortify over in caverns,
Such as Satan, if printing had then been invented,
As the climax of woe, would to Job have presented,
Such as Crusoe might dip in, although there are few so
Outrageously cornered by fate as poor Crusoe;
And since the philanthropists just now are banging
And gibbeting all who're in favor of hanging
(Though Cheever has proved that the Bible and Altar
Were let down from Heaven at the end of a halter,
And that vital religion would dull and grow callous,
Unrefreshed, now and then, with a sniff of the gallows),—

And folks are beginning to think it looks odd,
To choke a poor scamp for the glory of God;
And that He who esteems the Virginia reel
A bait to draw saints from their spiritual weal,
And regards the quadrille as a far greater knavery
Than crushing His African children with slavery,—
Since all who take part in a waltz or cotillon
Are mounted for hell on the Devil's own pillion,
Who, as every true orthodox Christian well knows,
Approaches the heart through the door of the toes,—
That He, I was saying, whose judgments are stored
For such as take steps in despite of His word,
Should look with delight on the agonized prancing
Of a wretch who has not the least ground for his dancing,
While the State, standing by, sings a verse from the Psalter
About offering to God on His favorite halter,
And, when the legs droop from their twitching divergence,
Sells the clothes to a Jew, and the corpse to the surgeons;—
Now, instead of all this, I think I can direct you all
To a criminal code both humane and effectual;
I propose to shut up every doer of wrong
With these desperate books, for such term, short or long,
As by statute in such cases made and provided,
Shall be by your wise legislators decided:
Thus: Let murderers be shut, to grow wiser and cooler,
At hard labor for life on the works of Miss ——;[1]
Petty thieves, kept from flagranter crimes by their fears,
Shall peruse *Yankee Doodle* a blank term of years,—
That American Punch, like the English, no doubt,—
Just the sugar and lemons and spirit left out.

"But stay, here comes Tityrus Griswold, and leads on
The flocks whom he first plucks alive, and then feeds on,—
A loud-cackling swarm, in whose feathers warmdrest,
He goes for as perfect a—swan as the rest.

"There comes Emerson first, whose rich words, every one,
Are like gold nails in temples to hang trophies on,

[1]Margaret Fuller. E. W.

Whose prose is grand verse, while his verse, the Lord knows,
Is some of it pr— No, 'tis not even prose;
I'm speaking of meters; some poems have welled
From those rare depths of soul that have ne'er been excelled;
They're not epics, but that doesn't matter a pin,
In creating, the only hard thing's to begin;
A grass-blade's no easier to make than an oak;
If you've once found the way, you've achieved the grand stroke;
In the worst of his poems are mines of rich matter,
But thrown in a heap with a crash and a clatter;
Now it is not one thing nor another alone
Makes a poem, but rather the general tone,
The something pervading, uniting the whole,
The before unconceived, unconceivable soul,
So that just in removing this trifle or that, you
Take away, as it were, a chief limb of the statue;
Roots, wood, bark, and leaves singly perfect may be,
But, clapt hodge-podge together, they don't make a tree.

"But, to come back to Emerson (whom, by the way,
I believe we left waiting),—his is, we may say,
A Greek head on right Yankee shoulders, whose range
Has Olympus for one pole, for t'other the Exchange;
He seems, to my thinking (although I'm afraid
The comparison must, long ere this, have been made),
A Plotinus-Montaigne, where the Egyptian's gold mist
And the Gascon's shrewd wit cheek-by-jowl coexist;
All admire, and yet scarcely six converts he's got
To I don't (nor they either) exactly know what;
For though he builds glorious temples, 'tis odd
He leaves never a doorway to get in a god.
'Tis refreshing to old-fashioned people like me
To meet such a primitive Pagan as he,
In whose mind all creation is duly respected
As parts of himself—just a little projected;
And who's willing to worship the stars and the sun,
A convert to—nothing but Emerson.
So perfect a balance there is in his head.

That he talks of things sometimes as if they were dead;
Life, nature, love, God, and affairs of that sort,
He looks at as merely ideas; in short,
As if they were fossils stuck round in a cabinet,
Of such vast extent that our earth's a mere dab in it;
Composed just as he is inclined to conjecture her,
Namely, one part pure earth, ninety-nine parts pure lecturer;
You are filled with delight at his clear demonstration,
Each figure, word, gesture, just fits the occasion,
With the quiet precision of science he'll sort 'em,
But you can't help suspecting the whole a *post mortem.*

"There are persons, mole-blind to the soul's make and style,
Who insist on a likeness 'twixt him and Carlyle;
To compare him with Plato would be vastly fairer,
Carlyle's the more burly, but E. is the rarer;
He sees fewer objects, but clearlier, truelier,
If C.'s as original, E.'s more peculiar;
That he's more of a man you might say of the one,
Of the other he's more of an Emerson;
C.'s the Titan, as shaggy of mind as of limb,—
E. the clear-eyed Olympian, rapid and slim;
The one's two thirds Norseman, the other half Greek,
Where the one's most abounding, the other's to seek;
C.'s generals require to be seen in the mass,—
E.'s specialties gain if enlarged by the glass;
C. gives nature and God his own fits of the blues,
And rims common-sense things with mystical hues,—
E. sits in a mystery calm and intense,
And looks coolly around him with sharp common sense;
C. shows you how every-day matters unite
With the dim transdiurnal recesses of night,—
While E., in a plain, preternatural way,
Makes mysteries matters of mere every day;
C. draws all his characters quite *à la* Fuseli,—
Not sketching their bundles of muscles and thews illy,
He paints with a brush so untamed and profuse,
They seem nothing but bundles of muscles and thews;

E. is rather like Flaxman, lines strait and severe,
And a colorless outline, but full, round, and clear;—
To the men he thinks worthy he frankly accords
The design of a white marble statue in words.
C. labors to get at the center, and then
Take a reckoning from there of his actions and men;
E. calmly assumes the said center as granted,
And, given himself, has whatever is wanted.

"He has imitators in scores, who omit
No part of the man but his wisdom and wit,—
Who go carefully o'er the sky-blue of his brain,
And when he has skimmed it once, skim it again;
If at all they resemble him, you may be sure it is
Because their shoals mirror his mists and obscurities,
As a mud-puddle seems deep as heaven for a minute,
While a cloud that floats o'er is reflected within it.

"There comes ——,[1] for instance; to see him's rare sport,
Tread in Emerson's tracks with legs painfully short;
How he jumps, how he strains, and gets red in the face,
To keep step with the mystagogue's natural pace!
He follows as close as a stick to a rocket,
His fingers exploring the prophet's each pocket.
Fie, for shame, brother bard; with good fruit of your own,
Can't you let Neighbor Emerson's orchards alone?
Besides, 'tis no use, you'll not find e'en a core,—
——[2] has picked up all the windfalls before.
They might strip every tree, and E. never would catch 'em,
His Hesperides have no rude dragon to watch 'em;
When they send him a dishful, and ask him to try 'em,
He never suspects how the sly rogues came by 'em;
He wonders why 'tis there are none such his trees on,
And thinks 'em the best he has tasted this season.

"Yonder, calm as a cloud, Alcott stalks in a dream,
And fancies himself in thy groves, Academe,

[1]This is supposed to refer to William Ellery Channing, the poet. E. W.

[2]This is supposed to refer to Henry David Thoreau. E. W.

With the Parthenon nigh, and the olive-trees o'er him,
And never a fact to perplex him or bore him,
With a snug room at Plato's when night comes, to walk to,
And people from morning till midnight to talk to,
And from midnight till morning, nor snore in their listening;—
So he muses, his face with the joy of it glistening,
For his highest conceit of a happiest state is
Where they'd live upon acorns, and hear him talk gratis;
And indeed, I believe, no man ever talked better,—
Each sentence hangs perfectly poised to a letter;
He seems piling words, but there's royal dust hid
In the heart of each sky-piercing pyramid.
While he talks he is great, but goes out like a taper,
If you shut him up closely with pen, ink, and paper;
Yet his fingers itch for 'em from morning till night,
And he thinks he does wrong if he don't always write;
In this, as in all things, a lamb among men,
He goes to sure death when he goes to his pen.

"Close behind him is Brownson, his mouth very full
With attempting to gulp a Gregorian bull;
Who contrives, spite of that, to pour out as he goes
A stream of transparent and forcible prose;
He shifts quite about, then proceeds to expound
That 'tis merely the earth, not himself, that turns round,
And wishes it clearly impressed on your mind
That the weathercock rules and not follows the wind;
Proving first, then as deftly confuting each side,
With no doctrine pleased that's not somewhere denied,
He lays the denier away on the shelf,
And then—down beside him lies gravely himself.
He's the Salt River boatman, who always stands willing
To convey friend or foe without charging a shilling,
And so fond of the trip that, when leisure's to spare,
He'll row himself up, if he can't get a fare.
The worst of it is, that his logic's so strong,
That of two sides he commonly chooses the wrong;
If there *is* only one, why, he'll split it in two,

And first pummel this half, then that, black and blue.
That white's white needs no proof, but it takes a deep fellow
To prove it jet-black, and that jet-black is yellow.
He offers the true faith to drink in a sieve,—
When it reaches your lips there's naught left to believe
But a few silly- (syllo-, I mean,) -gisms that squat 'em
Like tadpoles, o'erjoyed with the mud at the bottom.

"There is Willis, all *natty* and jaunty and gay,
Who says his best things in so foppish a way,
With conceits and pet phrases so thickly o'erlaying 'em,
That one hardly knows whether to thank him for saying 'em;
Overornament ruins both poem and prose,
Just conceive of a Muse with a ring in her nose!
His prose had a natural grace of its own,
And enough of it, too, if he'd let it alone;
But he twitches and jerks so, one fairly gets tired,
And is forced to forgive where one might have admired;
Yet whenever it slips away free and unlaced,
It runs like a stream with a musical waste,
And gurgles along with the liquidest sweep;
'Tis not deep as a river, but who'd have it deep?
In a country where scarcely a village is found
That has not its author sublime and profound,
For someone to be slightly shallow's a duty,
And Willis's shallowness makes half his beauty.
His prose winds along with a blithe, gurgling error,
And reflects all of Heaven it can see in its mirror:
'Tis a narrowish strip, but it is not an artifice;
'Tis the true out-of-doors with its genuine hearty phiz;
It is Nature herself, and there's something in that,
Since most brains reflect but the crown of a hat.
Few volumes I know to read under a tree,
More truly delightful than his *A l'Abri,*
With the shadows of leaves flowing over your book,
Like ripple-shades netting the bed of a brook;
With June coming softly your shoulder to look over,
Breezes waiting to turn every leaf of your book over,

And Nature to criticise still as you read,—
The page that bears that is a rare one indeed.

"He's so innate a cockney, that had he been born
Where plain bare-skin's the only full-dress that is worn,
He'd have given his own such an air that you'd say
'T had been made by a tailor to lounge in Broadway.
His nature's a glass of champagne with the foam on 't,
As tender as Fletcher, as witty as Beaumont;
So his best things are done in the flush of the moment;
If he wait, all is spoiled; he may stir it and shake it,
But, the fixed air once gone, he can never remake it.
He might be a marvel of easy delightfulness,
If he would not sometimes leave the *r* out of sprightfulness;
And he ought to let Scripture alone—'tis self-slaughter,
For nobody likes inspiration-and-water.
He'd have been just the fellow to sup at the Mermaid,
Cracking jokes at rare Ben, with an eye to the barmaid,
His wit running up as Canary ran down,—
The topmost bright bubble on the wave of The Town.

"Here comes Parker, the Orson of parsons, a man
Whom the Church undertook to put under her ban
(The Church of Socinus, I mean),—his opinions
Being So- (ultra) -cinian, they shocked the Socinians;
They believed—faith, I'm puzzled—I think I may call
Their belief a believing in nothing at all,
Or something of that sort; I know they all went
For a general union of total dissent:
He went a step farther; without cough or hem,
He frankly avowed he believed not in them;
And, before he could be jumbled up or prevented,
From their orthodox kind of dissent he dissented.
There was heresy here, you perceive, for the right
Of privately judging means simply that light
Has been granted to *me*, for deciding on *you*;
And in happier times, before Atheism grew.
The deed contained clauses for cooking you too:
Now at Xerxes and Knut we all laugh, yet our foot

With the same wave is wet that mocked Xerxes and Knut,
And we all entertain a secure private notion,
That our *Thus far!* will have a great weight with the ocean.
'Twas so with our liberal Christians: they bore
With sincerest conviction their chairs to the shore;
They brandished their worn theological birches,
Bade natural progress keep out of the Churches,
And expected the lines they had drawn to prevail
With the fast-rising tide to keep out of their pale;
They had formerly dammed the Pontifical See,
And the same thing, they thought, would do nicely for P.;
But he turned up his nose at their mumming and shamming,
And cared (shall I say?) not a d—— for their damming;
So they first read him out of their church, and next minute
Turned round and declared he had never been in it.
But the ban was too small or the man was too big,
For he recks not their bells, books, and candles a fig
(He scarce looks like a man who would *stay* treated shabbily,
Sophroniscus' son's head o'er the features of Rabelais);—
He bangs and bethwacks them,—their backs he salutes
With the whole tree of knowledge torn up by the roots;
His sermons with satire are plenteously verjuiced,
And he talks in one breath of Confutzee, Cass, Zerduscht,
Jack Robinson, Peter the Hermit, Strap, Dathan,
Cush, Pitt (not the bottomless, *that* he's no faith in),
Pan, Pillicock, Shakespeare, Paul, Toots, Monsieur Tonson,
Aldebaran, Alcander, Ben Khorat, Ben Jonson,
Thoth, Richter, Joe Smith, Father Paul, Judah Monis,
Musæus, Muretus, *hem,*— μ Scorpionis,
Maccabee, Maccaboy, Mac—Mac—ah! Machiavelli,
Condorcet, Count d'Orsay, Conder, Say, Ganganelli,
Orion, O'Connell, the Chevalier D'O,
(See the Memoirs of Sully,) τὸ πᾶν, the great toe
Of the statue of Jupiter, now made to pass
For that of Jew Peter by good Romish brass,
(You may add for yourselves, for I find it a bore,
All the names you have ever, or not, heard before,
And when you've done that—why, invent a few more.)
His hearers can't tell you on Sunday beforehand,

If in that day's discourse they'll be Bibled or Koraned,
For he's seized the idea (by his martyrdom fired)
That all men (not orthodox) *may be* inspired;
Yet though wisdom profane with his creed he may weave in,
He makes it quite clear what he *doesn't* believe in,
While some, who decry him, think all Kingdom Come
Is a sort of a, kind of a, species of Hum,
Of which, as it were, so to speak, not a crumb
Would be left, if we didn't keep carefully mum,
And, to make a clean breast, that 'tis perfectly plain
That *all* kinds of wisdom are somewhat profane;
Now P.'s creed than this may be lighter or darker,
But in one thing, 'tis clear, he has faith, namely—Parker;
And this is what makes him the crowd-drawing preacher,
There's a background of god to each hard-working feature,
Every word that he speaks has been fierily furnaced
In the blast of a life that has struggled in earnest:
There he stands, looking more like a plowman than priest,
If not dreadfully awkward, not graceful at least,
His gestures all downright and same, if you will,
As of brown-fisted Hobnail in hoeing a drill;
But his periods fall on you, stroke after stroke,
Like the blows of a lumberer felling an oak,
You forget the man wholly, you're thankful to meet
With a preacher who smacks of the field and the street,
And to hear, you're not overparticular whence,
Almost Taylor's profusion, quite Latimer's sense.

"There is Bryant, as quiet, as cool, and as dignified,
As a smooth, silent iceberg, that never is ignified,
Save when by reflection 'tis kindled o' nights
With a semblance of flame by the chill Northern Lights.
He may rank (Griswold says so) first bard of your nation
(There's no doubt that he stands in supreme ice-olation),
Your topmost Parnassus he may set his heel on,—
But no warm applauses come, peal following peal on,
He's too smooth and too polished to hang any zeal on:
Unqualified merits, I'll grant, if you choose, he has 'em,
But he lacks the one merit of kindling enthusiasm;

If he stir you at all, it is just, on my soul,
Like being stirred up with the very North Pole.

"He is very nice reading in summer, but *inter*
Nos, we don't want *extra* freezing in winter;
Take him up in the depth of July, my advice is,
When you feel an Egyptian devotion to ices.
But, deduct all you can, there's enough that's right good in
him,
He has a true soul for field, river, and wood in him;
And his heart, in the midst of brick walls, or where'er it is,
Glows, softens, and thrills with the tenderest charities—
To you mortals that delve in this trade-ridden planet?
No, to old Berkshire's hills, with their limestone and granite.
If you're one who *in loco* (add *foco* here) *desipis*,
You will get of his outermost heart (as I guess) a piece;
But you'd get deeper down if you came as a precipice,
And would break the last seal of its inwardest fountain,
If you only could palm yourself off for a mountain.
Mr. Quivis, or somebody quite as discerning,
Some scholar who's hourly expecting his learning,
Calls B. the American Wordsworth; but Wordsworth
May be rated at more than your whole tuneful herd's worth.
No, don't be absurd, he's an excellent Bryant;
But, my friends, you'll endanger the life of your client,
By attempting to stretch him up into a giant:
If you choose to compare him, I think there are two per-
-sons fit for a parallel—Thompson and Cowper;[1]
I don't mean exactly,—there's something of each,
There's T.'s love of nature, C.'s penchant to preach;
Just mix up their minds so that C.'s spice of craziness
Shall balance and neutralize T.'s turn for laziness,
And it gives you a brain cool, quite frictionless, quiet,
Whose internal police nips the buds of all riot,—
A brain like a permanent strait jacket put on

[1]To demonstrate quickly and easily how per-
-versely absurd 'tis to sound this name *Cowper*,
As people in general call him named *super*
I remark that he rhymes it himself with horse-trooper.

The heart that strives vainly to burst off a button,—
A brain which, without being slow or mechanic,
Does more than a larger less drilled, more volcanic;
He's a Cowper condensed, with no craziness bitten,
And the advantage that Wordsworth before him had written.

"But, my dear little bardlings, don't prick up your ears
Nor suppose I would rank you and Bryant as peers;
If I call him an iceberg, I don't mean to say
There is nothing in that which is grand in its way;
He is almost the one of your poets that knows
How much grace, strength, and dignity lie in Repose;
If he sometimes fall short, he is too wise to mar
His thought's modest fullness by going too far;
'Twould be well if your authors should all make a trial
Of what virtue there is in severe self-denial,
And measure their writings by Hesiod's staff,
Which teaches that all has less value than half.

"There is Whittier, whose swelling and vehement heart
Strains the strait-breasted drab of the Quaker apart,
And reveals the live Man, still supreme and erect,
Underneath the bemummying wrappers of sect;
There was ne'er a man born who had more of the swing
Of the true lyric bard and all that kind of thing;
And his failures arise (though he seem not to know it)
From the very same cause that has made him a poet,—
A fervor of mind which knows no separation
'Twixt simple excitement and pure inspiration,
As my Pythoness erst sometimes erred from not knowing
If 'twere I or mere wind through her tripod was blowing;
Let his mind once get head in its favorite direction
And the torrent of verse bursts the dams of reflection,
While, borne with the rush of the meter along,
The poet may chance to go right or go wrong,
Content with the whirl and delirium of song;
Then his grammar's not always correct, nor his rhymes,
And he's prone to repeat his own lyrics sometimes,
Not his best, though, for those are struck off at white heats

When the heart in his breast like a triphammer beats,
And can ne'er be repeated again any more
Than they could have been carefully plotted before:
Like old what's-his-name there at the battle of Hastings
(Who, however, gave more than mere rhythmical bastings)
Our Quaker leads off metaphorical fights
For reform and whatever they call human rights,
Both singing and striking in front of the war,
And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor;
Anne haec, one exclaims, on beholding his knocks,
Vestis filii tui, O leather-clad Fox?
Can that be thy son, in the battle's mid din,
Preaching brotherly love and then driving it in
To the brain of the tough old Goliath of sin,
With the smoothest of pebbles from Castaly's spring
Impressed on his hard moral sense with a sling?

"All honor and praise to the right-hearted bard
Who was true to The Voice when such service was hard,
Who himself was so free he dared sing for the slave
When to look but a protest in silence was brave;
All honor and praise to the women and men
Who spoke out for the dumb and the downtrodden then!
It needs not to name them, already for each
I see History preparing the statue and niche;
They were harsh, but shall *you* be so shocked at hard words
Who have beaten your pruning hooks up into swords,
Whose rewards and hurrahs men are surer to gain
By the reaping of men and of women than grain?
Why should *you* stand aghast at their fierce wordy war, if
You scalp one another for Bank or for Tariff?
Your calling them cutthroats and knaves all day long
Doesn't prove that the use of hard language is wrong;
While the World's heart beats quicker to think of such men
As signed Tyranny's doom with a bloody steel pen,
While on Fourth of Julys beardless orators fright one
With hints at Harmodius and Aristogeiton,
You need not look shy at your sisters and brothers
Who stab with sharp words for the freedom of others;—

No, a wreath, twine a wreath for the loyal and true
Who, for sake of the many, dared stand with the few,
Not of blood-spattered laurel for enemies braved,
But of broad, peaceful oak leaves for citizens saved!

"Here comes Dana, abstractedly loitering along,
Involved in a paulo-post-future of song,
Who'll be going to write what'll never be written
Till the Muse, ere he think of it, gives him the mitten,—
Who is so well aware of how things should be done,
That his own works displease him before they're begun,—
Who so well all that makes up good poetry knows,
That the best of his poems is written in prose;
All saddled and bridled stood Pegasus waiting,
He was booted and spurred, but he loitered debating;
In a very grave question his soul was immersed,—
Which foot in the stirrup he ought to put first;
And, while this point and that he judicially dwelt on,
He, somehow or other, had written *Paul Felton,*
Whose beauties or faults, whichsoever you see there,
You'll allow only genius could hit upon either.
That he once was the Idle Man none will deplore,
But I fear he will never be anything more;
The ocean of song heaves and glitters before him,
The depth and the vastness and longing sweep o'er him,
He knows every breaker and shoal on the chart,
He has the Coast Pilot and so on by heart,
Yet he spends his whole life, like the man in the fable,
In learning to swim on his library table.

"There swaggers John Neal, who has wasted in Maine
The sinews and cords of his pugilist brain,
Who might have been poet, but that, in its stead, he
Preferred to believe that he was so already;
Too hasty to wait till Art's ripe fruit should drop,
He must pelt down an unripe and colicky crop;
Who took to the law, and had this sterling plea for it,
It required him to quarrel, and paid him a fee for it;
A man who's made less than he might have, because

He always has thought himself more than he was,—
Who, with very good natural gifts as a bard,
Broke the strings of his lyre out by striking too hard,
And cracked half the notes of a truly fine voice,
Because song drew less instant attention than noise.
Ah, men do not know how much strength is in poise,
That he goes the farthest who goes far enough,
And that all beyond that is just bother and stuff.
No vain man matures, he makes too much new wood;
His blooms are too thick for the fruit to be good;
'Tis the modest man ripens, 'tis he that achieves,
Just what's needed of sunshine and shade he receives;
Grapes, to mellow, require the cool dark of their leaves;
Neal wants balance; he throws his mind always too far,
Whisking out flocks of comets, but never a star;
He has so much muscle, and loves so to show it,
That he strips himself naked to prove he's a poet,
And, to show he could leap Art's wide ditch, if he tried,
Jumps clean o'er it, and into the hedge t' other side.
He has strength, but there's nothing about him in keeping;
One gets surelier onward by walking than leaping;
He has used his own sinews himself to distress,
And had done vastly more had he done vastly less;
In letters, too soon is as bad as too late;
Could he only have waited he might have been great;
But he plumped into Helicon up to the waist,
And muddied the stream ere he took his first taste.

"There is Hawthorne, with genius so shrinking and rare
That you hardly at first see the strength that is there;
A frame so robust, with a nature so sweet,
So earnest, so graceful, so lithe and so fleet,
Is worth a descent from Olympus to meet;
'Tis as if a rough oak that for ages had stood,
With his gnarled bony branches like ribs of the wood,
Should bloom, after cycles of struggle and scathe,
With a single anemone trembly and rathe;
His strength is so tender, his wildness so meek,
That a suitable parallel sets one to seek,—

He's a John Bunyan Fouqué, a Puritan Tieck;
When Nature was shaping him, clay was not granted
For making so full-sized a man as she wanted,
So, to fill out her model, a little she spared
From some finer-grained stuff for a woman prepared,
And she could not have hit a more excellent plan
For making him fully and perfectly man.
The success of her scheme gave her so much delight,
That she tried it again, shortly after, in Dwight;
Only, while she was kneading and shaping the clay,
She sang to her work in her sweet childish way,
And found, when she'd put the last touch to his soul,
That the music had somehow got mixed with the whole.

"Here's Cooper, who's written six volumes to show
He's as good as a lord: well, let's grant that he's so;
If a person prefer that description of praise,
Why, a coronet's certainly cheaper than bays;
But he need take no pains to convince us he's not
(As his enemies say) the American Scott.
Choose any twelve men, and let C. read aloud
That one of his novels of which he's most proud,
And I'd lay any bet that, without ever quitting
Their box, they'd be all, to a man, for acquitting.
He has drawn you one character, though, that is new,
One wildflower he's plucked that is wet with the dew
Of this fresh Western world, and, the thing not to mince,
He has done naught but copy it ill ever since;
His Indians, with proper respect be it said,
Are just Natty Bumppo, daubed over with red,
And his very Long Toms are the same useful Nat,
Rigged up in duck pants and a sou'wester hat
(Though once in a Coffin, a good chance was found
To have slipped the old fellow away underground).
All his other men figures are clothes upon sticks,
The *dernière chemise* of a man in a fix
(As a captain besieged, when his garrison's small,
Sets up caps upon poles to be seen o'er the wall);
And the women he draws from one model don't vary,

All sappy as maples and flat as a prairie.
When a character's wanted, he goes to the task
As a cooper would do in composing a cask;
He picks out the staves, of their qualities heedful,
Just hoops them together as tight as is needful,
And, if the best fortune should crown the attempt, he
Has made at the most something wooden and empty.

"Don't suppose I would underrate Cooper's abilities;
If I thought you'd do that, I should feel very ill at ease;
The men who have given to *one* character life
And objective existence are not very rife;
You may number them all, both prose writers and singers,
Without overrunning the bounds of your fingers,
And Natty won't go to oblivion quicker
Than Adams the parson or Primrose the vicar.

"There is one thing in Cooper I like, too, and that is
That on manners he lectures his countrymen gratis;
Not precisely so either, because, for a rarity,
He is paid for his tickets in unpopularity.
Now he may overcharge his American pictures,
But you'll grant there's a good deal of truth in his strictures;
And I honor the man who is willing to sink
Half his present repute for the freedom to think,
And, when he has thought, be his cause strong or weak,
Will risk t'other half for the freedom to speak,
Caring naught for what vengeance the mob has in store,
Let that mob be the upper ten thousand or lower.

"There are truths you Americans need to be told,
And it never'll refute them to swagger and scold;
John Bull, looking o'er the Atlantic, in choler
At your aptness for trade, says you worship the dollar;
But to scorn such eye-dollar-try's what very few do,
And John goes to that church as often as you do.
No matter what John says, don't try to outcrow him,
'Tis enough to go quietly on and outgrow him;
Like most fathers, Bull hates to see Number One
Displacing himself in the mind of his son,

And detests the same faults in himself he'd neglected
When he sees them again in his child's glass reflected;
To love one another you're too like by half;
If he is a bull, you're a pretty stout calf,
And tear your own pasture for naught but to show
What a nice pair of horns you're beginning to grow.

"There are one or two things I should just like to hint,
For you don't often get the truth told you in print;
The most of you (this is what strikes all beholders)
Have a mental and physical stoop in the shoulders;
Though you ought to be free as the winds and the waves,
You've the gait and the manners of runaway slaves;
Though you brag of your New World, you don't half believe in it;
And as much of the Old as is possible weave in it;
Your goddess of freedom, a tight, buxom girl,
With lips like a cherry and teeth like a pearl,
With eyes bold as Hercë's, and hair floating free,
And full of the sun as the spray of the sea,
Who can sing at a husking or romp at a shearing,
Who can trip through the forests alone without fearing,
Who can drive home the cows with a song through the grass,
Keeps glancing aside into Europe's cracked glass,
Hides her red hands in gloves, pinches up her lithe waist,
And makes herself wretched with transmarine taste;
She loses her fresh country charm when she takes
Any mirror except her own rivers and lakes.

"You steal Englishmen's books and think Englishmen's thought,
With their salt on her tail your wild eagle is caught;
Your literature suits its each whisper and motion
To what will be thought of it over the ocean;
The cast clothes of Europe your statesmanship tries
And mumbles again the old blarneys and lies;—
Forget Europe wholly, your veins throb with blood,
To which the dull current in hers is but mud;
Let her sneer, let her say your experiment fails,

In her voice there's a tremble e'en now while she rails,
And your shore will soon be in the nature of things
Covered thick with gilt driftwood of castaway kings,
Where alone, as it were in a Longfellow's *Waif,*
Her fugitive pieces will find themselves safe.
O my friends, thank your god, if you have one, that he
'Twixt the Old World and you set the gulf of a sea;
Be strong-backed, brown-handed, upright as your pines,
By the scale of a hemisphere shape your designs,
Be true to yourselves and this new nineteenth age,
As a statue by Powers, or a picture by Page,
Plow, sail, forge, build, carve, paint, make all over new,
To your own New-World instincts contrive to be true,
Keep your ears open wide to the Future's first call,
Be whatever you will, but yourselves first of all,
Stand fronting the dawn on Toil's heaven-scaling peaks,
And become my new race of more practical Greeks.—
Hem! your likeness at present, I shudder to tell o't,
Is that you have your slaves, and the Greek had his helot."

Here a gentleman present, who had in his attic
More pepper than brains, shrieked, "The man's a fanatic,
I'm a capital tailor with warm tar and feathers,
And will make him a suit that'll serve in all weathers;
But we'll argue the point first, I'm willing to reason 't,
Palaver before condemnation's but decent;
So, through my humble person, Humanity begs
Of the friends of true freedom a loan of bad eggs."
But Apollo let one such a look of his show forth
As when ἤϊε νύκτι ἐοικώς, and so forth,
And the gentleman somehow slunk out of the way,
But, as he was going, gained courage to say,—
"At slavery in the abstract my whole soul rebels,
I am as strongly opposed to 't as anyone else."
"Ay, no doubt, but whenever I've happened to meet
With a wrong or a crime, it is always concrete,"
Answered Phœbus severely; then turning to us,
"The mistake of such fellows as just made the fuss
Is only in taking a great busy nation

For a part of their pitiful cotton plantation.—
But there comes Miranda,[1] Zeus! where shall I flee to?
She has such a penchant for bothering me too!
She always keeps asking if I don't observe a
Particular likeness 'twixt her and Minerva;
She tells me my efforts in verse are quite clever;—
She's been traveling now, and will be worse than ever;
One would think, though, a sharp-sighted noter she'd be
Of all that's worth mentioning over the sea,
For a woman must surely see well, if she try,
The whole of whose being's a capital I:
She will take an old notion, and make it her own,
By saying it o'er in her Sibylline tone,
Or persuade you 'tis something tremendously deep,
By repeating it so as to put you to sleep;
And she well may defy any mortal to see through it,
When once she has mixed up her infinite *me* through it.
There is one thing she owns in her own single right,
It is native and genuine—namely, her spite;
Though, when acting as censor, she privately blows
A censer of vanity 'neath her own nose."[2]

Here Miranda came up, and said, "Phœbus! you know
That the Infinite Soul has its infinite woe,
As I ought to know, having lived cheek by jowl,
Since the day I was born, with the Infinite Soul;
I myself introduced, I myself, I alone,
To my Land's better life authors solely my own,
Who the sad heart of earth on their shoulders have taken,
Whose works sound a depth by Life's quiet unshaken,
Such as Shakespeare, for instance, the Bible, and Bacon,
Not to mention my own works; Time's nadir is fleet,
And, as for myself, I'm quite out of conceit——"

"Quite out of conceit! I'm enchanted to hear it,"
Cried Apollo aside. "Who'd have thought she was near it?

[1]Margaret Fuller, E. W.

[2]Lowell made an attempt at the last moment to suppress the last four lines of this passage. E. W.

To be sure, one is apt to exhaust those commodities
One uses too fast, yet in this case as odd it is
As if Neptune should say to his turbots and whitings,
'I'm as much out of salt as Miranda's own writings'
(Which, as she in her own happy manner has said,
Sound a depth, for 'tis one of the functions of lead).
She often has asked me if I could not find
A place somewhere near me that suited her mind;
I know but a single one vacant, which she,
With her rare talent that way, would fit to a T.
And it would not imply any pause or cessation
In the work she esteems her peculiar vocation,—
She may enter on duty today, if she chooses,
And remain Tiring-woman for life to the Muses."

Miranda meanwhile has succeeded in driving
Up into a corner, in spite of their striving,
A small flock of terrified victims, and there,
With an I-turn-the-crank-of-the-Universe air
And a tone which, at least to *my* fancy, appears
Not so much to be entering as boxing your ears,
Is unfolding a tale (of herself, I surmise,
For 'tis dotted as thick as a peacock's with I's).
Apropos of Miranda, I'll rest on my oars
And drift through a trifling digression on bores,
For, though not wearing earrings *in more majorum,*
Our ears are kept bored just as if we still wore 'em.
There was one feudal custom worth keeping, at least,
Roasted bores made a part of each well-ordered feast,
And of all quiet pleasures the very *ne plus*
Was in hunting wild bores as the tame ones hunt us.
Archæologians, I know, who have personal fears
Of this wise application of hounds and of spears,
Have tried to make out, with a zeal more than wonted,
'Twas a kind of wild swine that our ancestors hunted;
But I'll never believe that the age which has strewn
Europe o'er with cathedrals, and otherwise shown
That it knew what was what, could by chance not have known

(Spending, too, its chief time with its buff on, no doubt)
Which beast 'twould improve the world most to thin out.
I divide bores myself, in the manner of rifles,
Into two great divisions, regardless of trifles;—
There's your smoothbore and screw-bore, who do not much vary
In the weight of cold lead they respectively carry.
The smoothbore is one in whose essence the mind
Not a corner nor cranny to cling by can find;
You feel as in nightmares sometimes, when you slip
Down a steep slated roof, where there's nothing to grip;
You slide and you slide, the blank horror increases,—
You had rather by far be at once smashed to pieces;
You fancy a whirlpool below white and frothing,
And finally drop off and light upon—nothing.
The screw-bore has twists in him, faint predilections
For going just wrong in the tritest directions;
When he's wrong he is flat, when he's right he can't show it,
He'll tell you what Snooks said about the new poet,[1]
Or how Fogrum was outraged by Tennyson's *Princess;*
He has spent all his spare time and intellect since his
Birth in perusing, on each art and science,
Just the books in which no one puts any reliance,
And though *nemo,* we're told, *horis omnibus sapit,*
The rule will not fit him, however you shape it,
For he has a perennial foison of sappiness;
He has just enough force to spoil half your day's happiness,
And to make him a sort of mosquito to be with,
But just not enough to dispute or agree with.

These sketches I made (not to be too explicit)
From two honest fellows who made me a visit,
And broke, like the tale of the Bear and the Fiddle,
My reflections on Halleck short off by the middle;
I sha'n't now go into the subject more deeply,
For I notice that some of my readers look sleep'ly;
I will barely remark that, 'mongst civilized nations,

[1](If you call Snooks an owl, he will show by his looks
That he's morally certain you're jealous of Snooks.)

There's none that displays more exemplary patience
Under all sorts of boring, at all sorts of hours,
From all sorts of desperate persons, than ours.
Not to speak of our papers, our State legislatures,
And other such trials for sensitive natures,
Just look for a moment at Congress,—appalled,
My fancy shrinks back from the phantom it called;
Why, there's scarcely a member unworthy to frown
'Neath what Fourier nicknames the Boreal crown;
Only think what that infinite bore-pow'r could do
If applied with a utilitarian view;
Suppose, for example, we shipped it with care
To Sahara's great desert and let it bore there;
If they held one short session and did nothing else,
They'd fill the whole waste with Artesian wells.
But 'tis time now with pen phonographic to follow
Through some more of his sketches our laughing Apollo:–

"There comes Harry Franco,[1] and, as he draws near,
You find that's a smile which you took for a sneer;
One half of him contradicts t' other; his wont
Is to say very sharp things and do very blunt;
His manner's as hard as his feelings are tender,
And a *sortie* he'll make when he means to surrender;
He's in joke half the time when he seems to be sternest,
When he seems to be joking, be sure he's in earnest;
He has common sense in a way that's uncommon,
Hates humbug and cant, loves his friends like a woman,
Builds his dislikes of cards and his friendships of oak,
Loves a prejudice better than aught but a joke,
Is half upright Quaker, half downright Come-outer,
Loves Freedom too well to go stark mad about her,
Quite artless himself, is a lover of Art,
Shuts you out of his secrets and into his heart,
And though not a poet, yet all must admire
In his letters of Pinto his skill on the liar.

[1]Charles Frederick Briggs, who wrote a novel called *The Adventures of Harry Franco*. E. W.

"There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge,
Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
In a way to make people of common sense damn meters,
Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,
But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind,
Who— But hey-day! What's this? Messieurs Mathews and Poe,
You mustn't fling mud balls at Longfellow so,
Does it make a man worse that his character's such
As to make his friends love him (as you think) too much?
Why, there is not a bard at this moment alive
More willing than he that his fellows should thrive;
While you are abusing him thus, even now
He would help either one of you out of a slough;
You may say that he's smooth and all that till you're hoarse,
But remember that elegance also is force;
After polishing granite as much as you will,
The heart keeps its tough old persistency still;
Deduct all you can, *that* still keeps you at bay·
Why, he'll live till men weary of Collins and Gray.
I'm not overfond of Greek meters in English,
To me rhyme's a gain, so it be not too jinglish,
And your modern hexameter verses are no more
Like Greek ones than sleek Mr. Pope is like Homer;
As the roar of the sea to the coo of a pigeon is,
So, compared to your moderns, sounds old Melesigenes;
I may be too partial, the reason, perhaps, o't is
That I've heard the old blind man recite his own rhapsodies,
And my ear with that music impregnate may be,
Like the poor exiled shell with the soul of the sea,
Or as one can't bear Strauss when his nature is cloven
To its deeps within deeps by the stroke of Beethoven;
But, set that aside, and 'tis truth that I speak,
Had Theocritus written in English, not Greek,
I believe that his exquisite sense would scarce change a line
In that rare, tender, virginlike pastoral *Evangeline*.
That's not ancient nor modern, its place is apart

Where time has no sway, in the realm of pure Art,
'Tis a shrine of retreat from Earth's hubbub and strife
As quiet and chaste as the author's own life.

"There comes Philothea,[1] her face all aglow,
She has just been dividing some poor creature's woe,
And can't tell which pleases her most, to relieve
His want, or his story to hear and believe;
No doubt against many deep griefs she prevails,
For her ear is the refuge of destitute tales;
She knows well that silence is sorrow's best food,
And that talking draws off from the heart its black blood,
So she'll listen with patience and let you unfold
Your bundle of rags as 'twere pure cloth of gold,
Which, indeed, it all turns to as soon as she's touched it,
And (to borrow a phrase from the nursery) *muched* it;
She has such a musical taste, she will go
Any distance to hear one who draws a long bow;
She will swallow a wonder by mere might and main,
And thinks it Geometry's fault if she's fain
To consider things flat, inasmuch as they're plain;
Facts with her are accomplished, as Frenchmen would say–
They will prove all she wishes them to either way,—
And, as fact lies on this side or that, we must try,
If we're seeking the truth, to find where it don't lie;
I was telling her once of a marvelous aloe
That for thousands of years had looked spindling and sallow,
And, though nursed by the fruitfullest powers of mud,
Had never vouchsafed e'en so much as a bud,
Till its owner remarked (as a sailor, you know,
Often will in a calm) that it never would blow,
For he wished to exhibit the plant, and designed
That its blowing should help him in raising the wind;
At last it was told him that if he should water
Its roots with the blood of his unmarried daughter
(Who was born, as her mother, a Calvinist, said,
With William Law's serious caul on her head),
It would blow as the obstinate breeze did when by a

[1] Lydia Maria Child, who wrote a novel called *Philothea*. E. W.

Like decree of her father died Iphigenia;
At first he declared he himself would be blowed
Ere his conscience with such a foul crime he would load,
But the thought, coming oft, grew less dark than before,
And he mused, as each creditor knocked at his door,
If *this* were but done they would dun me no more;
I told Philothea his struggles and doubts,
And how he considered the ins and the outs
Of the visions he had, and the dreadful dyspepsy,
How he went to the seer that lives at Po'keepsie,
How the seer advised him to sleep on it first,
And to read his big volume in case of the worst,
And further advised he should pay him five dollars
For writing **Hum, Hum,** on his wristbands and collars;
Three years and ten days these dark words he had studied
When the daughter was missed, and the aloe had budded;
I told how he watched it grow large and more large,
And wondered how much for the show he should charge,—
She had listened with utter indifference to this, till
I told how it bloomed, and, discharging its pistil
With an aim the Eumenides dictated, shot
The botanical filicide dead on the spot;
It had blown, but he reaped not his horrible gains,
For it blew with such force as to blow out his brains,
And the crime was blown also, because on the wad,
Which was paper, was writ 'Visitation of God,'
As well as a thrilling account of the deed
Which the coroner kindly allowed me to read.

"Well, my friend took this story up just, to be sure,
As one might a poor foundling that's laid at one's door;
She combed it and washed it and clothed it and fed it,
And as if 'twere her own child most tenderly bred it,
Laid the scene (of the legend, I mean) far away a-
-mong the green vales underneath Himalaya,
And by artistlike touches, laid on here and there,
Made the whole thing so touching, I frankly declare
I have read it all thrice, and, perhaps I am weak,
But I found every time there were tears on my cheek.

"The pole, science tells us, the magnet controls,
But she is a magnet to emigrant Poles,
And folks with a mission that nobody knows,
Throng thickly about her as bees round a rose;
She can fill up the *carets* in such, make their scope
Converge to some focus of rational hope,
And, with sympathies fresh as the morning, their gall
Can transmute into honey,—but this is not all;
Not only for those she has solace, oh say,
Vice's desperate nursling adrift in Broadway,
Who clingest, with all that is left of thee human,
To the last slender spar from the wreck of the woman,
Hast thou not found one shore where those tired drooping
feet
Could reach firm mother earth, one full heart on whose beat
The soothed head in silence reposing could hear
The chimes of far childhood throb back on the ear?
Ah, there's many a beam from the fountain of day
That, to reach us unclouded, must pass, on its way,
Through the soul of a woman, and hers is wide ope
To the influence of Heaven as the blue eyes of Hope;
Yes, a great heart is hers, one that dares to go in
To the prison, the slave hut, the alleys of sin,
And to bring into each, or to find there, some line
Of the never completely outtrampled divine;
If her heart at high floods swamps her brain now and then,
'Tis but richer for that when the tide ebbs agen,
As, after old Nile has subsided, his plain
Overflows with a second broad deluge of grain;
What a wealth would it bring to the narrow and sour
Could they be as a Child but for one little hour!

"What! Irving? thrice welcome, warm heart and fine
brain,
You bring back the happiest spirit from Spain,
And the gravest sweet humor, that ever were there
Since Cervantes met death in his gentle despair;
Nay, don't be embarrassed, nor look so beseeching,
I shan't run directly against my own preaching,

And, having just laughed at their Raphaels and Dantes,
Go to setting you up beside matchless Cervantes;
But allow me to speak what I honestly feel,—
To a true poet heart add the fun of Dick Steele,
Throw in all of Addison, *minus* the chill,
With the whole of that partnership's stock and good will,
Mix well, and while stirring, hum o'er, as a spell,
The fine *old* English Gentleman, simmer it well,
Sweeten just to your own private liking, then strain,
That only the finest and clearest remain,
Let it stand out-of-doors till a soul it receives
From the warm lazy sun loitering down through green leaves,
And you'll find a choice nature, not wholly deserving
A name either English or Yankee,—just Irving.

"There goes,—but *stet nominis umbra,*—his name
You'll be glad enough, some day or other, to claim,
And will all crowd about him and swear that you knew him
If some English critic should chance to review him.[1]
The old *porcos ante ne projiciatis*
MARGARITAS, for him you have verified gratis;
What matters his name? Why, it may be Sylvester,
Judd, Junior, or Junius, Ulysses, or Nestor,
For aught *I* know or care; 'tis enough that I look
On the author of *Margaret,* the first Yankee book
With the *soul* of Down East in 't, and things farther East,
As far as the threshold of morning, at least,
Where awaits the fair dawn of the simple and true,
Of the day that comes slowly to make all things new.
'T has a smack of pine woods, of bare field and bleak hill,
Such as only the breed of the *Mayflower* could till;
The Puritan's shown in it, tough to the core,
Such as prayed, smiting Agag on red Marston Moor:
With an unwilling humor, half choked by the drouth
In brown hollows about the inhospitable mouth;
With a soul full of poetry, though it has qualms

[1]Sylvester Judd, whose novel *Margaret* was published anonymously. E. W.

About finding a happiness out of the Psalms;
Full of tenderness, too, though it shrinks in the dark,
Hamadryad-like, under the coarse, shaggy bark;
That sees visions, knows wrestlings of God with the Will,
And has its own Sinais and thunderings still."

Here, "Forgive me, Apollo," I cried, "while I pour
My heart out to my birthplace: O loved more and more
Dear Baystate, from whose rocky bosom thy sons
Should suck milk, strong-will-giving, brave, such as runs
In the veins of old Graylock—who is it that dares
Call thee peddler, a soul wrapped in bank books and shares?
It is false! She's a Poet! I see, as I write,
Along the far railroad the steam snake glide white,
The cataract throb of her mill hearts I hear,
The swift strokes of trip hammers weary my ear,
Sledges ring upon anvils, through logs the saw screams,
Blocks swing to their place, beetles drive home the beams:—
It is songs such as these that she croons to the din
Of her fast-flying shuttles, year out and year in,
While from earth's farthest corner there comes not a breeze
But wafts her the buzz of her gold-gleaning bees:
What though those horn hands have as yet found small time
For painting and sculpture and music and rhyme?
These will come in due order; the need that pressed sorest
Was to vanquish the seasons, the ocean, the forest,
To bridle and harness the rivers, the steam,
Making those whirl her mill wheels, this tug in her team,
To vassalize old tyrant Winter, and make
Him delve surlily for her on river and lake;—
When this New World was parted, she strove not to shirk
Her lot in the heirdom, the tough, silent Work,
The hero share ever, from Herakles down
To Odin, the Earth's iron scepter and crown:
Yes, thou dear, noble Mother! If ever men's praise
Could be claimed for creating heroical lays,
Thou hast won it; if ever the laurel divine
Crowned the Maker and Builder, that glory is thine!
Thy songs are right epic, they tell how this rude

Rock rib of our earth here was tamed and subdued;
Thou hast written them plain on the face of the planet
In brave, deathless letters of iron and granite;
Thou hast printed them deep for all time; they are set
From the same runic type fount and alphabet
With thy stout Berkshire hills and the arms of thy Bay,—
They are staves from the burly old *Mayflower* lay.
If the drones of the Old World, in querulous ease,
Ask thy Art and thy Letters, point proudly to these,
Or, if they deny these are Letters and Art,
Toil on with the same old invincible heart;
Thou art rearing the pedestal broad-based and grand
Whereon the fair shapes of the Artist shall stand,
And creating, through labors undaunted and long,
The theme for all Sculpture and Painting and Song!

"But my good mother Baystate wants no praise of mine,
She learned from *her* mother a precept divine
About something that butters no parsnips, her *forte*
In another direction lies, work is her sport
(Though she'll curtsy and set her cap straight, that she will,
If you talk about Plymouth and red Bunker's hill).
Dear, notable goodwife! by this time of night,
Her hearth is swept neatly, her fire burning bright,
And she sits in a chair (of home plan and make) rocking,
Musing much, all the while, as she darns on a stocking,
Whether turkeys will come pretty high next Thanksgiving,
Whether flour'll be so dear, for, as sure as she's living,
She will use rye-and-injun then, whether the pig
By this time ain't got pretty tolerable big,
And whether to sell it outright will be best,
Or to smoke hams and shoulders and salt down the rest,—
At this minute, she'd swop all my verses, ah, cruel!
For the last patent stove that is saving of fuel;
So I'll just let Apollo go on, for his phiz
Shows I've kept him awaiting too long as it is."

"If our friend, there, who seems a reporter, is done
With his burst of emotion, why, *I* will go on,"

Said Apollo; some smiled, and, indeed, I must own
There was something sarcastic, perhaps, in his tone;—

"There's Holmes, who is matchless among you for wit;
A Leyden jar always full-charged, from which flit
The electrical tingles of hit after hit;
In long poems 'tis painful sometimes, and invites
A thought of the way the new Telegraph writes,
Which pricks down its little sharp sentences spitefully
As if you got more than you'd title to rightfully,
And you find yourself hoping its wild father Lightning
Would flame in for a second and give you a fright'ning.
He has perfect sway of what *I* call a sham meter,
But many admire it, the English pentameter,
And Campbell, I think, wrote most commonly worse,
With less nerve, swing, and fire in the same kind of verse,
Nor e'er achieved aught in 't so worthy of praise
As the tribute of Holmes to the grand *Marseillaise.*
You went crazy last year over Bulwer's *New Timon;*
Why, if B., to the day of his dying, should rhyme on
Heaping verses on verses and tomes upon tomes,
He could ne'er reach the best point and vigor of Holmes.
His are just the fine hands, too, to weave you a lyric
Full of fancy, fun, feeling, or spiced with satiric
In a measure so kindly, you doubt if the toes
That are trodden upon are your own or your foes'.

"There is Lowell, who's striving Parnassus to climb
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme,
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders,
But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders,
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching;
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,
But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he's old as Methusalem,
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem.

"There goes Halleck, whose *Fanny*'s a pseudo *Don Juan,*
With the wickedness out that gave salt to the true one,

He's a wit, though, I hear, of the very first order,
And once made a pun on the words soft Recorder;
More than this, he's a very great poet, I'm told,
And has had his works published in crimson and gold,
With something they call 'Illustrations,' to wit,
Like those with which Chapman obscured Holy Writ,[1]
Which are said to illustrate, because, as I view it,
Like *lucus a non,* they precisely don't do it;
Let a man who can write what himself understands
Keep clear, if he can, of designing men's hands,
Who bury the sense, if there's any worth having,
And then very honestly call it engraving.
But, to quit *badinage*, which there isn't much wit in,
Halleck's better, I doubt not, than all he has written;
In his verse a clear glimpse you will frequently find,
If not of a great, of a fortunate mind,
Which contrives to be true to its natural loves
In a world of back offices, ledgers, and stoves.
When his heart breaks away from the brokers and banks,
And kneels in his own private shrine to give thanks,
There's a genial manliness in him that earns
Our sincerest respect (read, for instance, his *Burns*),
And we can't but regret (seek excuse where we may)
That so much of a man has been peddled away.

"But what's that? a mass meeting? No, there come in lots,
The American Bulwers, Disraelis, and Scotts,
And in short the American everything elses,
Each charging the others with envies and jealousies;—
By the way, 'tis a fact that displays what profusions
Of all kinds of greatness bless free institutions,
That while the Old World has produced barely eight
Of such poets as all men agree to call great,
And of other great characters hardly a score
(One might safely say less than that rather than more),
With you every year a whole crop is begotten,
They're as much of a staple as corn is, or cotton;
Why, there's scarcely a huddle of log huts and shanties

[1](Cuts rightly called wooden, as all must admit.)

That has not brought forth its own Miltons and Dantes;
I myself know ten Byrons, one Coleridge, three Shelleys,
Two Raphaels, six Titians, (I think) one Apelles,
Leonardos and Rubenses plenty as lichens,
One (but that one is plenty) American Dickens,
A whole flock of Lambs, any number of Tennysons,—
In short, if a man has the luck to have any sons,
He may feel pretty certain that one out of twain
Will be some very great person over again.
There is one inconvenience in all this, which lies
In the fact that by contrast we estimate size,[1]
And, where there are none except Titans, great stature
Is only the normal proceeding of nature.
What puff the strained sails of your praise will you furl at, if
The calmest degree that you know is superlative?
At Rome, all whom Charon took into his wherry must,
As a matter of course, be well *issimus*t and *errimus*t,
A Greek, too, could feel, while in that famous boat he tost,
That his friends would take care he was ιστοst and ωταοst,
And formerly we, as through graveyards we past,
Thought the world went from bad to worst fearfully fast;
Let us glance for a moment, 'tis well worth the pains,
And note what an average graveyard contains;
There lie levelers leveled, duns done up themselves,
There are booksellers finally laid on their shelves,
Horizontally there lie upright politicians,
Dose-a-dose with their patients sleep faultless physicians,
There are slave drivers quietly whipped underground,
There bookbinders, done up in boards, are fast bound,
There card players wait till the last trump be played,
There all the choice spirits get finally laid,
There the babe that's unborn is supplied with a berth,
There men without legs get their six feet of earth,
There lawyers repose, each wrapped up in his case,
There seekers of office are sure of a place,

[1]That is in most cases we do, but not all,
Past a doubt, there are men who are innately small,
Such as Blank, who, without being 'minished a tittle,
Might stand for a type of the Absolute Little.

There defendant and plaintiff get equally cast,
There shoemakers quietly stick to the last,
There brokers at length become silent as stocks,
There stage drivers sleep without quitting their box,
And so forth and so forth and so forth and so on,
With this kind of stuff one might endlessly go on;
To come to the point, I may safely assert you
Will find in each yard every cardinal virtue;[1]
Each has six truest patriots: four discoverers of ether,
Who never had thought on 't nor mentioned it either;
Ten poets, the greatest who ever wrote rhyme:
Two hundred and forty first men of their time:
One person whose portrait just gave the least hint
Its original had a most horrible squint:
One critic, most (what do they call it?) reflective,
Who never had used the phrase ob- or subjective:
Forty fathers of Freedom, of whom twenty bred
Their sons for the rice swamps, at so much a head,
And their daughters for—faugh! thirty mothers of Gracchi:
Non-resistants who gave many a spiritual black eye:
Eight true friends of their kind, one of whom was a jailer:
Four captains almost as astounding as Taylor:
Two dozen of Italy's exiles who shoot us his
Kaisership daily, stern pen-and-ink Brutuses,
Who, in Yankee back parlors, with crucified smile,[2]
Mount serenely their country's funereal pile:
Ninety-nine Irish heroes, ferocious rebellers
'Gainst the Saxon in cis-marine garrets and cellars,
Who shake their dread fists o'er the sea and all that,—
As long as a copper drops into the hat:
Nine hundred Teutonic republicans stark
From Vaterland's battles just won—in the Park,
Who the happy profession of martyrdom take
Whenever it gives them a chance at a steak:
Sixty-two second Washingtons: two or three Jacksons:
And so many everythings else that it racks one's

[1](And at this just conclusion will surely arrive,
That the goodness of earth is more dead than alive.)

[2]Not forgetting their tea and their toast, though, the while.

Poor memory too much to continue the list,
Especially now they no longer exist;
I would merely observe that you've taken to giving
The puffs that belong to the dead to the living,
And that somehow your trump-of-contemporary-doom's tones
Is tuned after old dedications and tombstones."

Here the critic came in and a thistle presented—[1]
From a frown to a smile the god's features relented,
As he stared at his envoy, who, swelling with pride,
To the god's asking look, nothing daunted, replied,—
"You're surprised, I suppose, I was absent so long,
But your godship respecting the lilies was wrong;
I hunted the garden from one end to t'other,
And got no reward but vexation and bother,
Till, tossed out with weeds in a corner to wither,
This one lily I found and made haste to bring hither."

"Did he think I had given him a book to review?
I ought to have known what the fellow would do,"
Muttered Phœbus aside, "for a thistle will pass
Beyond doubt for the queen of all flowers with an ass;
He has chosen in just the same way as he'd choose
His specimens out of the books he reviews;
And now, as this offers an excellent text,
I'll give 'em some brief hints on criticism next."
So, musing a moment, he turned to the crowd,
And, clearing his voice, spoke as follows aloud:

"My friends, in the happier days of the muse,
We were luckily free from such things as reviews;
Then naught came between with its fog to make clearer
The heart of the poet to that of his hearer;
Then the poet brought heaven to the people, and they
Felt that they, too, were poets in hearing his lay;
Then the poet was prophet, the past in his soul
Precreated the future, both parts of one whole;
Then for him there was nothing too great or too small,

[1]Turn back now to page -- goodness only knows what,
And take a fresh hold on the thread of my plot.

For one natural deity sanctified all;
Then the bard owned no clipper and meter of moods
Save the spirit of silence that hovers and broods
O'er the seas and the mountains, the rivers and woods;
He asked not earth's verdict, forgetting the clods,
His soul soared and sang to an audience of gods;
'Twas for them that he measured the thought and the line,
And shaped for their vision the perfect design,
With as glorious a foresight, a balance as true,
As swung out the worlds in the infinite blue;
Then a glory and greatness invested man's heart,
The universal, which now stands estranged and apart,
In the free individual molded, was Art;
Then the forms of the Artist seemed thrilled with desire
For something as yet unattained, fuller, higher,
As once with her lips, lifted hands, and eyes listening,
And her whole upward soul in her countenance glistening,
Eurydice stood—like a beacon unfired,
Which, once touched with flame, will leap heav'nward inspired—
And waited with answering kindle to mark
The first gleam of Orpheus that pained the red Dark.
Then painting, song, sculpture did more than relieve
The need that men feel to create and believe,
And as, in all beauty, who listens with love
Hears these words oft repeated—'beyond and above,'
So these seemed to be but the visible sign
Of the grasp of the soul after things more divine;
They were ladders the Artist erected to climb
O'er the narrow horizon of space and of time,
And we see there the footsteps by which men had gained
To the one rapturous glimpse of the never-attained,
As shepherds could erst sometimes trace in the sod
The last spurning print of a sky-cleaving god.

"But now, on the poet's dis-privacied moods
With *do this* and *do that* the pert critic intrudes;
While he thinks he's been barely fulfilling his duty
To interpret 'twixt men and their own sense of beauty,

And has striven, while others sought honor or pelf,
To make his kind happy as he was himself,
He finds he's been guilty of horrid offenses
In all kinds of moods, numbers, genders, and tenses;
He's been *ob* and *sub*jective, what Kettle calls Pot,
Precisely, at all events, what he ought not,
You have done this, says one judge; *done that,* says another;
You should have done this, grumbles one; *that,* says t'other;
Never mind what he touches, one shrieks out *Taboo!*
And while he is wondering what he shall do,
Since each suggests opposite topics for song,
They all shout together *you're right!* and *you're wrong!*

"Nature fits all her children with something to do,
He who would write and can't write can surely review,
Can set up a small booth as critic and sell us his
Petty conceit and his pettier jealousies;
Thus a lawyer's apprentice, just out of his teens,
Will do for the Jeffrey of six magazines;
Having read Johnson's lives of the poets half through,
There's nothing on earth he's not competent to;
He reviews with as much nonchalance as he whistles,—
He goes through a book and just picks out the thistles;
It matters not whether he blame or commend,
If he's bad as a foe, he's far worse as a friend:
Let an author but write what's above his poor scope,
He goes to work gravely and twists up a rope,
And, inviting the world to see punishment done,
Hangs himself up to bleach in the wind and the sun;
'Tis delightful to see, when a man comes along
Who has anything in him peculiar and strong,
Every cockboat that swims clear its fierce (pop) gun deck at
him,
And make as he passes its ludicrous Peck at him—"

Here Miranda came up and began, "As to that——"
Apollo at once seized his gloves, cane, and hat,
And, seeing the place getting rapidly cleared,
I too snatched my notes and forthwith disappeared.

POE, at the time of his death in 1849, had had the intention of publishing a book on *The Authors of America in Prose and Verse.* He had already worked over to a considerable extent the material of his articles and reviews; and the collection of critical writing printed by Griswold after his death is something between a journalistic chronicle like Bernard Shaw's dramatic notices and a selected and concentrated volume like Eliot's *The Sacred Wood.*

Poe as a critic has points of resemblance both to Eliot and to Shaw. He deals vigorously and boldly with books as they come into his hands day by day, as Shaw did with the plays of the season, and manages to be brilliant and arresting even about works of no interest; and he constantly insists, as Eliot does, on attempting, in the practice of this journalism, to formulate general principles. His literary articles and lectures, in fact, surely constitute the most remarkable body of criticism ever produced in the United States. Henry James, as will be seen in his study of Hawthorne, called it "probably the most complete and exquisite specimen of *provincialism* ever prepared for the edification of men." But, though Poe had his share of provincialism as all American writers did in that period, the thing that most

strikes us today is his success in keeping himself above it. Intellectually he stands on higher ground than any other American writer of his time. He is trying to curb the tendency of the Americans to overrate or overpraise their own books, and at the same time he is fighting a rearguard action against the overinflation of British reputations and the British injustice to American writers; and he has also a third battle: to break down the monopolistic instincts of the New Englanders, who tended to act as a clique and to keep out New Yorkers and Southerners.

On one plane, Poe grapples realistically with the practical problems of writers in the United States of that time: the copyright situation and the growth of the American magazine, with its influence on literary technique; and on another plane, he is able to take in the large developments of Western literature. With his general interest in method, he has definite ideas about the procedures in a variety of departments of literature: fiction, poetry, satire, travel, criticism. And he can be elevated, ironic, analytical, as the subject in hand requires. His prose is as taut as in his stories, but it has cast off the imagery of his fiction to become simply sharp and precise: our only first-rate classical prose of this period. His mind is like a bright vivid shaft that picks out the successive objects in the American literary landscape just as the searchlight on the Albany night-boat picks out houses along the Hudson; so that, just as we are drawn to gaze at even undistinguished mansions in their new relief of spectral intensity, so with Poe we read even the articles on insignificant figures whose dead faces the critic irradiates in the process of speeding them to oblivion. When we have put the whole picture together, we seem to behold it as clearly as the geography of the surface of the moon under an unattainably powerful telescope. There is no other such critical survey in our literature.

But Poe had tweaked the beard of Longfellow, and he had made people laugh at a Channing, and the lurking rancor of New England seems to have worked against the acceptance of his criticism. There is an anecdote in W. D.

Howells' book, *Literary Friends and Acquaintance,* which shows both the attitude of New England and the influence of this attitude on others. Howells had visited Boston for the first time when he was twenty-three, and he had gone to see Emerson in Concord. Poe had been dead ten years. "After dinner," says Howells, "we walked about in [Emerson's] 'pleached garden' a little, and then we came again into his library, where I meant to linger only till I could fitly get away. He questioned me about what I had seen of Concord, and whom besides Hawthorne I had met, and when I told him only Thoreau, he asked me if I knew the poems of Mr. William Ellery Channing. I have known them since, and felt their quality, which I have gladly owned a genuine and original poetry; but I answered then truly that I knew them only from Poe's criticisms: cruel and spiteful things which I should be ashamed of enjoying as I once did. 'Whose criticisms?' asked Emerson. 'Poe's,' I said again. 'Oh,' he cried out, after a moment, as if he had returned from a far search for my meaning, *'you mean the jingle-man.'*

"I do not know why this should have put me to such confusion, but if I had written the criticisms myself I do not think I could have been more abashed. Perhaps I felt an edge of reproof, of admonition, in a characterization of Poe which the world will hardly agree with; though I do not agree with the world about him, myself, in its admiration. At any rate, it made an end of me for the time, and I remained as if already absent, while Emerson questioned me as to what I had written in the *Atlantic Monthly.*"

It is true that Poe had not much admired Emerson and had written rather insultingly about him in *A Chapter of Autography;* and that Channing had been a sort of disciple and protégé of Emerson's. But an entry in Emerson's journal for 1855 shows that his private opinion of Channing was not so very different from Poe's: "Ellery Channing's poetry has the merit of being genuine, and not the metrical commonplaces of the magazines, but it is painfully incomplete. He has not kept faith with the reader; 'tis shamefully insolent and slovenly. He should have lain awake all night to find the

true rhyme for a verse, and he has availed himself of the first one that came; so that it is all a babyish incompleteness."

The prejudice of New England against Poe was supported by the bad reputation that had been given him by Griswold's mendacious memoirs. It is not so long ago that it was possible for President Hadley of Yale to explain the refusal of the Hall of Fame to admit Poe among its immortals on the ground that he "wrote like a drunkard and a man who is not accustomed to pay his debts"; and it was only in 1941 that Professor A. H. Quinn showed the lengths to which Griswold had gone, by producing the originals of Poe's letters and printing them side by side with Griswold's falsifications.

We have often been told of Poe's criticism that it is spiteful; that it is pretentious; that it is vitiated by Poe's acceptance of the sentimental bad taste of his time. In regard to the first two of these charges, it must be admitted that the essays do give us unpleasant moments: they do have their queer knots and wrinkles; they are neurotic as all Poe's work is neurotic, and the distortions do here sometimes throw us off as they do not do in the stories, because it is here a question of judgment, whereas in his fiction the distortion itself is the subject of the story. It is true, as Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch has said, that there is constantly felt in Poe's criticism the same element of obsessive cruelty that inspires his tales of horror. Yet certainly Poe in his criticism makes an effort to hold this tendency in check—with an occasional effect of inconsistency, of opinion as well as of tone, as when he will begin by telling us that certain passages in some book he is reviewing are among the best things of their kind to be found in contemporary poetry, and then go on to pick the poet to pieces slowly, coldly, and at a length of many pages. It is also true that Poe pretends sometimes, or at least sometimes lets us infer, that he has read things he has not read. The psychology of the pretender is always a factor to be reckoned with in Poe.

The child of a fascinating actress, who died when he was two years old, he had been adopted by a Scotch merchant in Richmond, brought up as a Southern gentleman, and then cast off with no job and no income at the end of his

first year of college. His foster father had even failed to provide money for his necessary expenses, so that Poe, as he said, had been unable to associate with any students "except those who were in a similar situation with myself." He had always been in the false situation of not being Allan's son and of knowing that in the society he was bred to his parents had been *déclassés;* and now he was suddenly deprived of his role of a well-heeled young Southern gentleman with prospects of inheriting a fortune, and found himself a poor man with no backing who had to survive in the American Grub Street. He had the confidence of faith in superior abilities, and the reports of his work at his English school and at the University of Virginia show that he excelled as a student. But his studies had been aborted at the same time as his social career, and a shade of the uncertainty of the "gentleman" was communicated also to the "scholar." Perhaps, also, though Poe's mind was a first-rate one, there was in him a dash of the actor who delights in elaborating a part. Out of this consciousness of being a pretender, at any rate, with its infliction of an habitual secretiveness, came certainly Poe's love of cryptograms, his interest in inventing and solving crimes, and his indulgence in concocting and exposing hoaxes. If Poe sometimes plays unavowed tricks by cheating the reader a little as to what he has written or read, the imposture is still almost as gratuitous, as innocent, and as unimportant as Stendhal's disguises and aliases and his weakness for taking ladies from the provinces through Paris and misinforming them about the public monuments. And with this we must also write off Poe's rather annoying mania of accusing his contemporaries of plagiarism—a harsh name he is in the habit of brandishing to indicate borrowings and echoes of a kind which, whether more or less abject, are usually perfectly harmless. Poe himself was certainly guilty —in his imitations of Chivers, for example—of borrowings of precisely the same kind. But the consciousness of borrowing at all was enough to touch off the pretender.

As for the charge of Poe's acquiescence in the mawkish bad taste of his period, it is deserved to only a slight degree. He more often ran counter to this taste, as when he came

down on Fitz-Greene Halleck; and, for the rest, his excessive enthusiasm for poets like Mrs. Osgood is attributable to the same sort of causes as, say, the praises of Bernard Shaw for the plays of Henry Arthur Jones: the writer who is potentially a master sees in the inferior writer a suggestion of the kind of thing that he wants to do himself—a kind of thing of which the possibility will hardly be plain to anyone else till the master himself has made it actual.

We must recognize these warpings of Poe's line; but we must not allow them as serious impugnments of the validity of his critical work. His reading *was* wide and great; and his culture was derived from a plane of the world of thought and art which had hardly been visited by Longfellow, with his patient, persistent transposition of the poetry of many lands and ages into terms of his own insipidity or by Lowell with his awful cozy titles for the collections of his literary essays: *My Study Windows* and *Among My Books*. The truth was that literary America has always resented in Poe the very superiority which made him so quickly an international figure. He must have been a difficult person, with his accesses of hatefulness and depression, though certain people seem to have got on very well with him; but it seems hard to explain the virulence with which Griswold pursued him after his death and the general hostility toward him which has haunted us ever since, except on the ground that he puts us out by making so much of our culture seem second-rate. In our childhood we read *The Gold Bug* and *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and everybody knows *Annabel Lee* and *Ulalume* and *The Raven* and *The Bells*; but Poe is not, as he is with the French and as he ought to be with us, a vital part of our intellectual equipment. It is rare that an American writer points out, as Waldo Frank once did, that Poe does not belong at all with the clever contrivers of fiction like O. Henry and S. S. Van Dine, but, in terms of his more constricted personality, with the great inquiring and versatile minds like Goethe. So that in any presentation of American writing it is still necessary to insist on his value. In the darkness of his solitary confinement, Poe is still a prince.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

J. G. C. BRAINARD

February 1842[1]

AMONG all the *pioneers* of American literature, whether prose or poetical, there is *not one* whose productions have not been much overrated by his countrymen. But this fact is more especially obvious in respect to such of these pioneers as are no longer living; nor is it a fact of so deeply transcendental a nature as only to be accounted for by the Emersons and Alcotts. In the first place, we have but to consider that gratitude, surprise, and a species of hyper-patriotic triumph have been blended, and finally confounded with mere admiration, or appreciation, in respect to the labors of our earlier writers; and, in the second place, that Death has thrown his customary veil of the sacred over these commingled feelings, forbidding them, in a measure, to be *now* separated or subjected to analysis. "In speaking of the deceased," says that excellent old English Moralist, James Puckle, in his *Gray Cap for a Green Head,* "so fold up your discourse that their virtues may be outwardly shown, while their vices are wrapped up in silence." And with somewhat too inconsiderate a promptitude have we followed the spirit of this quaint advice. The mass of American readers have been, hitherto, in no frame of mind to view with calmness,

[1]The dates given here are the dates of the first publication of Poe's essays in contemporary periodicals. E. W.

and to discuss with discrimination, the true claims of the few who were *first* in convincing the mother country that her sons were not all brainless, as, in the plenitude of her arrogance, she, at one period, half affected and half wished to believe; and where any of these few have departed from among us, the difficulty of bringing their pretensions to the test of a proper criticism has been enhanced in a very remarkable degree. But even as concerns the living: is there anyone so blind as not to see that Mr. Cooper, for example, owes much, and that Mr. Paulding owes *all* of his reputation as a novelist to his early occupation of the field? Is there anyone so dull as not to know that fictions which neither Mr. Paulding nor Mr. Cooper *could* have written are daily published by native authors without attracting more of commendation than can be crammed into a hack newspaper paragraph? And, again, is there anyone so prejudiced as not to acknowledge that all this is because there is no longer either reason or wit in the query,—"Who reads an American book?" It is not because we lack the talent in which the days of Mr. Paulding exulted, but because such talent has shown itself to be common. It is not because we have *no* Mr. Coopers; but because it has been demonstrated that we might, at any moment, have as many Mr. Coopers as we please. In fact, we are now strong in our own resources. We have, at length, arrived at that epoch when our literature may and must stand on its own merits, or fall through its own defects. We have snapped asunder the leading-strings of our British grandmamma, and, better still, we have survived the first hours of our novel freedom,—the first licentious hours of a hobbledehoy braggadocio and swagger. At last, then, we are in a condition to be criticized —even more, to be neglected; and the journalist is no longer in danger of being impeached for *lèse majesté* of the Democratic Spirit, who shall assert, with sufficient humility, that we have committed an error in mistaking Kettell's *Specimens* for the Pentateuch, or Joseph Rodman Drake for Apollo.

The case of this latter gentleman is one which well illustrates what we have been saying. We believe it was about 1835 that Mr. Dearborn republished *The Culprit Fay,* which

then, as at the period of its original issue, was belauded by the universal American press, in a manner which must have appeared ludicrous—not to speak *very* plainly—in the eyes of all unprejudiced observers. With a curiosity much excited by comments at once so grandiloquent and so general, we procured and read the poem. What we found it we ventured to express distinctly, and at some length, in the pages of the *Southern Messenger*. It is a well-versified and sufficiently fluent composition, without high merit of any kind. Its defects are gross and superabundant. Its plot and conduct, considered in reference to its scene, are absurd. Its originality is none at all. Its imagination (and this was the great feature insisted upon by its admirers) is but a "counterfeit presentment,"—but the shadow of the shade of that lofty quality which is, in fact, the soul of the Poetic Sentiment, but a drivelling *effort to be fanciful*, an effort resulting in a species of hop-skip-and-go-merry rodomontade, which the uninitiated feel it a duty to call ideality, and to admire as such, while lost in surprise at the impossibility of performing at least the latter half of the duty with anything like satisfaction to themselves. And all this we not only asserted, but without difficulty *proved*. Dr. Drake has written some beautiful poems, but *The Culprit Fay* is not of them. We neither expected to hear any dissent from our opinions, nor did we hear any. On the contrary, the approving voice of every critic in the country whose *dictum* we had been accustomed to respect was to us a sufficient assurance that we had not been very grossly in the wrong. In fact, the public taste was then approaching the right. The truth indeed had not, as yet, made itself heard; but we had reached a point at which it had but to be plainly and boldly put, to be at least tacitly admitted.

This habit of apotheosizing our literary pioneers was a most indiscriminating one. Upon all who wrote, the applause was plastered with an impartiality really refreshing. Of course, the system favored the dunces at the expense of true merit; and, since there existed a certain fixed standard of exaggerated commendation to which all were adapted after the fashion of Procrustes, it is clear that the most meritorious

required *the least stretching,*—in other words, that although all were much overrated, the deserving were overrated in a less degree than the unworthy. Thus with Brainard: a man of indisputable genius, who, in any more discriminate system of panegyric, would have been long ago bepuffed into Demi-Deism; for if *M'Fingal,* for example, is in reality what we have been told, the commentators upon Trumbull, as a matter of the simplest consistency, should have exalted into the seventh heaven of poetical dominion the author of the many graceful and vigorous effusions which are now lying, in a very neat little volume, before us.

Yet we maintain that even these effusions have been overpraised, and materially so. It is not that Brainard has not written poems which may rank with those of any American, with the single exception of Longfellow; but that the general merit of our whole national Muse has been estimated too highly, and that the author of *The Connecticut River* has, individually, shared in the exaggeration. No poet among us has composed what would deserve the tithe of that amount of approbation so innocently lavished upon Brainard. But it would not suit our purpose just now to enter into any elaborate analysis of his productions. It so happens, however, that we open the book at a brief poem, an examination of which will stand us in good stead of this general analysis, since it is by this very poem that the admirers of its author are content to swear, since it is the fashion to cite it as his best, since thus, in short, it is the chief basis of his notoriety, if not the surest triumph of his fame.

We allude to *The Fall of Niagara,* and shall be pardoned for quoting it in full:

> The thoughts are strange that crowd into my brain
> While I look upward to thee. It would seem
> As if God poured thee from His hollow hand,
> And hung His bow upon thy awful front;
> And spoke in that loud voice which seemed to him
> Who dwelt in Patmos for his Savior's sake
> The "sound of many waters;" and had bade
> Thy flood to chronicle the ages back,
> And notch his centuries in the eternal rocks.

Deep calleth unto deep. And what are we
That hear the question of that voice sublime?
Oh, what are all the notes that ever rung
From war's vain trumpet, by thy thundering side?
Yea, what is all the riot man can make
In his short life to thy unceasing roar?
And yet, bold babbler, what art thou to HIM
Who drowned a world and heaped the waters far
Above its loftiest mountains?—a light wave
That breaks and whispers of its Maker's might.

It is a very usual thing to hear these verses called not merely the best of their author, but the best which have been written on the subject of Niagara. Their positive merit appears to us only partial. We have been informed that the poet had seen the great cataract before writing the lines; but the Memoir prefixed to the present edition denies what, for our own part, we never believed, for Brainard was truly a poet, and no poet could have looked upon Niagara, in the substance, and written thus about it. If he saw it at all, it must have been in fancy—"at a distance"—ἐκάς—as the lying Pindar says he saw Archilochus, who died ages before the villain was born.

To the two opening verses we have no objection; but it may be well observed, in passing, that had the mind of the poet been really "crowded with strange thoughts," and not merely *engaged in an endeavor to think,* he would have entered at once upon the thoughts themselves, without allusion to the state of his brain. His subject would have left him no room for self.

The third line embodies an absurd and impossible, not to say a contemptible image. We are called upon to conceive a similarity between the *continuous* downward sweep of Niagara and the momentary splashing of some definite and of course trifling quantity of water *from a hand;* for, although it is the hand of the Deity Himself which is referred to, the mind is irresistibly led, by the words "poured from His hollow hand," to that idea which has been *customarily* attached to such a phrase. It is needless to say, moreover, that the bestowing upon Deity a human form is at best a low

and most unideal conception. In fact, the poet has committed the grossest of errors in likening the fall to any material object; for the human fancy can fashion nothing which shall not be inferior in majesty to the cataract itself. Thus bathos is inevitable; and there is no better exemplification of bathos than Mr. Brainard has here given.[1]

The fourth line but renders the matter worse, for here the figure is most inartistically shifted. The handful of water becomes animate; for it has a front—that is, a forehead, and upon this forehead the Deity proceeds to hang a bow, that is, a rainbow. At the same time He "speaks in that loud voice," etc.; and here it is obvious that the ideas of the writer are in a sad state of fluctuation; for he transfers the idiosyncrasy of the fall itself (that is to say, its sound) to the One who pours it from His hand. But not content with all this, Mr. Brainard commands the flood to *keep a kind of tally;* for this is the low thought which the expression about "notching in the rocks" immediately and inevitably induces. The whole of this first division of the poem embraces, we hesitate not to say, one of the most jarring, inappropriate, mean, and in every way monstrous assemblages of false imagery which can be found out of the tragedies of Nat Lee or the farces of Thomas Carlyle.

In the latter division, the poet recovers himself, as if ashamed of his previous bombast. His natural instinct (for

[1]It is remarkable that Drake is, perhaps, the sole poet who has employed, in the description of Niagara, imagery which does not produce a bathetic impression. In one of his minor poems he has these magnificent lines:

> How sweet 'twould be, *when all the air*
> *In moonlight swims,* along thy river
> To couch upon the grass, and hear
> Niagara's everlasting voice
> Far in the deep blue West away—
> That dreaming and poetic noise
> We mark not in the glare of day;
> Oh, how unlike its torrent-cry
> When o'er the brink the tide is driven,
> *As if the vast and sheeted sky*
> *In thunder fell from Heaven!*
>
> E. A. P.

Brainard was no artist) has enabled him to feel that *subjects which surpass in grandeur all efforts of the human imagination are well depicted only in the simplest and least metaphorical language*—a proposition as susceptible of demonstration as any in Euclid. Accordingly, we find a material sinking in tone, although he does not at once discard all imagery. The "Deep calleth unto deep" is nevertheless a great improvement upon his previous rhetoricianism. The personification of the waters above and below would be good in reference to any subject less august. The moral reflections which immediately follow have at least the merit of simplicity; but the poet exhibits no very lofty imagination when he bases these reflections only upon the cataract's superiority to man *in the noise it can create;* nor is the concluding idea more spirited, where the mere difference between the quantity of water which occasioned the flood and the quantity which Niagara precipitates is made the measure of the Almighty Mind's superiority to that cataract which it called by a thought into existence.

But although *The Fall of Niagara* does not deserve all the unmeaning commendation it has received, there are, nevertheless, many truly beautiful poems in this collection, and even more certain evidences of poetic power. *To a Child, the Daughter of a Friend,* is exceedingly graceful and terse. *To the Dead* has equal grace, with more vigor, and, moreover, a touching air of melancholy. Its melody is very rich, and in the monotonous repetition, at each stanza, of a certain rhyme, we recognize a fantastic yet true imagination. *Mr. Merry's Lament for Long Tom* would be worthy of all praise were not its unusually beautiful rhythm an imitation from Campbell, who would deserve his high poetical rank, if only for its construction. Of the merely humorous pieces we have little to say. Such things are not *poetry*. Mr. Brainard excelled in them, and they are very good in their place; but that place is not in a collection of poems. The prevalent notions upon this head are extremely vague; yet we see no reason why any ambiguity should exist. Humor, with an exception to be made hereafter, is directly antagonistical to that which is the soul of the Muse proper; and the omni-

prevalent belief, that melancholy is inseparable from the higher manifestations of the beautiful, is not without a firm basis in nature and in reason. But it so happens that humor and that quality which we have termed the soul of the Muse (imagination) are both essentially aided in their development by the same adventitious assistance—that of rhythm and of rhyme. Thus the only bond between humorous verse and poetry, properly so called, is that they employ in common a certain tool. But this single circumstance has been sufficient to occasion, and to maintain through long ages, a confusion of two very distinct ideas in the brain of the unthinking critic. There is, nevertheless, an individual branch of humor which blends so happily with the ideal that from the union result some of the finest effects of legitimate poesy. We allude to what is termed *"archness"*—a trait with which popular feeling, which is unfailingly poetic, has invested, for example, the whole character of the fairy. In the volume before us there is a brief composition entitled *The Tree Toad* which will afford a fine exemplification of our idea. It seems to have been hurriedly constructed, as if its author had felt ashamed of his light labor. But that in his heart there was a secret exultation over these verses for which his reason found it difficult to account, *we know;* and there is not a really imaginative man within sound of our voice today, who, upon perusal of this little *Tree Toad,* will not admit it to be one of the truest poems ever written by Brainard.

LONGFELLOW'S BALLADS

April 1842

"Il y a à parier," says Chamfort, *"que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre,"*—"One would be safe in wagering that any given public idea is erroneous, for it has

been yielded to the clamor of the majority"; and this strictly philosophical, although somewhat French, assertion has especial bearing upon the whole race of what are termed maxims and popular proverbs, nine-tenths of which are the quintessence of folly. One of the most deplorably false of them is the antique adage, *"De gustibus non est disputandum"*—"There should be no disputing about taste." Here the idea designed to be conveyed is that any one person has as just right to consider his own taste *the true*, as has any one other—that taste itself, in short, is an arbitrary something, amenable to no law, and measurable by no definite rules. It must be confessed, however, that the exceedingly vague and impotent treatises which are alone extant have much to answer for as regards confirming the general error. Not the least important service which, hereafter, mankind will owe to *Phrenology*, may, perhaps, be recognized in an analysis of the real principles and a digest of the resulting laws of taste. These principles, in fact, are as clearly traceable, and these laws as readily susceptible of system, as are any whatever.

In the meantime, the insane adage above mentioned is in no respect more generally, more stupidly, and more pertinaciously quoted than by the admirers of what is termed the "good old Pope" or the "good old Goldsmith school" of poetry, in reference to the bolder, more natural, and more ideal compositions of such authors as Coëtlogon and Lamartine[1] in France; Herder, Körner, and Uhland in Germany; Brun and Baggesen in Denmark; Bellman, Tegner, and Nyberg[2] in Sweden; Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Tennyson in England; Lowell and Longfellow in America. *"De gustibus non,"* say these "good-old-school" fellows; and we have no doubt that their mental translation of the phrase is —"We pity your taste—we pity everybody's taste but our own."

It is our purpose to controvert the popular idea that the poets just mentioned owe to novelty, to trickeries of expression, and to other meretricious effects, their appreciation by

[1]We allude here chiefly to the *David* of Coëtlogon, and *only* to the *Chute d'un Ange* of Lamartine. E. A. P.

[2]Julia C. Nyberg, author of the *Dikter von Euphrosyne*. E. A. P.

certain readers; to demonstrate (for the matter is susceptible of demonstration) that such poetry, and *such alone,* has fulfilled the legitimate office of the Muse; has thoroughly satisfied an earnest and unquenchable desire existing in the heart of man.

This volume of *Ballads and Tales* includes, with several brief original pieces, a translation from the Swedish of Tegner. In attempting (what never should be attempted) a literal version of both the words and the meter of this poem, Professor Longfellow has failed to do justice either to his author or himself. He has striven to do what no man ever did well, and what, from the nature of language itself, never can be well done. Unless, for example, we shall come to have an influx of spondees in our English tongue, it will always be impossible to construct an English hexameter. Our spondees, or, we should say, our spondaic words, are rare. In the Swedish they are nearly as abundant as in the Latin and Greek. We have only "compound," "context," "footfall," and a few other similar ones. This is the difficulty; and that it is so will become evident upon reading *The Children of the Lord's Supper,* where the sole readable verses are those in which we meet with the rare spondaic dissyllables. We mean to say readable as hexameters; for many of them will read very well as mere English dactylics with certain irregularities.

Much as we admire the genius of Mr. Longfellow, we are fully sensible of his many errors of affectation and imitation. His artistical skill is great, and his ideality high. But his conception of the aims of poesy is all wrong; and this we shall prove at some future day, to our own satisfaction, at least. His didactics are all out of place. He has written brilliant poems, by accident; that is to say, when permitting his genius to get the better of his conventional habit of thinking, a habit deduced from German study. We do not mean to say that a didactic moral may not be well made the undercurrent of a poetical thesis; but that it can never be well put so obtrusively forth, as in the majority of his compositions.

We have said that Mr. Longfellow's conception of the aims of poesy is erroneous; and that thus, laboring at a disadvantage, he does violent wrong to his own high powers;

and now the question is, what are his ideas of the aims of the Muse, as we gather these ideas from the general tendency of his poems? It will be at once evident that, imbued with the peculiar spirit of German song (in pure conventionality), he regards the inculcation of a moral as essential. Here we find it necessary to repeat that we have reference only to the general tendency of his compositions; for there are some magnificent exceptions, where, as if by accident, he has permitted his genius to get the better of his conventional prejudice. But didacticism is the prevalent tone of his song. His invention, his imagery, his all, is made subservient to the elucidation of some one or more points (but rarely of more than one) which he looks upon as truth. And that this mode of procedure will find stern defenders should never excite surprise, so long as the world is full to overflowing with cant and conventicles. There are men who will scramble on all fours through the muddiest sloughs of vice to pick up a single apple of virtue. There are things called men who, so long as the sun rolls, will greet with snuffling huzzas every figure that takes upon itself the semblance of truth, even although the figure, in itself only a "stuffed Paddy," be as much out of place as a toga on the statue of Washington, or out of season as rabbits in the days of the dog star.

We say this with little fear of contradiction. Yet the spirit of our assertion must be more heeded than the letter. Mankind have seemed to define Poesy in a thousand, and in a thousand conflicting, definitions. But the war is one only of words. Induction is as well applicable to this subject as to the most palpable and utilitarian; and by its sober processes we find that, in respect to compositions which have been really received as poems, the imaginative, or, more popularly, the creative portions alone have insured them to be so received. Yet these works, on account of these portions, having once been so received and so named, it has happened, naturally and inevitably, that other portions totally unpoetic have not only come to be regarded by the popular voice as poetic, but have been made to serve as false standards of perfection, in the adjustment of other poetical claims. Whatever has been found in whatever has been received as a poem

has been blindly regarded as *ex statu* poetic. And this is a species of gross error which scarcely could have made its way into any less intangible topic. In fact, that license, which appertains to the Muse herself, it has been thought decorous, if not sagacious, to indulge, in all examination of her character.

Poesy is a response—unsatisfactory, it is true—but still in some measure a response, to a natural and irrepressible demand. Man being what he is, the time could never have been in which Poesy was not. Its first element is the thirst for supernal BEAUTY—a beauty which is not afforded the soul by any existing collocation of earth's forms—a beauty which, perhaps, no possible combination of these forms would fully produce. Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by novel combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist—or by novel combinations *of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order.* We thus clearly deduce the *novelty,* the *originality,* the *invention,* the *imagination,* or lastly the *creation* of BEAUTY (for the terms as here employed are synonymous), as the essence of all Poesy. Nor is this idea so much at variance with ordinary opinion as, at first sight, it may appear. A multitude of antique dogmas on this topic will be found, when divested of extrinsic speculation, to be easily resoluble into the definition now proposed. We do nothing more than present tangibly the vague clouds of the world's idea. We recognize the idea itself floating, unsettled, indefinite, in every attempt which has yet been made to circumscribe the conception of "Poesy" in words. A striking instance of this is observable in the fact that no definition exists in which either "the beautiful," or some one of those qualities which we have above designated synonymously with "creation," has not been pointed out as the chief attribute of the Muse. "Invention," however, or "imagination," is by far more commonly insisted upon. The word ποιῆσις itself (creation) speaks volumes upon this point. Neither will it be amiss here to mention Count Bielfeld's definition of poetry as *"L'art d'exprimer les pensées par la fiction."* With this definition (of which the philosophy

is profound to a certain extent) the German terms *Dichtkunst,* the art of fiction, and *dichten,* to feign, which are used for "poetry" and "to make verses," are in full and remarkable accordance. It is, nevertheless, in the combination of the two omni-prevalent ideas that the novelty, and, we believe, the force of our own proposition is to be found.

The elements of that beauty which is felt in sound may be the mutual or common heritage of Earth and Heaven. Contenting ourselves with the firm conviction that music (in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme) is of so vast a moment to Poesy as never to be neglected by him who is truly poetical —is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended that he is mad who rejects its assistance—content with this idea, we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality for the mere sake of rounding a definition. That our definition of poetry will necessarily exclude much of what, through a supine toleration, has been hitherto ranked as poetical, is a matter which affords us not even momentary concern. We address but the thoughtful, and heed only their approval—with our own. If our suggestions are truthful, then "after many days" shall they be understood as truth, even though found in contradiction of all that has been hitherto so understood. If false, shall we not be the first to bid them die?

We would reject, of course, all such matters as Armstrong on *Health,* a revolting production; Pope's *Essay on Man,* which may well be content with the title of an *Essay in Rhyme; Hudibras,* and other merely humorous pieces. We do not gainsay the peculiar merits of either of these latter compositions, but deny them the position held. In a notice of Brainard's poems, we took occasion to show that the common use of a certain instrument (rhythm) had tended, more than aught else, to confound humorous verse with poetry. The observation is now recalled to corroborate what we have just said in respect to the vast effect or force of melody in itself —an effect which could elevate into even momentary confusion with the highest efforts of mind compositions such as are the greater number of satires or burlesques.

We have shown our ground of objection to the general themes of Professor Longfellow. In common with all who

claim the sacred title of poet, he should limit his endeavors to the creation of novel moods of beauty, in form, in color, in sound, in sentiment; for over all this wide range has the poetry of words dominion. To what the world terms "prose" may be safely and properly left all else. The artist who doubts of his thesis may always resolve his doubt by the single question—"might not this matter be as well or better handled in prose?" If it may, then is it no subject for the Muse. In the general acceptation of the term "Beauty" we are content to rest; being careful only to suggest that, in our peculiar views, it must be understood as inclusive of the sublime.

Of the pieces which constitute the present volume, there are not more than one or two thoroughly fulfilling the ideas we have proposed; although the volume, as a whole, is by no means so chargeable with didacticism as Mr. Longfellow's previous book. We would mention as poems nearly true, *The Village Blacksmith, The Wreck of the* Hesperus, and especially *The Skeleton in Armor.* In the first-mentioned we have the beauty of simple-mindedness as a genuine thesis; and this thesis is inimitably handled until the concluding stanza, where the spirit of legitimate poesy is aggrieved in the pointed antithetical deduction of a moral from what has gone before. In *The Wreck of the* Hesperus we have the beauty of childlike confidence and innocence, with that of the father's stern courage and affection. But, with slight exception, those particulars of the storm here detailed are not poetic subjects. Their thrilling horror belongs to prose, in which it could be far more effectively discussed, as Professor Longfellow may assure himself at any moment by experiment. There are points of a tempest which afford the loftiest and truest poetical themes—points in which pure beauty is found, or, better still, beauty heightened into the sublime by terror. But when we read, among other similar things, that

> The salt sea was frozen on her breast,
> The salt tears in her eyes,

we feel, if not positive disgust, at least a chilling sense of the inappropriate. In *The Skeleton in Armor* we find a pure

and perfect thesis artistically treated. We find the beauty of bold courage and self-confidence, of love and maiden devotion, of reckless adventure, and finally of life-contemning grief. Combined with all this, we have numerous points of beauty apparently insulated, but all aiding the main effect or impression. The heart is stirred, and the mind does not lament its mal-instruction. The meter is simple, sonorous, well-balanced, and fully adapted to the subject. Upon the whole, there are fewer truer poems than this. It has but one defect—an important one. The prose remarks prefacing the narrative are really necessary. But every work of art should contain within itself all that is requisite for its own comprehension. And this remark is especially true of the ballad. In poems of magnitude the mind of the reader is not, at all times, enabled to include, in one comprehensive survey, the proportions and proper adjustment of the whole. He is pleased, if at all, with particular passages; and the sum of his pleasure is compounded of the sums of the pleasurable sentiments inspired by these individual passages in the progress of perusal. But, in pieces of less extent, the pleasure is unique, in the proper acceptation of this term—the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture as a whole; and thus its effect will depend, in great measure, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and, especially, upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel *the unity or totality of interest.* But the practice of prefixing explanatory passages is utterly at variance with such unity. By the prefix, we are either put in possession of the subject of the poem, or some hint, historic fact, or suggestion is thereby afforded, not included in the body of the piece, which, without the hint, is incomprehensible. In the latter case, while perusing the poem, the reader must revert, in mind at least, to the prefix, for the necessary explanation. In the former, the poem being a mere paraphrase of the prefix, the interest is divided between the prefix and the paraphrase. In either instance the totality of effect is destroyed.

Of the other original poems in the volume before us there is none in which the aim of instruction, or truth, has not

been too obviously substituted for the legitimate aim, beauty. We have heretofore taken occasion to say that a didactic moral might be happily made the undercurrent of a poetical theme, and we have treated this point at length, in a review of Moore's *Alciphron;* but the moral thus conveyed is invariably an ill effect when obtruding beyond the upper current of the thesis itself. Perhaps the worst specimen of this obtrusion is given us by our poet in *Blind Bartimeus* and *The Goblet of Life,* where it will be observed that the sole interest of the upper current of meaning depends upon its relation or reference to the under. What we read upon the surface would be *vox et præterea nihil* in default of the moral beneath. The Greek *finales* of *Blind Bartimeus* are an affectation altogether inexcusable. What the small, second-hand Gibbonish pedantry of Byron introduced is unworthy the imitation of Longfellow.

Of the translations we scarcely think it necessary to speak at all. We regret that our poet will persist in busying himself about such matters. His time might be better employed in original conception. Most of these versions are marked with the error upon which we have commented. This error is, in fact, essentially Germanic. *The Luck of Edenhall,* however, is a truly beautiful poem; and we say this with all that deference which the opinion of the *Democratic Review* demands. This composition appears to us one of the very finest. It has all the free, hearty, obvious movement of the true ballad-legend. The greatest force of language is combined in it with the richest imagination, acting in its most legitimate province. Upon the whole, we prefer it even to the *Sword-Song* of Körner. The pointed moral with which it terminates is so exceedingly natural, so perfectly fluent from the incidents, that we have hardly heart to pronounce it in ill taste. We may observe of this ballad, in conclusion, that its subject is more physical than is usual in Germany. Its images are rich rather in physical than in moral beauty. And this tendency, in Song, is the true one. It is chiefly, if we are not mistaken—it is chiefly amid forms of physical loveliness (we use the word *forms* in its widest sense as embracing modifications of sound and color) that the soul seeks the

realization of its dreams of BEAUTY. It is to her demand in this sense especially that the poet, who is wise, will most frequently and most earnestly respond.

The Children of the Lord's Supper is, beyond doubt, a true and most beautiful poem in great part, while, in some particulars, it is too metaphysical to have any pretension to the name. We have already objected, briefly, to its meter—the ordinary Latin or Greek hexameter—dactyls and spondees at random, with a spondee in conclusion. We maintain that the hexameter can never be introduced into our language, from the nature of that language itself. This rhythm demands, *for English ears,* a preponderance of natural spondees. Our tongue has few. Not only does the Latin and Greek, with the Swedish, and some others, abound in them; but the Greek and Roman ear had become reconciled (why or how is unknown) to the reception of artificial spondees—that is to say, spondaic words formed partly of one word and partly of another, or from an excised part of one word. In short, the ancients were content to read *as they scanned,* or nearly so. It may be safely prophesied that we shall never do this; and thus we shall never admit English hexameters. The attempt to introduce them, after the repeated failures of Sir Philip Sidney, and others, is, perhaps, somewhat discreditable to the scholarship of Professor Longfellow. The *Democratic Review,* in saying that he has triumphed over difficulties in this rhythm, has been deceived, it is evident, by the facility with which some of these verses may be read. In glancing over the poem, we do not observe a single verse which can be read, *to English ears, as a Greek hexameter.* There are many, however, which can be well read as mere English dactylic verses; such, for example, as the well-known lines of Byron, commencing

Know ye the | land where the | cypress and | myrtle.

These lines (although full of irregularities) are, in their perfection, formed of three dactyls and a cæsura—just as if we should cut short the initial verse of the *Bucolics* thus:

Tityre | tu patu | læ recu | bans . . .

The "myrtle," at the close of Byron's line, is a double rhyme, and must be understood as one syllable.

Now a great number of Professor Longfellow's hexameters are merely these dactylic lines, *continued for two feet.* For example:

Whispered the | race of the | flowers and | merry on | balancing | branches.

In this example, also, "branches," which is a double ending, must be regarded as the cæsura, or one syllable, of which alone it has the force.

As we have already alluded, in one or two regards, to a notice of these poems which appeared in the *Democratic Review,* we may as well here proceed with some few further comments upon the article in question, with whose general tenor we are happy to agree.

The *Review* speaks of *Maidenhood* as a poem "not to be understood but at the expense of more time and trouble than a song can justly claim." We are scarcely less surprised at this opinion from Mr. Langtree than we were at the condemnation of *The Luck of Edenhall.*

Maidenhood is faulty, it appears to us, only on the score of its theme, which is somewhat didactic. Its meaning seems simplicity itself. A maiden on the verge of womanhood, hesitating to enjoy life (for which she has a strong appetite) through a false idea of duty, is bidden to fear nothing, having purity of heart as her lion of Una.

What Mr. Langtree styles "an unfortunate peculiarity" in Mr. Longfellow, resulting from "adherence to a false system," has really been always regarded by us as one of his idiosyncratic merits. "In each poem," says the critic, "he has but one idea, which, in the progress of his song, is gradually unfolded, and at last reaches its full development in the concluding lines; this singleness of thought might lead a harsh critic to suspect intellectual barrenness." It leads *us,* individually, only to a full sense of the artistical power and knowledge of the poet. We confess that now, for the first time, we hear unity of conception objected to as a defect. But Mr. Langtree seems to have fallen into the singular

error of supposing the poet to have absolutely *but one idea* in each of his ballads. Yet how "one idea" can be "gradually unfolded" without other ideas is, to us, a mystery of mysteries. Mr. Longfellow, very properly, has but one leading idea which forms the basis of his poem; but to the aid and development of this one there are innumerable others, of which the rare excellence is that all are in keeping, that none could be well omitted, that each tends to the one general effect. It is unnecessary to say another word upon this topic.

In speaking of *Excelsior,* Mr. Langtree (are we wrong in attributing the notice to his very forcible pen?) seems to labor under some similar misconception. "It carries along with it," says he, "a false moral which greatly diminishes its merit in our eyes. The great merit of a picture, whether made with the pencil or pen, is its truth; and this merit does not belong to Mr. Longfellow's sketch. Men of genius may, and probably do, meet with greater difficulties in their struggles with the world than their fellow men who are less highly gifted; but their power of overcoming obstacles is proportionably greater, and the result of their laborious suffering is not death but immortality."

That the chief merit of a picture is its truth is an assertion deplorably erroneous. Even in Painting, which is, more essentially than Poetry, a mimetic art, the proposition cannot be sustained. Truth is not even the aim. Indeed it is curious to observe how very slight a degree of truth is sufficient to satisfy the mind, which acquiesces in the absence of numerous essentials in the thing depicted. An outline frequently stirs the spirit more pleasantly than the most elaborate picture. We need only refer to the compositions of Flaxman and of Retzch. Here all details are omitted—nothing can be farther from truth. Without even color the most thrilling effects are produced. In statues we are rather pleased than disgusted with *the want of the eyeball.* The hair of the Venus de Medici *was gilded.* Truth indeed! The grapes of Zeuxis as well as the curtain of Parrhasius were received as indisputable evidence of the truthful ability of these artists—but they were not even *classed among their pictures.* If truth

is the highest aim of either Painting or Poesy, then Jan Steen was a greater artist than Angelo, and Crabbe is a more noble poet than Milton.

But we have not quoted the observation of Mr. Langtree to deny its philosophy; our design was simply to show that he has misunderstood the poet. *Excelsior* has not even a remote tendency to the interpretation assigned it by the critic. It depicts the *earnest upward impulse of the soul*—an impulse not to be subdued even in Death. Despising danger, resisting pleasure, the youth, bearing the banner inscribed "*Excelsior!*" ("higher still!") struggles through all difficulties to an Alpine summit. Warned to be content with the elevation attained, his cry is still "*Excelsior!*" and, even in falling dead on the highest pinnacle, his cry is *still* "*Excelsior!*" There is yet an immortal height to be surmounted—an ascent in Eternity. The poet holds in view the idea of never-ending progress. That he is misunderstood is rather the misfortune of Mr. Langtree than the fault of Mr. Longfellow. There is an old adage about the difficulty of one's furnishing an auditor both with matter to be comprehended and brains for its comprehension.

FLACCUS—THOMAS WARD

March 1843

THE POET now comprehended in the *cognomen* FLACCUS is by no means our ancient friend Quintus Horatius, nor even his ghost, but merely a Mr. —— Ward, of Gotham, once a contributor to the New York *American* and to the New York *Knickerbocker Magazine*. He is characterized by Mr. Griswold, in his *Poets and Poetry of America*, as a gentleman of elegant leisure.

What there is in "elegant leisure" so much at war with the divine afflatus it is not very difficult, but quite un-

necessary, to say. The fact has been long apparent. Never sing the Nine so well as when penniless. The *mens divinior* is one thing, and the *otium cum dignitate* quite another.

Of course Mr. Ward is not, as a poet, altogether destitute of merit. If so, the public had been spared these paragraphs. But the sum of his deserts has been footed up by a clique who are in the habit of reckoning units as tens in all cases where champagne and "elegant leisure" are concerned. We do not consider him, at all points, a "Pop Emmons," but, with deference to the more matured opinions of the *Knickerbocker,* we may be permitted to entertain a doubt whether he is either Jupiter Tonans or Phœbus Apollo.

Justice is not, at all times, to all persons, the most desirable thing in the world; but then there is the old adage about the tumbling of the heavens, and simple justice is all that we propose in the case of Mr. Ward. We have no design to be bitter. We notice his book at all, only because it is an unusually large one of its kind, because it is here lying upon our table, and because, whether justly or unjustly, whether for good reason or for none, it has attracted some portion of the attention of the public.

The volume is entitled, somewhat affectedly, *Passaic, a Group of Poems touching that river: with Other Musings, by Flaccus,* and embodies, we believe, all the previously published effusions of its author. It commences with a very pretty *Sonnet to Passaic;* and from the second poem, *Introductory Musings on Rivers,* we are happy in being able to quote an entire page of even remarkable beauty:

> Beautiful Rivers! that adown the vale
> With graceful passage journey to the deep,
> Let me along your grassy marge recline
> At ease, and, musing, meditate the strange
> Bright history of your life: yes, from your birth
> Has beauty's shadow chased your every step;
> The blue sea was your mother, and the sun,
> Your glorious sire, clouds your voluptuous cradle,
> Roofed with o'erarching rainbows; and your fall
> To earth was cheered with shouts of happy birds,
> With brightened faces of reviving flowers,

And meadows, while the sympathizing west
Took holiday, and donned her richest robes.
From deep mysterious wanderings your springs
Break bubbling into beauty; where they lie
In infant helplessness awhile, but soon,
Gathering in tiny brooks, they gambol down
The steep sides of the mountain, laughing, shouting,
Teasing the wild flowers, and at every turn
Meeting new playmates still to swell their ranks;
Which, with the rich increase resistless grown,
Shed foam and thunder, that the echoing wood
Rings with the boisterous glee; while, o'er their heads,
Catching their spirit blithe, young rainbows sport,
The frolic children of the wanton sun.

Nor is your swelling prime, or green old age,
Though calm, unlovely; still, where'er ye move,
Your train is beauty; trees stand grouping by,
To mark your graceful progress; giddy flowers
And vain, as beauties wont, stoop o'er the verge
To greet their faces in your flattering glass;
The thirsty herd are following at your side;
And water-birds in clustering fleets convoy
Your sea-bound tides; and jaded man, released
From worldly thraldom, here his dwelling plants,
Here pauses in your pleasant neighborhood,
Sure of repose along your tranquil shores;
And, when your end approaches and ye blend
With the eternal ocean, ye shall fade
As placidly as when an infant dies,
And the Death-Angel shall your powers withdraw
Gently as twilight takes the parting day,
And, with a soft and gradual decline
That cheats the senses, lets it down to night.

There is nothing very original in all this; the general idea is, perhaps, the most absolutely trite in poetical literature; but the theme is not the less just on this account, while we must confess that it is admirably handled. The picture embodied in the whole of the concluding paragraph is perfect. The seven final lines convey not only a novel but a highly appropriate and beautiful image.

What follows, of this poem, however, is by no means worthy so fine a beginning. Instead of confining himself to the true poetical thesis, the beauty or the sublimity of river scenery, he descends into mere meteorology—into the uses and general philosophy of rain, etc., matters which should be left to Mr. Espy, who knows something about them, as we are sorry to say Mr. Flaccus does not.

The second and chief *poem* in the volume is entitled *The Great Descender.* We emphasize the "poem" merely by way of suggesting that *The Great Descender* is anything else. We never could understand what pleasure men of talent can take in concocting elaborate doggerel of this order. Least of all can we comprehend why, having perpetrated the atrocity, they should place it at the door of the Muse. We are at a loss to know by what right, human or divine, twattle of this character is intruded into a collection of what professes to be *poetry.* We put it to Mr. Ward, in all earnestness, if *The Great Descender,* which is a history of Sam Patch, has a single attribute, beyond that of mere versification, in common with what even Sam Patch himself would have had the hardihood to denominate a poem.

Let us call this thing a rhymed *jeu d'esprit,* a burlesque, or what not?—and, even so called and judged by its new name, we must still regard it as a failure. Even in the loosest compositions we demand a certain degree of keeping. But in *The Great Descender* none is apparent. The tone is unsteady, fluctuating between the grave and the gay, and never being precisely either. Thus there is a failure in both. The intention being never rightly taken, we are, of course, never exactly in condition either to weep or to laugh.

We do not pretend to be the Oracle of Dodona, but it does really appear to us that Mr. Flaccus intended the whole matter, in the first instance, as a solemnly serious thing; and that, having composed it in a grave vein, he became apprehensive of its exciting derision, and so interwove sundry touches of the burlesque, behind whose equivocal aspect he might shelter himself at need. In no other supposition can we reconcile the spotty appearance of the whole with a belief in the sanity of the author. It is difficult, also, in any other

view of the case, to appreciate the air of positive gravity with which he descants upon the advantages to Science which have accrued from a man's making a frog of himself. Mr. Ward is frequently pleased to denominate Mr. Patch "a martyr of science," and appears very doggedly in earnest in all passages such as the following:

> Through the glad Heavens, which tempests now conceal,
> Deep thunder-guns in quick succession peal,
> As if salutes were firing from the sky,
> To hail the triumph and the victory.
> Shout! trump of Fame, till thy brass lungs burst out!
> Shout! mortal tongues! deep-throated thunders, shout!
> For lo! electric *genius*, downward hurled,
> Has startled *Science*, and illumed the world!

That Mr. Patch was a genius we do not doubt; so is Mr. Ward; but the science displayed in jumping down the Falls is a point above us. There might have been some science in jumping *up*.

The Worth of Beauty; or a Lover's Journal, is the title of the poem next in place and importance. Of this composition Mr. Ward thus speaks in a Note: "The individual to whom the present poem relates, and who had suffered severely all the pains and penalties which arise from the want of those personal charms so much admired by him in others, gave the author many years since some fragments of a journal kept in his early days, in which he had bared his heart and set down all his thoughts and feelings. This prose journal has here been transplanted into the richer soil of verse."

The narrative of the friend of Mr. Flaccus must, originally, have been a very good thing. By "originally," we mean before it had the misfortune to be "transplanted in the richer soil of verse"—which has by no means agreed with its constitution. But, even through the dense fog of our author's rhythm, we can get an occasional glimpse of its merit. It must have been the work of a heart on fire with passion, and the utter abandon of the details reminds us even of Jean-

Jacques. But alas for this "richer soil"! *Can* we venture to present our readers with a specimen?

> Now roses blush, and violets' eyes
> And seas reflect the glance of skies;
> And now *that frolic pencil* streaks
> With quaintest tints the tulips' cheeks;
> Now jewels bloom in secret worth,
> Like blossoms of the inner earth;
> Now painted birds are pouring round
> The beauty and the wealth of sound;
> Now sea-shells glance with quivering ray,
> Too rare to seize, too fleet to stay,
> And hues outdazzling all the rest
> Are dashed profusely on the west,
> While rainbows seem to palettes changed,
> Whereon the motley tints are ranged.
> But soft the moon *that pencil* tipped,
> As though, in liquid radiance dipped,
> A likeness of the sun it drew,
> But flattered him with pearlier hue,
> Which haply spilling runs astray,
> And blots with light the Milky Way;
> While stars besprinkle all the air,
> Like spatterings of *that pencil* there.

All this by way of *exalting* the subject. The moon is made a painter, and the rainbow a palette. And the moon has a pencil (*that* pencil!) which she dips, by way of a brush, in the liquid radiance (the colors on a palette are *not* liquid) and then *draws* (not paints) a likeness of the sun; but, in the attempt, plasters him too "pearly," puts it on too thick; the consequence of which is that some of the paint is spilt, and "runs astray" and besmears the Milky Way, and "spatters" the rest of the sky with stars! We can only say that a very singular picture was spoilt in the making.

The versification of *The Worth of Beauty* proceeds much after this fashion; we select a fair example of the whole from page 43:

> Yes! pangs have cut my soul with grief
> So keen that gashes were relief,

And racks have wrung my spirit-frame
To which the strain of joints were tame,
And battle strife itself were nought
Beside the inner fight I've fought, etc., etc.

Nor do we regard any portion of it (so far as rhythm is concerned) as at all comparable to some of the better ditties of William Slater. Here, for example, from his Psalms, published in 1642:

The righteous shall his sorrow scan
And laugh at him, and say, "Behold!
What hath become of this here man
That on his riches was so bold?"

And here, again, are lines from the edition of the same Psalms, by Archbishop Parker, which we most decidedly prefer:

Who sticketh to God in sable trust,
As Sion's mount he stands full just,
Which moveth no whit nor yet can reel,
But standeth forever as stiff as steel.

The Martyr and *The Retreat of Seventy-six* are merely Revolutionary incidents "done into verse," and spoilt in the doing. *The Retreat* begins with the remarkable line,

Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp!

which is elsewhere introduced into the poem. We look in vain here for anything worth even qualified commendation.

The Diary is a record of events occurring to the author during a voyage from New York to Havre. Of these events a fit of seasickness is the chief. Mr. Ward, we believe, is the first of the *genus irritabile* who has ventured to treat so delicate a subject with that grave dignity which is its due:

Rejoice! rejoice! already on my sight
Bright shores, gray towers, and coming wonders reel;
My brain grows giddy—is it with delight?
A swimming faintness, such as one might feel
When stabbed and dying, gathers on my sense—
It weighs me down—and now—help!—horror!—

But the "horror," and indeed all that ensues, we must leave to the fancy of the poetical.

Some pieces entitled *Humorous* next succeed, and one or two of them (for example, *The Graham System* and *The Bachelor's Lament*) are not so *very* contemptible in their way, but the way itself is beneath even contempt.

To an Infant in Heaven embodies some striking thoughts, and, although feeble as a whole, and terminating lamely, may be cited as the best composition in the volume. We quote two or three of the opening stanzas:

Thou bright and starlike spirit,
  That in my visions wild
I see 'mid heaven's seraphic host—
  Oh! canst thou be my child?

My grief is quenched in wonder,
  And pride arrests my sighs;
A branch from this unworthy stock
  Now blossoms in the skies.

Our hopes of thee were lofty,
  But have we cause to grieve?
Oh! could our fondest, proudest wish
  A nobler fate conceive?

The little weeper tearless!
  The sinner snatched from sin!
The babe to more than manhood grown,
  Ere childhood did begin!

And I, thy earthly teacher,
  Would blush thy powers to see!
Thou art to me a parent now,
  And I a child to thee!

There are several other pieces in the book—but it is needless to speak of them in detail. Among them we note one or two poetical effusions, and one or two which are (satirically?) termed satirical. All are worthless.

Mr. Ward's imagery, at detached points, has occasional vigor and appropriateness; we may go so far as to say that, at

times, it is strikingly beautiful—by accident, of course. Let us cite a few instances. At page 53 we read,

> Oh, happy day!—earth, sky is fair,
> And fragrance floats along the air;
> *For all the bloomy orchards glow*
> *As with a fall of rosy snow.*

At page 91,

> How flashed the overloaded flowers
> With gems, a present from the showers!

At page 92,

> No! there is danger; all the night
> I saw her like a starry light
> More lovely in my visions lone
> Than in my day-dreams' truth she shone.
> 'Tis naught when on the sun we gaze,
> If only dazzled by his rays;
> But, when our eyes his form retain,
> Some wound to vision must remain.

And again, at page 234, speaking of a slight shock of an earthquake, the earth is said to tremble

> As if some wing of passing angel, bound
> From sphere to sphere, had brushed the golden chain
> That hangs our planet to the throne of God.

This latter passage, however, is, perhaps, not altogether original with Mr. Ward. In a poem now lying before us, entitled *Al Aaraaf,* the composition of a gentleman of Philadelphia,[1] we find what follows:

> A dome by linkèd light from heaven let down
> Sat gently on these columns as a crown;
> A window of one circular diamond there
> Looked out above into the purple air,
> And rays from God shot down that meteor chain
> And hallowed all the beauty twice again,
> Save when, between the Empyrean and that ring,
> Some eager spirit flapped his dusky wing.

[1]Poe himself. E. W.

But if Mr. Ward's imagery is, indeed, at rare intervals good, it must be granted, on the other hand, that in general it is atrociously inappropriate or low. For example:

> Thou gaping chasm! whose wide devouring throat
> Swallows a river, *while the gulping note*
> *Of monstrous deglutition gurgles loud,* etc.
>
> (*Page* 24.)

> Bright Beauty! child of starry birth,
> The grace, the gem, the flower of earth,
> The *damask livery* of Heaven! (*Page* 44.)

Here the mind wavers between gems, and stars, and taffety—between footmen and flowers. Again, at page 46,

> All thornless flowers of wit, all chaste
> And delicate essays of taste,
> All playful fancies, wingèd wiles,
> That from their pinions scatter smiles,
> All prompt resource in stress or pain,
> *Leap ready-armed* from woman's brain.

The idea of "thornless flowers," etc., leaping *"ready-armed"* could have entered few brains except those of Mr. Ward.

Of the most ineffable *bad taste* we have instances without number. For example, page 183,

> And, straining, fastens on her lips a kiss
> That seemed to *suck the life-blood from her heart!*

And here, very gravely, at page 25,

> Again he's roused, *first cramming in his cheek*
> *The weed, though vile, that props the nerves when weak.*

Here again, at page 33,

> Full well he knew, where food does not refresh,
> The shriveled soul sinks inward with the flesh—
> That he's best armed for danger's rash career,
> *Who's crammed so full there is no room for fear.*

But we doubt if the whole world of literature, poetical or prosaic, can afford a picture more utterly *disgusting* than the following, which we quote from page 177:

But most of all good eating cheers the brain,
Where other joys are rarely met—at sea—
Unless, indeed, we lose as soon as gain—
Ay, there's the rub, so baffling oft to me.
Boiled, roast, and baked—*what precious choice of dishes*
My generous throat has shared among the fishes!

'Tis sweet to leave, in each forsaken spot,
Our footprints there, if only in the sand;
'T is sweet to feel we are not all forgot,
That some will weep our flight from every land;
And sweet the knowledge, when the seas I cross,
My briny messmates! ye will mourn my loss.

This passage alone should damn the book—ay, damn a dozen such.

Of what may be termed the *niaiseries*—the sillinesses—of the volume, there is no end. Under this head we might quote two thirds of the work. For example:

Now lightning, with convulsive spasm
Splits heaven *in many a* fearful chasm.

It takes the high trees by the hair
And, as with *besoms,* sweeps the air.

Now breaks the gloom and through the *chinks*
The moon, in search of opening, *winks*—

all seriously urged, at different points of page 66. Again, on the very next page,

Bees buzzed, and wrens that thronged the rushes
Poured round incessant twittering gushes.

And here, at page 129,

And now he leads her to the slippery brink
Where ponderous tides headlong plunge down the horrid *chink.*

And here, page 109,

And, like a ravenous vulture, *peck*
The smoothness of that cheek and neck.

And here, page 111,

> While through the skin worms *wriggling* broke.

And here, page 170,

> And ride the *skittish* backs of untamed waves.

And here, page 214,

> Now clasps its mate in holy prayer,
> Or *twangs* a harp of gold.

Mr. Ward, also, is constantly talking about "thunder-guns," "thunder-trumpets," and "thunder-shrieks." He has a bad habit, too, of styling an eye "a weeper," as for example, at page 208,

> Oh, curl in smiles that mouth again
> And wipe that *weeper* dry.

Somewhere else he calls two tears "two sparklers"—very much in the style of Mr. Richard Swiveller, who was fond of denominating Madeira "the rosy." "In the nick," meaning in the height, or fullness, is likewise a pet expression of the author of *The Great Descender*. Speaking of American forests, at page 286, for instance, he says, "let the doubter walk through them in the nick of their glory." A phrase which may be considered as in the very nick of good taste.

We cannot pause to comment upon Mr. Ward's most extraordinary system of versification. *Is* it his own? He has quite an original way of conglomerating consonants, and seems to have been experimenting whether it were not possible to do altogether without vowels. Sometimes he strings together quite a chain of impossibilities. The line, for example, at page 51,

> Or, only such as seashells flash,

puts us much in mind of the schoolboy stumbling-block, beginning, "The cat ran up the ladder with a lump of raw liver in her mouth," and we defy Sam Patch himself to pronounce it twice in succession without tumbling into a blunder.

But we are fairly wearied with this absurd theme. *Who*

calls Mr. Ward a poet? He is a second-rate, or a third-rate, or perhaps a ninety-ninth-rate poetaster. He is a gentleman of "elegant leisure," and gentlemen of elegant leisure are, for the most part, neither men, women, nor Harriet Martineaus. Similar opinions, we believe, were expressed by somebody else—was it Mr. Benjamin?—not very long ago. But neither Mr. Ward nor the *Knickerbocker* would be convinced. The latter, by way of defense, went into a treatise upon Sam Patch, and Mr. Ward, "in the nick of his glory," wrote another poem against criticism in general, in which he called Mr. Benjamin "a wasp" and "an owl," and endeavored to prove him an ass. An owl is a wise bird—especially in spectacles—still, we do not look upon Mr. Benjamin as an owl. If all are owls who disbelieve in this book (which we now throw to the pigs), then the world at large cuts a pretty figure, indeed, and should be burnt up in April, as Mr. Miller desires—for it is only one immense aviary of owls.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

August 1843

In speaking of Mr. William Ellery Channing, who has just published a very neat little volume of poems, we feel the necessity of employing the indefinite rather than the definite article. He is *a*, and by no means *the*, William Ellery Channing. He is only *the son* of the great essayist deceased.[1] He is just such a person, in despite of his *clarum et venerabile nomen*, as Pindar would have designated by the significant term τις. It may be said in his favor that nobody ever heard of him. Like an honest woman, he has always succeeded in keeping himself from being made the subject of gossip. His book contains about sixty-three things,

[1]William Ellery Channing was not the son but the nephew of the famous Boston divine of the same name. E. W.

which he calls poems, and which he no doubt seriously supposes so to be. They are full of all kinds of mistakes, of which the most important is that of their having been printed at all. They are not precisely English—nor will we insult a great nation by calling them Kickapoo; perhaps they are Channingese. We may convey some general idea of them by two foreign terms not in common use—the Italian *pavoneggiarsi,* "to strut like a peacock," and the German word for "sky-rocketing," *schwärmerei.* They are more preposterous, in a word, than any poems except those of the author of Sam Patch; for we presume we are right (are we not?) in taking it for granted that the author of Sam Patch is the very worst of all the wretched poets that ever existed upon earth.

In spite, however, of the customary phrase about a man's "making a fool of himself," we doubt if anyone was ever a fool of his own free will and accord. A poet, therefore, should not always be taken too strictly to task. He should be treated with leniency, and, even when damned, should be damned with respect. Nobility of descent, too, should be allowed its privileges not more in social life than in letters. The son of a great author cannot be handled too tenderly by the critical Jack Ketch. Mr. Channing must be hung, that's true. He must be hung *in terrorem*—and for this there is no help under the sun; but then we shall do him all manner of justice, and observe every species of decorum, and be especially careful of his feelings, and hang him gingerly and gracefully, with a silken cord, as the Spaniards hang their grandees of the blue blood, their nobles of the *sangre azul.*

To be serious, then; as we always wish to be if possible. Mr. Channing (whom we suppose to be a *very* young man, since we are precluded from supposing him a *very* old one) appears to have been inoculated, at the same moment, with *virus* from Tennyson and from Carlyle. And here we do not wish to be misunderstood. For Tennyson, as for a man imbued with the richest and rarest poetic impulses, we have an admiration, a reverence unbounded. His *Morte D'Arthur,* his *Locksley Hall,* his *Sleeping Beauty,* his *Lady of Shalott,* his *Lotos Eaters,* his *Œnone,* and many other poems, are not

surpassed, in all that gives to poetry its distinctive value, by the compositions of anyone living or dead. And his leading error, that error which renders him unpopular—a point, to be sure, of no particular importance—that very error, we say, is founded in truth, in a keen perception of the elements of poetic beauty. We allude to his quaintness, to what the world chooses to term his affectation. No true poet, no critic whose approbation is worth even a copy of the volume we now hold in our hand, will deny that he feels impressed, sometimes even to tears, by many of those very affectations which he is impelled by the prejudice of his education or by the cant of his reason to condemn. He should thus be led to examine the extent of the one and to be wary of the deductions of the other. In fact, the profound intuition of Lord Bacon has supplied, in one of his immortal apothegms, the whole philosophy of the point at issue. "There is no exquisite beauty," he truly says, "without some *strangeness* in its proportions." We maintain, then, that Tennyson errs, not in his occasional quaintness, but in its continual and obtrusive excess. And, in accusing Mr. Channing of having been inoculated with *virus* from Tennyson, we merely mean to say that he has adopted and exaggerated that noble poet's characteristic defect, having mistaken it for his principal merit.

Mr. Tennyson is quaint only; he is never, as some have supposed him, obscure, except, indeed, to the uneducated, whom he does not address. Mr. Carlyle, on the other hand, is obscure only; he is seldom, as some have imagined him, quaint. So far he is right; for although quaintness, employed by a man of judgment and genius, may be made auxiliary to a poem, whose true thesis is beauty, and beauty alone, it is grossly, and even ridiculously, out of place in a work of prose. But in his obscurity it is scarcely necessary to say that he is wrong. Either a man intends to be understood, or he does not. If he write a book which he intends not to be understood, we shall be very happy indeed not to understand it; but if he write a book which he means to be understood, and, in this book, be at all possible pains to prevent us from understanding it, we can only say that he is an ass—

and this, to be brief, is our private opinion of Mr. Carlyle, which we now take the liberty of making public.

It seems that having deduced, from Tennyson and Carlyle, an opinion of the sublimity of everything odd, and of the profundity of everything meaningless, Mr. Channing has conceived the idea of setting up for himself as a poet of unusual depth and very remarkable powers of mind. His airs and graces, in consequence, have a highly picturesque effect, and the Boston critics, who have a notion that poets are porpoises (for they are always talking about their running in "schools"), cannot make up their minds as to what particular school he must belong. *We* say the Bobby Button school, by all means. He clearly belongs to that. And should nobody ever have heard of the Bobby Button school, that is a point of no material importance. We will answer for it, as it is one of our own. Bobby Button is a gentleman with whom, for a long time, we have had the honor of an intimate acquaintance. His personal appearance is striking. He has quite a big head. His eyes protrude and have all the air of saucers. His chin retreats. His mouth is depressed at the corners. He wears a perpetual frown of contemplation. His words are slow, emphatic, few, and oracular. His "the's," "ands," and "buts" have more meaning than other men's polysyllables. His nods would have put Burleigh's to the blush. His whole aspect, indeed, conveys the idea of a gentleman modest to a fault, and painfully overburdened with intellect. We insist, however, upon calling Mr. Channing's school of poetry the Bobby Button school, rather because Mr. Channing's poetry is strongly suggestive of Bobby Button than because Mr. Button himself ever dallied, to any very great extent, with the Muses. With the exception, indeed, of a *very* fine *Sonnet to a Pig*—or rather the fragment of a sonnet, for he proceeded no farther than the words "O piggy wiggy," with the O italicized for emphasis —with the exception of this, we say, we are not aware of his having produced anything worthy of that stupendous genius which is certainly *in* him, and only wants, like the starling of Sterne, "to get out."

The best passage in the book before us is to be found at

page 121, and we quote it, as a matter of simple justice, in full:

> Dear friend, in this fair atmosphere again,
> Far from the noisy echoes of the main,
> Amid the world-old mountains, and the hills
> From whose strange grouping a fine power distils
> The soothing and the calm, I seek repose,
> The city's noise forgot and hard stern woes.
> As thou once saidst, the rarest sons of earth
> Have in the dust of cities shown their worth,
> Where long collision with the human curse
> Has of great glory been the frequent nurse,
> *And only those who in sad cities dwell*
> *Are of the green trees fully sensible.*
> *To them the silver bells of tinkling streams*
> *Seem brighter than an angel's laugh in dreams.*

The four lines italicized are highly meritorious, and the whole extract is so far decent and intelligible that we experienced a feeling of surprise upon meeting it amid the doggerel which surrounds it. Not less was our astonishment upon finding, at page 18, a fine thought so well embodied as the following:

> *Or see the early stars, a mild sweet train,*
> *Come out to bury the diurnal sun.*

But, in the way of commendation, we have now done. We have carefully explored the whole volume, in vain, for a single additional line worth even the most qualified applause.

The utter abandon—the charming *négligé*—the perfect looseness (to use a Western phrase) of his rhythm, is one of Mr. Channing's most noticeable, and certainly one of his most refreshing traits. It would be quite a pleasure to hear him read or scan, or to hear anybody else read or scan, such a line as this, at page 3, for example:

> Masculine almost though softly carved in grace,

where "masculine" has to be read as a trochee, and "almost" as an iambus; or this, at page 8:

> That compels me on through wood, and fell, and moor,

where "that compels" has to be pronounced as equivalent to the iambus "me on"; or this, at page 18:

I leave thee, *the* maid spoke to *the* true youth,

where both the "the's" demand a strong accent to preserve the iambic rhythm; or this, at page 29:

So in our steps strides truth and honest trust,

where (to say nothing of the grammar, which *may* be Dutch, but is not English) it is quite impossible to get through with the "steps strides truth" without dislocating the under jaw; or this, at page 32:

The serene azure. *The* keen stars are now;

or this, on the same page:

Some*time* of sorrow. Joy to *thy* Fu*ture;*

or this, at page 56:

Harsh action, even in repose inwardly harsh;

or this, at page 59:

Provides am*plest* enjoyment. O my brother;

or this, at page 138:

Like the swift petrel, mimicking the wave's measure;

about all of which the less we say the better.

At page 96 we read thus:

Where the untrammeled soul on her wind-pinions,
Fearlessly sweeping, defies my earthly woes,
There, there upon that infinitest sea
Lady, thy hope, so fair a hope, summons me.

At page 51 we have it thus:

The river calmly flows
Through shining banks, through lonely glen
Where the owl shrieks, though ne'er the cheer of men
Has stirred its mute repose;
Still if you should walk there you would go there again.

At page 136 we read as follows:

> Tune thy clear voice to no funereal song,
> *For O Death stands to welcome thee sure.*

At page 116 he has this:

> These graves, you mean;
> Their histo*ry* who knows bet*ter* than I?
> For in the busy street strikes on my ear
> *Each sound, even inaudible voices*
> Lengthen the long tale my memory tells.

Just below, on the same page, he has,

> I see but little difference tru*ly*,

and at page 76 he fairly puts the climax to metrical absurdity in the lines which follow:

> The spirit builds his house in *the* least flowers—
> A beautiful mansion; how the colors live,
> Int*ri*cately del*i*cate!

This is to be read, of course, intrikkittly delikkit, and "intrikkittly delikkit" it is—unless, indeed, we are very especially mistaken.

The affectations—the Tennysonisms of Mr. Channing—pervade his book at all points, and are not easily particularized. He employs, for example, the word "delight" for "delighted"; as at page 2:

> Delight to trace the mountain-brook's descent.

He uses, also, all the prepositions in a different sense from the rabble. If, for instance, he was called upon to say "on," he wouldn't say it by any means, but he'd say "off," and endeavor to make it answer the purpose. For "to," in the same manner, he says "from"; for "with," "of," and so on; at page 2, for example:

> Nor less in winter, mid the glittering banks
> Heaped *of* unspotted snow, the maiden roved.

For "serene," he says "*se*rene"; as at page 4:

> The influences of this *se*rene isle.

For "subdued," he says "*sub*dued"; as at page 16:

So full of thought, so *sub*dued to bright fears.

By the way, what kind of fears *are* bright?

For "eternal," he says "*e*terne"; as at page 30:

Has risen, *and* an *e*terne sun now paints.

For "friendless," he substitutes "friend*less*"; as at page 31:

Are drawn in other figures. Not friend*less*.

To "future," he prefers "fu*ture*"; as at page 32:

Sometime of sorrow. Joy to thy fu*ture*.

To "azure," in the same way, he prefers "a*zure*"; as at page 46:

Ye stand each separate in the a*zure*.

In place of "unheard," he writes "*un*heard"; as thus, at page 47:

Or think, though *un*heard, that your sphere is dumb.

In place of "perchance," he writes "*per*chance"; as at page 71:

When *per*chance sorrow with her icy smile.

Instead of "more infinite," he writes "infi*niter*," with an accent on the "nit"; as thus, at page 100:

Hope's child, I summon infi*niter* powers.

And here we might as well ask Mr. Channing, in passing, what idea he attaches to infinity, and whether he really thinks that he is at liberty to subject the adjective "infinite" to degrees of comparison. Some of these days we shall hear, no doubt, of "eternal," "eternaler," and "eternalest."

Our author is quite enamored of the word "sumptuous," and talks about "sumptuous trees" and "sumptuous girls," with no other object, we think, than to employ the epithet at all hazards and upon all occasions. He seems unconscious that it means nothing more than expensive, or costly; and

we are not quite sure that either trees or girls are, in America, either the one or the other.

For "loved" Mr. Channing prefers to say "was loving," and takes great pleasure in the law phrase "the same." Both peculiarities are exemplified at page 20, where he says:

> The maid was loving this enamored same.

He is fond, also, of inversions and contractions, and employs them in a very singular manner. At page 15 he has

> Now may I thee describe a Paradise.

At page 86 he says:

> Thou lazy river, flowing neither way
> Me figurest, and yet thy banks seem gay.

At page 143 he writes:

> Men change that Heaven above not more;

meaning that men change so much that Heaven above does not change more. At page 150 he says:

> But so much soul hast thou within thy form
> Than luscious summer days thou art the more;

by which he would imply that the lady has so much soul within her form that she is more luscious than luscious summer days.

Were we to quote specimens under the general head of "utter and irredeemable nonsense," we should quote nine tenths of the book. Such nonsense, we mean, as the following, from page 11:

> I hear thy solemn anthem fall,
> Of richest song upon my ear,
> That clothes thee in thy golden pall
> As this wide sun flows on the mere.

Now let us translate this: He hears (Mr. Channing) a solemn anthem, of richest song, fall upon his ear, and this anthem clothes the individual who sings it in that individual's golden pall, in the same manner that, or at the time

when, the wide sun flows on the mere—which is all very delightful, no doubt.

At page 37 he informs us that,

> It is not living,
> To a soul believing,
> To change each noble joy,
> Which our strength employs,
> For a state half rotten
> And a life of toys,

and that it is

> Better to be forgotten
> Than lose equipoise.

And we dare say it is, if one could only understand what kind of equipoise is intended. It is better to be forgotten, for instance, than to lose one's equipoise on the top of a shot tower.

Occupying the whole of page 88, he has the six lines which follow, and we will present anyone (the author not excepted) with a copy of the volume, if anyone will tell us what they are all about:

> He came and waved a little silver wand,
> He dropped the veil that hid a statue fair,
> He drew a circle with that pearly hand,
> His grace confined that beauty in the air,
> Those limbs so gentle now at rest from flight,
> Those quiet eyes now musing on the night.

At page 102 he has the following:

> Dry leaves with yellow ferns, they are
> Fit wreath of Autumn, while a star
> Still, bright, and pure, our frosty air
> Shivers in twinkling points
> Of thin celestial hair
> And thus one side of Heaven anoints.

This we think we can explain. Let us see. Dry leaves, mixed with yellow ferns, are a wreath fit for autumn at the time when our frosty air shivers a still, bright, and pure star

with twinkling points of thin celestial hair, and with this hair, or hair plaster, anoints one side of the sky. Yes—this is it—no doubt.

At page 123 we have these lines:

> My sweet girl is lying still
> In her lovely atmosphere;
> The gentle hopes her blue veins fill
> With pure silver warm and clear.
>
> Oh, see her hair, oh, mark her breast!
> Would it not, oh, comfort thee,
> If thou couldst nightly go to rest
> By that virgin chastity?

Yes; we think, upon the whole, it would. The eight lines are entitled a *Song*, and we should like very much to hear Mr. Channing sing it.

Pages 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41 are filled with short *Thoughts* in what Mr. Channing supposes to be the manner of Jean Paul. One of them runs thus:

> How shall I live? In earnestness.
> What shall I do? Work earnestly.
> What shall I give? A willingness.
> What shall I gain? Tranquillity.
> But do you mean a quietness
> In which I act and no man bless?
> Flash out in action infinite and free,
> Action conjoined with deep tranquillity,
> Resting upon the soul's true utterance,
> And life shall flow as merry as a dance.

All our readers will be happy to hear, we are sure, that Mr. Channing is going "to flash out." Elsewhere, at page 97, he expresses very similar sentiments:

> My empire is myself and I defy
> The external; yes, I rule the whole or die!

It will be observed here that Mr. Channing's empire is himself (a small kingdom, however), that he intends to defy "the external," whatever that is—perhaps he means the infernal—and that, in short, he is going to rule the whole or

die; all which is very proper, indeed, and nothing more than we have to expect from Mr. Channing.

Again, at page 146, he is rather fierce than otherwise. He says:

> We surely were not meant to ride the sea,
> Skimming the wave in that so prisoned small,
> Reposing our infinite faculties utterly.
> Boom like a roaring sunlit waterfall,
> Humming to infinite abysms: speak loud, speak free!

Here Mr. Channing not only intends to "speak loud and free" himself, but advises everybody else to do likewise. For his own part, he says, he is going to *"boom"*—"to hum and to boom"—to "hum like a roaring waterfall" and "boom to an infinite abysm." What, in the name of Beelzebub, *is* to become of us all?

At page 39, while indulging in similar bursts of fervor and of indignation, he says:

> Thou meetest a common man
> With a delusive show of *can,*

and this passage we quote by way of instancing what we consider the only misprint in the book. Mr. Channing could never have meant to say:

> Thou meetest a common man
> With a delusive show of *can;*

for what *is* a delusive show of *can?* No doubt it should have been:

> Thou meetest a little pup
> With a delusive show of tin-cup.

A can, we believe, is a tin cup, and the cup must have been tied to the tail of the pup. Boys *will* do such tricks, and there is no earthly way of preventing them, we believe, short of cutting off their heads—or the tails of the pups.

And this remarkable little volume is, after all, by William Ellery Channing. A great name, it has been said, is, in many cases, a great misfortune. We hear daily complaints from the George Washington Dixons, the Socrates Smiths, and

the Napoleon Buonaparte Joneses, about the inconsiderate ambition of their parents and sponsors. By inducing invidious comparison, these *prænomina* get their bearers (so they say) into every variety of scrape. If George Washington Dixon, for example, does not think proper, upon compulsion, to distinguish himself as a patriot, he is considered a very singular man; and Socrates Smith is never brought up before his honor the Mayor without receiving a double allowance of thirty days; while his honor the Mayor can assign no sounder reason for his severity than that better things than getting toddied are to be expected of Socrates. Napoleon Buonaparte Jones, on the other hand, to say nothing of being called Nota Bene Jones by all his acquaintance, is cowskinned, with perfect regularity, five times a month, merely because people *will* feel it a point of honor to cowskin a Napoleon Buonaparte.

And yet these gentlemen—the Smiths and the Joneses—are wrong *in toto,* as the Smiths and the Joneses invariably are. They are wrong, we say, in accusing their parents and sponsors. They err in attributing their misfortunes and persecutions to the *prænomina*—to the names assigned them at the baptismal font. Mr. Socrates Smith does not receive his double quantum of thirty days because he is called Socrates, but because he is called Socrates *Smith.* Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte Jones is not in the weekly receipt of a flogging on account of being Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte, but simply on account of being Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte *Jones.* Here, indeed, is a clear distinction. It is the surname which is to blame, after all. Mr. Smith must drop the Smith. Mr. Jones should discard the Jones. No one would ever think of taking Socrates—Socrates solely—to the watch house; and there is not a bully living who would venture to cowskin Napoleon Buonaparte *per se.* And the reason is plain. With nine individuals out of ten, as the world is at present happily constituted, Mr. Socrates (without the Smith) would be taken for the veritable philosopher of whom we have heard so much, and Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte (without the Jones) would be received implicitly as the hero of Austerlitz. And should Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte (without the Jones) give

an opinion upon military strategy, it would be heard with the profoundest respect. And should Mr. Socrates (without the Smith) deliver a lecture or write a book, what critic so bold as not to pronounce it more luminous than the logic of Emerson, and more profound than the Orphicism of Alcott. In fact, both Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, in the case we have imagined, would derive, through their own ingenuity, a very material advantage. But no such ingenuity has been needed in the case of Mr. William Ellery Channing, who has been befriended by Fate, or the foresight of his sponsors, and who has *no* Jones or Smith at the end of his name.

And here, too, a question occurs. There are many people in the world silly enough to be deceived by appearances. There are individuals so crude in intellect—so *green* (if we may be permitted to employ a word which answers our purpose much better than any other in the language), so green, we say, as to imagine, in the absence of any indication to the contrary, that a volume bearing upon its title page the name of William Ellery Channing must necessarily be the posthumous work of that truly illustrious author, the *sole* William Ellery Channing of whom anybody in the world ever heard. There are a vast number of uninformed young persons prowling about our bookshops, who will be raw enough to buy, and even to read half through this pretty little book (God preserve and forgive them!) mistaking it for the composition of another. But what then? Are not books made, as well as razors, to sell? The poet's name *is* William Ellery Channing—is it *not?* And if a man has not a right to the use of his own name, to the use of what has he a right? And could the poet have reconciled it to his conscience to have injured the sale of his own volume by any uncalled-for announcement upon the title page, or in a preface, to the effect that he is not his father, but only his father's very intelligent son? To put the case more clearly by reference to our old friends, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones. Is either Mr. Smith, when mistaken for Socrates, or Mr. Jones, when accosted as Napoleon, bound, by any conceivable species of honor, to inform the whole world—

the one, that he is not Socrates, but only Socrates Smith; the other, that he is by no means Napoleon Buonaparte, but only Napoleon Buonaparte Jones?

SIMMS'S *THE WIGWAM AND THE CABIN*

January 1846

MR. SIMMS, we believe, made his first, or nearly his first, appearance before an American audience with a small volume entitled *Martin Faber,* an amplification of a much shorter fiction. He had some difficulty in getting it published, but the Harpers finally undertook it, and it did credit to their judgment. It was well received both by the public and the more discriminative few, although some of the critics objected that the story was an imitation of *Miserrimus,* a very powerful fiction by the author of *Pickwick Abroad.* The original tale, however—the germ of *Martin Faber*—was written long before the publication of *Miserrimus.* But independently of this fact, there is not the slightest ground for the charge of imitation. The thesis and incidents of the two works are totally dissimilar; the idea of resemblance arises only from the absolute identity of *effect* wrought by both.

Martin Faber was succeeded, at short intervals, by a great number and variety of fictions, some brief, but many of the ordinary novel size. Among these we may notice *Guy Rivers, The Partisan, The Yemassee, Mellichampe, Beauchampe,* and *Richard Hurdis.* The last two were issued anonymously, the author wishing to ascertain whether the success of his books (which was great) had anything to do with his mere name as the writer of previous works. The result proved that popularity, in Mr. Simms's case, arose solely from intrinsic merit, for *Beauchampe* and *Richard Hurdis* were the most popular of his fictions, and excited very general attention and curiosity. *Border Beagles* was another of his anony-

mous novels, published with the same end in view, and, although disfigured by some instances of bad taste, was even more successful than *Richard Hurdis.*

The "bad taste" of the *Border Beagles* was more particularly apparent in *The Partisan, The Yemassee,* and one or two other of the author's earlier works, and displayed itself most offensively in a certain fondness for the purely disgusting or repulsive, where the intention was or should have been merely the horrible. The writer evinced a strange propensity for minute details of human and brute suffering, and even indulged at times in more unequivocal obscenities. His English, too, was, in his efforts, exceedingly objectionable—verbose, involute, and not unfrequently ungrammatical. He was especially given to pet words, of which we remember at present only "hug," "coil," and the compound "old-time," and introduced them upon all occasions. Neither was he at this period particularly dexterous in the conduct of his stories. His improvement, however, was rapid at all these points, although, on the two first counts of our indictment, there is still abundant room for improvement. But whatever may have been his early defects, or whatever are his present errors, there can be no doubt that from the very beginning he gave evidence of genius, and that of no common order. His *Martin Faber,* in our opinion, is a more forcible story than its supposed prototype, *Miserrimus.* The difference in the American reception of the two is to be referred to the fact (we blush while recording it) that *Miserrimus* was understood to be the work of an Englishman, and *Martin Faber* was known to be the composition of an American as yet unaccredited in our Republic of Letters. The fiction of Mr. Simms gave indication, we repeat, of genius, and that of no common order. Had he been even a Yankee, this genius would have been rendered immediately manifest to his countrymen, but unhappily (*perhaps*) he was a Southerner, and united the Southern pride, the Southern dislike to the making of bargains, with the Southern supineness and general want of tact in all matters relating to the making of money. His book, therefore, depended entirely upon its own intrinsic value and resources, but with

these it made its way in the end. The "intrinsic value" consisted first of a very vigorous imagination in the conception of the story; secondly, in artistic skill manifested in its conduct; thirdly, in general vigor, life, movement—the whole resulting in deep interest on the part of the reader. These high qualities Mr. Simms has carried with him in his subsequent books; and they are qualities which, above all others, the fresh and vigorous intellect of America should and does esteem. It may be said, upon the whole, that while there are several of our native writers who excel the author of *Martin Faber* at particular *points*, there is, nevertheless, not one who surpasses him in the aggregate of the higher excellences of fiction. We confidently expect him to do much for the lighter literature of his country.

The volume now before us has a title which may mislead the reader. *The Wigwam and the Cabin* is merely a generic phrase, intended to designate the subject matter of a series of short tales, most of which have first seen the light in the Annuals. "The material employed," says the author, "will be found to illustrate, in large degree, the border history of the South. I can speak with confidence of the general truthfulness of its treatment. The life of the planter, the squatter, the Indian, the negro, the bold and hardy pioneer, and the vigorous yeoman—these are the subjects. In their delineation I have mostly drawn from living portraits, and, in frequent instances, from actual scenes and circumstances within the memories of men."

All the tales in this collection have merit, and the first has merit of a very peculiar kind. *Grayling, or Murder Will Out,* is the title. The story was well received in England, but on this fact no opinion can be safely based. The *Athenæum,* we believe, or some other of the London weekly critical journals, having its attention called (no doubt through personal influence) to Carey and Hart's beautiful annual *The Gift,* found it convenient, in the course of its notice, to speak at length of some one particular article, and *Murder Will Out* probably arrested the attention of the sub-editor who was employed in so trivial a task as the patting on the head an American book—arrested his atten-

tion first from its title (murder being a taking theme with the cockney), and secondly, from its details of Southern forest scenery. Large quotations were made, as a matter of course, and very ample commendation bestowed—the whole criticism proving nothing, in our opinion, but that the critic had not read a single syllable of the story. The *critique*, however, had at least the good effect of calling American attention to the fact that an American might possibly do a decent thing (provided the possibility were first admitted by the British sub-editors), and the result was, first, that many persons read, and secondly, that all persons admired, the "excellent story in *The Gift* that had actually been called 'readable' by one of the English newspapers."

Now had *Murder Will Out* been a much worse story than was ever written by Professor Ingraham, still, under the circumstances, we patriotic and independent Americans would have declared it inimitable; but, by some species of odd accident, it happened to deserve all that the British "sub-sub" had condescended to say of it, on the strength of a guess as to what it was all about. It is really an admirable tale, nobly conceived, and skillfully carried into execution —the best ghost story ever written *by an American*—for we presume that this is the ultimate extent of commendation to which we, as an humble American, dare go.

The other stories of the volume do credit to the author's abilities, and display their peculiarities in a strong light, but there is no one of them so good as *Murder Will Out.*

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

April 1846

MR. BRYANT'S position in the poetical world is, perhaps, better settled than that of any American. There is less difference of opinion about his rank; but, as usual, the agree-

ment is more decided in private literary circles than in what appears to be the public expression of sentiment as gleaned from the press. I may as well observe here, too, that this coincidence of opinion in private circles is in all cases very noticeable when compared with the discrepancy of the apparent public opinion. In private it is quite a rare thing to find any strongly marked disagreement—I mean, of course, about mere authorial merit. The author accustomed to seclusion, and mingling for the first time freely with the literary people about him, is invariably startled and delighted to find that the decisions of his own unbiased judgment—decisions to which he has refrained from giving voice on account of their broad contradiction to the decision of the press—are sustained and considered quite as matters of course by almost every person with whom he converses. The fact is, that, when brought face to face with each other, we are constrained to a certain amount of honesty by the sheer trouble it causes us to mold the countenance to a lie. We put on paper with a grave air what we could not for our lives assert personally to a friend without either blushing or laughing outright. That the opinion of the press is not an honest opinion—that necessarily it is impossible that it should be an honest opinion—is never denied by the members of the press themselves. Individual presses, of course, are now and then honest, but I speak of the combined effect. Indeed, it would be difficult for those conversant with the *modus operandi* of public journals to deny the general falsity of impression conveyed. Let, in America, a book be published by an unknown, careless, or uninfluential author; if he publishes it "on his own account," he will be confounded at finding that no notice of it is taken at all. If it has been intrusted to a publisher of caste, there will appear forthwith in each of the leading business papers a variously phrased critique to the extent of three or four lines, and to the effect that "we have received, from the fertile press of So and So, a volume entitled This and That, which appears to be well worthy perusal, and which is 'got up' in the customary neat style of the enterprising firm of So and So." On the other hand, let our author have acquired influence.

experience, or (what will stand him in good stead of either) effrontery, on the issue of his book he will obtain from his publisher a hundred copies (or more, as the case may be) "for distribution among friends connected with the press." Armed with these, he will call personally either at the office or (if he understands his game) at the private residence of every editor within his reach, enter into conversation, compliment the journalist, interest him, as if incidentally, in the subject of the book, and finally, watching an opportunity, beg leave to hand him "a volume which, quite opportunely, is on the very matter now under discussion." If the editor seems sufficiently interested, the rest is left to fate; but if there is any lukewarmness (usually indicated by a polite regret on the editor's part that he really has "no time to render the work that justice which its importance demands"), then our author is prepared to understand and to sympathize; has, luckily, a friend thoroughly conversant with the topic, and who (perhaps) could be persuaded to write some account of the volume, provided that the editor would be kind enough just to glance over the critique and amend it in accordance with his own particular views. Glad to fill half a column or so of his editorial space, and still more glad to get rid of his visitor, the journalist assents. The author retires, consults the friend, instructs him touching the strong points of the volume and, insinuating in some shape a *quid pro quo,* gets an elaborate critique written (or, what is more usual and far more simple, writes it himself), and his business in this individual quarter is accomplished. Nothing more than sheer impudence is requisite to accomplish it in all.

Now the effect of this system (for it has really grown to be such) is obvious. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, men of genius, too indolent and careless about worldly concerns to bestir themselves after this fashion, have also that pride of intellect which would prevent them, under any circumstances, from even insinuating, by the presentation of a book to a member of the press, a desire to have that book reviewed. They, consequently, and their works, are utterly overwhelmed and extinguished in the flood of

the *apparent* public adulation upon which in gilded barges are borne triumphant the ingenious toady and the diligent quack.

In general, the books of the toadies and quacks, not being read at all, are safe from any contradiction of this self-bestowed praise; but now and then it happens that the excess of the laudation works out in part its own remedy. Men of leisure, hearing one of the toady works commended, look at it, read its preface and a few pages of its body, and throw it aside with disgust, wondering at the ill taste of the *editors* who extol it. But there is an iteration, and then a continuous reiteration of the panegyric, till these men of leisure begin to suspect themselves in the wrong, to fancy that there may really be something good lying *perdu* in the volume. In a fit of desperate curiosity they read it through critically, their indignation growing hotter at each succeeding page till it gets the better even of contempt. The result is, that reviews now appear in various quarters entirely at variance with the opinions so generally expressed, and which, but for these indignation reviews, would have passed universally current as the opinion of the public. It is in this manner that those gross seeming discrepancies arise which so often astonish us, but which vanish instantaneously in private society.

But although it may be said, in general, that Mr. Bryant's position is comparatively well settled, still for some time past there has been a growing tendency to underestimate him. The new licentious "schools" of poetry—I do not now speak of the transcendentalists, who are the merest nobodies, fatiguing even themselves, but the Tennysonian and Barrettian schools—having, in their rashness of spirit, much in accordance with the whole spirit of the age, thrown into the shade necessarily all that seems akin to the conservatism of half a century ago,—the conventionalities, even the most justifiable *decora* of composition, are regarded, *per se,* with a suspicious eye. When I say *per se,* I mean that, from finding them so long in connection with conservatism of thought, we have come at last to dislike them, not merely as the outward visible signs of that conservatism, but as things evil

in themselves. It is very clear that those accuracies and elegancies of style, and of general manner, which in the time of Pope were considered as *prima facie* and indispensable indications of genius, are now conversely regarded. How few are willing to admit the possibility of reconciling genius with artistic skill! Yet this reconciliation is not only possible, but an absolute necessity. It is a mere prejudice which has hitherto prevented the union, by studiously insisting upon a natural repulsion which not only does not exist but which is at war with all the analogies of nature. The greatest poems will not be written until this prejudice is annihilated; and I mean to express a very exalted opinion of Mr. Bryant when I say that his works in time to come will do much towards the annihilation.

I have never disbelieved in the perfect consistency, and even congeniality, of the highest genius and the profoundest art; but in the case of the author of *The Ages,* I *have* fallen into the general error of undervaluing his poetic ability on account of the mere "elegancies and accuracies" to which allusion has already been made. I confess that, with an absolute abstraction from all personal feelings, and with the most sincere intention to do justice, I was at one period beguiled into this popular error; there can be no difficulty, therefore, on my part, in excusing the inadvertence in others.

It will never do to claim for Bryant a genius of the loftiest order, but there has been latterly, since the days of Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Lowell, a growing disposition to deny him genius in any respect. He is now commonly spoken of as "a man of high poetical talent, very 'correct,' with a warm appreciation of the beauty of nature and great descriptive powers, but rather too much of the old-school manner of Cowper, Goldsmith, and Young." This is the truth, but not the whole truth. Mr. Bryant has genius, and that of a marked character, but it has been overlooked by modern schools, because deficient in those externals which have become in a measure symbolical of those schools.

Dr. Griswold, in summing up his comments on Bryant, has the following significant objections: "His genius is not versatile; he has related no history; he has not sung of the

passion of love; he has not described artificial life. Still the tenderness and feeling in *The Death of the Flowers, Rizpah, The Indian Girl's Lament,* and other pieces, show that he might have excelled in delineations of the gentler passions, had he made them his study."

Now, in describing *no* artificial life, in relating *no* history, in *not* singing the passion of love, the poet has merely shown himself the profound artist, has merely evinced a proper consciousness that such are not the legitimate themes of poetry. That they are not, I have repeatedly shown, or attempted to show; and to go over the demonstration now would be foreign to the gossiping and desultory nature of the present article. What Dr. Griswold means by "the gentler passions" is, I presume, not very clear to himself; but it is possible that he employs the phrase in consequence of the gentle, unpassionate emotion induced by the poems of which he quotes the titles. It is precisely this "unpassionate emotion" which is the limit of the true poetical art. Passion proper and poesy are discordant. Poetry, in elevating, tranquillizes *the soul.* With *the heart* it has nothing to do. For a fuller explanation of these views I refer the reader to an analysis of a poem by Mrs. Welby—an analysis contained in an article called *Marginalia,* and published about a year ago in the *Democratic Review.*

The editor of *The Poets and Poetry of America* thinks the literary precocity of Bryant remarkable. "There are few recorded more remarkable," he says. The first edition of *The Embargo* was in 1808, and the poet was born in 1794; he was more than thirteen, then, when the satire was printed, although it is reported to have been written a year earlier. I quote a few lines:

> Oh, might some patriot rise, the gloom dispel,
> Chase Error's mist and break the magic spell!
> But vain the wish; for, hark! the murmuring meed
> Of hoarse applause from yonder shed proceed.
> Enter and view the thronging concourse there,
> Intent with gaping mouth and stupid stare;
> While in the midst their supple leader stands,
> Harangues aloud. and flourishes his hands,

To adulation tunes his servile throat,
And sues successful for each blockhead's vote.

This is a fair specimen of the whole, both as regards its satirical and rhythmical power. A satire is, of course, no *poem*. I have known boys of an earlier age do better things, although the case is rare. All depends upon the course of education. Bryant's father "was familiar with the best English literature, and perceiving in his son indications of superior genius, attended carefully to his instruction, taught him the art of composition, and guided his literary taste." This being understood, the marvel of such verse as I have quoted ceases at once, even admitting it to be thoroughly the boy's own work; but it is difficult to make any such admission. The father *must* have suggested, revised, retouched.

The longest poem of Bryant is *The Ages*—thirty-five Spenserian stanzas. It is the one improper theme of its author. The design is, "from a survey of the past ages of the world, and of the successive advances of mankind in knowledge and virtue, to justify and confirm the hopes of the philanthropist for the future destinies of the human race." All this would have been more rationally, because more effectually, accomplished in prose. Dismissing it as a poem (which in its general tendency it is not), one might commend the force of its argumentation but for the radical error of deducing a hope of progression from the cycles of physical nature.

The sixth stanza is a specimen of noble versification (within the narrow limits of the iambic pentameter):

Look on this beautiful world, and read the truth
In her fair page; see, every season brings
New change to her of everlasting youth;
Still the green soil with joyous living things
Swarms; the wide air is full of joyous wings;
And myriads still are happy in the sleep
Of Ocean's azure gulfs, and where he flings
The restless surge. Eternal Love doth keep
In his complacent arms, the earth, the air, the deep.

The cadences here at "page," "swarms," and "surge," cannot be surpassed. There are comparatively few con-

sonants. Liquids and the softer vowels abound, and the partial line after the pause at "surge," with the stately march of the succeeding Alexandrine, is one of the finest conceivable *finales.*

The poem, in general, has unity, completeness. Its tone, of calm, elevated and hopeful contemplation, is well sustained throughout. There is an occasional quaint grace of expression, as in,

> Nurse of full streams, and lifter-up of proud
> Sky-mingling mountains that o'erlook the cloud!

or of antithetical and rhythmical force combined, as in,

> The shock that hurled
> To dust, in many fragments dashed and strown,
> The throne whose roofs were in another world,
> And whose far-stretching shadow awed our own.

But we look in vain for anything more worthy commendation.

Thanatopsis is the poem by which its author is best known, but is by no means his best poem. It owes the extent of its celebrity to its nearly absolute freedom from defect, in the ordinary understanding of the term. I mean to say that its negative merit recommends it to the public attention. It is a thoughtful, well-phrased, well-constructed, well-versified poem. The concluding thought is exceedingly noble, and has done wonders for the success of the whole composition.

The Waterfowl is very beautiful, but like *Thanatopsis* owes a great deal to its completeness and pointed termination.

Oh, Fairest of the Rural Maids! will strike every poet as the truest poem written by Bryant. It is richly ideal.

June is sweet, and perfectly well modulated in its rhythm, and inexpressibly pathetic. It serves well to illustrate my previous remarks about passion in its connection with poetry. In *June* there is, very properly, nothing of the intense *passion* of grief; but the subdued sorrow which comes up, as if perforce, to the surface of the poet's gay sayings about his

grave, we find thrilling us to the soul, while there is yet a spiritual *elevation* in the thrill:

And what if cheerful shouts at noon
  Come, from the village sent,
Or songs of maids, beneath the moon
  With fairy laughter blent?
And what if, in the evening light,
Betrothed lovers walk in sight
  Of my low monument?
I would the lovely scene around
Might know no sadder sight nor sound.

I know that I no more should see
  The season's glorious show,
Nor would its brightness shine for me,
  Nor its wild music flow;
But if, around my place of sleep,
The friends I love should come to weep,
  They might not haste to go;
Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom,
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

The thoughts here belong to the highest class of poetry, the imaginative-natural, and are of themselves sufficient to stamp their author a man of genius.

I copy at random a few passages of similar cast, inducing a similar conviction:

The great heavens
Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love,—
A nearer vault, and of a tenderer blue,
Than that which bends above our eastern hills.

Till twilight blushed, and lovers walked, and wooed
In a forgotten language, and *old tunes*
From instruments of unremembered form
Gave the soft winds a voice.

Breezes of the South!
Who toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,
And pass the prairie hawk that, poised on high,
Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not.

On the breast of Earth
I lie, and listen to her mighty voice:
A voice of many tones—sent up from streams
That wander through the gloom, from woods unseen
Swayed by the sweeping of the tides of air;
From rocky chasms where darkness dwells all day,
And hollows of the great invisible hills,
And sands that edge the ocean, stretching far
Into the night—a melancholy sound!

All the green herbs
Are stirring in his breath; *a thousand flowers*
By the roadside and the borders of the brook,
Nod gayly to each other.

There is a fine "echo of sound to sense" in "the borders of the brook," etc.; and in the same poem from which these lines are taken, *The Summer Wind,* may be found two other equally happy examples:

For me, I lie
Languidly in the shade, where the thick turf,
Yet virgin from the kisses of the sun,
Retains some freshness.

And again:

All is silent, save the faint
And interrupted murmur of the bee
Settling on the sick flowers, and then again
Instantly on the wing.

I resume the imaginative extracts:

Paths, homes, graves, ruins from the lowest glen
To where life shrinks from the fierce Alpine air.

And the blue gentian flower that in the breeze
Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last.

A shoot of that old vine that made
The nations silent in the shade.

But 'neath yon crimson tree,
Lover to listening maid might breathe his flame,
Nor mark, within its roseate canopy,
Her flush of maiden shame.

The mountains that infold,
In their wild sweep, the colored landscape round,
Seem *groups of giant kings in purple and gold*
That guard the enchanted ground.

This latter passage is especially beautiful. Happily to endow inanimate nature with sentience and a capability of action is one of the severest tests of the poet.

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along *that pathless coast—*
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

Pleasant shall be thy way *where meekly bows*
The shutting flower, and darkling waters pass,
And where the o'ershadowing branches sweep the grass.

Sweet odors in the sea air, sweet and strange,
Shall tell the homesick mariner of the shore,
And, listening to thy murmur, he shall deem
He hears the rustling leaf and running stream.

In a *Sonnet, To* ——, are some richly imaginative lines. I quote the whole:

Ay, thou art for the grave; thy glances shine
Too brightly to shine long; another Spring
Shall deck her for men's eyes, but not for thine,
Sealed in a sleep which knows no wakening.
The fields for thee have no medicinal leaf,
And the vexed ore no mineral of power;
And they who love thee wait in anxious grief
Till the slow plague shall bring the fatal hour.
Glide softly to thy rest, then: death should come
Gently to one of gentle mold like thee,
As light winds wandering through groves of bloom,
Detach the delicate blossom from the tree.
Close thy sweet eyes, calmly, and without pain,
And we will trust in God to see thee yet again.

The happiest *finale* to these brief extracts will be the magnificent conclusion of *Thanatopsis.*

So live, that, when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves

To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him and lies down to pleasant dreams.

In the minor morals of the Muse, Mr. Bryant excels. In versification (as far as he goes) he is unsurpassed in America—unless, indeed, by Mr. Sprague. Mr. Longfellow is not so thorough a versifier, within Mr. Bryant's limits, but a far better one upon the whole, on account of his greater range. Mr. Bryant, however, is by no means always accurate —or defensible, for accurate is not the term. His lines are occasionally unpronounceable through excess of harsh consonants, as in

As if they loved to breast the breeze that sweeps the cool clear sky.

Now and then he gets out of his depth in attempting anapæstic rhythm, of which he makes sad havoc, as in

And Rizpah, once the loveliest of all
That bloomed and smiled in the court of Saul.

Not unfrequently, too, even his pentameters are inexcusably rough, as in

Kind influence. Lo! their orbs burn more bright,

which can only be read metrically by drawing out "influence" into three marked syllables, shortening the long monosyllable "Lo!" and lengthening the short one "their."

Mr. Bryant is not devoid of mannerisms, one of the most noticeable of which is his use of the epithet "old" preceded by some other adjective, *e. g.:*

In all that proud old world beyond the deep;

There is a tale about these gray old rocks;

The wide old woods resounded with her song;

And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven,

etc., etc., etc. These duplicates occur so frequently as to excite a smile upon each repetition.

Of merely grammatical errors the poet is rarely guilty. Faulty constructions are more frequently chargeable to him. In *The Massacre of Scio* we read:

> Till the last link of slavery's chain
> Is shattered, to be worn no more.

What shall be worn no more? The chain, of course—but the link is implied. It will be understood that I pick these flaws only with difficulty from the poems of Bryant. He is, in the "minor morals," the most generally correct of our poets.

He is now fifty-two years of age. In height, he is, perhaps, five feet nine. His frame is rather robust. His features are large but thin. His countenance is sallow, nearly bloodless. His eyes are piercing gray, deep set, with large projecting eyebrows. His mouth is wide and massive, the expression of the smile hard, cold—even sardonic. The forehead is broad, with prominent organs of ideality; a good deal bald; the hair thin and grayish, as are also the whiskers, which he wears in a simple style. His bearing is quite distinguished, full of the aristocracy of intellect. In general, he looks in better health than before his last visit to England. He seems active—physically and morally energetic. His dress is plain to the extreme of simplicity, although of late there is a certain degree of Anglicism about it.

In character no man stands more loftily than Bryant. The peculiarly melancholy expression of his countenance has caused him to be accused of harshness, or coldness of heart. Never was there a greater mistake. His soul is charity itself, in all respects generous and noble. His manners are undoubtedly reserved.

Of late days he has nearly, if not altogether, abandoned literary pursuits, although still editing with unabated vigor the New York *Evening Post*. He is married (Mrs. Bryant still living), has two daughters (one of them Mrs. Parke Godwin), and is residing for the present at Vice-Chancellor McCown's, near the junction of Warren and Church streets.

SARAH MARGARET FULLER

August 1846

MISS FULLER was at one time editor, or one of the editors of the *Dial,* to which she contributed many of the most forcible and certainly some of the most peculiar papers. She is known, too, by *Summer on the Lakes,* a remarkable assemblage of sketches, issued in 1844, by Little and Brown, of Boston. More lately she has published *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* a work which has occasioned much discussion, having had the good fortune to be warmly abused and chivalrously defended. At present, she is assistant editor of the New York *Tribune,* or rather a salaried contributor to that journal, for which she has furnished a great variety of matter, chiefly notices of new books, etc., etc., her articles being designated by an asterisk. Two of the best of them were a review of Professor Longfellow's late magnificent edition of his own works (with a portrait), and an appeal to the public in behalf of her friend Harro Harring. The review did her infinite credit; it was frank, candid, independent—in even ludicrous contrast to the usual mere glorifications of the day, giving honor only where honor was due, yet evincing the most thorough capacity to appreciate and the most sincere intention to place in the fairest light the real and idiosyncratic merits of the poet.

In my opinion it is one of the very few reviews of Longfellow's poems, ever published in America, of which the critics have not had abundant reason to be ashamed. Mr. Longfellow is entitled to a certain, and very distinguished, rank among the poets of his country; but that country is disgraced by the evident toadyism which would award to his social position and influence, to his fine paper and large type, to his morocco binding and gilt edges, to his flattering portrait of himself, and to the illustrations of his poems by

Huntingdon, that amount of indiscriminate approbation which neither could nor would have been given to the poems themselves.

The defense of Harro Harring, or rather the philippic against those who were doing him wrong, was one of the most eloquent and well-*put* articles I have ever yet seen in a newspaper.

Woman in the Nineteenth Century is a book which few women in the country could have written, and no woman in the country would have published, with the exception of Miss Fuller. In the way of independence, of unmitigated radicalism, it is one of the "Curiosities of American Literature," and Doctor Griswold should include it in his book. I need scarcely say that the essay is nervous, forcible, thoughtful, suggestive, brilliant, and to a certain extent scholarlike—for all that Miss Fuller produces is entitled to these epithets—but I must say that the conclusions reached are only in part my own. Not that they are too bold, by any means—too novel, too startling, or too dangerous in their consequences, but that in their attainment too many premises have been distorted, and too many analogical inferences left altogether out of sight. I mean to say that the intention of the Deity as regards sexual differences—an intention which can be distinctly comprehended only by throwing the exterior (more sensitive) portions of the mental retina *casually* over the wide field of universal analogy—I mean to say that this intention has not been sufficiently considered. Miss Fuller has erred, too, through her own excessive subjectiveness. She judges woman by the heart and intellect of Miss Fuller, but there are not more than one or two dozen Miss Fullers on the whole face of the earth. Holding these opinions in regard to *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* I still feel myself called upon to disavow the silly, condemnatory criticism of the work which appeared in one of the earlier numbers of the *Broadway Journal.* That article was *not* written by myself, and *was* written by my associate, Mr. Briggs.

The most favorable estimate of Miss Fuller's genius (for high genius she unquestionably possesses) is to be obtained,

perhaps, from her contributions to the *Dial,* and from her *Summer on the Lakes.* Many of the descriptions in this volume are unrivaled for graphicality (why is there not such a word?)—for the force with which they convey the true by the novel or unexpected, by the introduction of touches which other artists would be sure to omit as irrelevant to the subject. This faculty, too, springs from her subjectiveness, which leads her to paint a scene less by its features than by its effects.

Here, for example, is a portion of her account of Niagara:

> Daily these proportions widened and towered more and more upon my sight, and I got at last a proper foreground for these sublime distances. Before coming away, I think I really saw the full wonder of the scene. After awhile it *so drew me into itself as to inspire an undefined dread, such as I never knew before, such as may be felt when death is about to usher us into a new existence.* The perpetual trampling of the waters seized my senses. *I felt that no other sound, however near, could be heard, and would start and look behind me for a foe.* I realized the identity of that mood of nature in which these waters were poured down with such absorbing force with that in which the Indian was shaped on the same soil. For continually upon my mind came, unsought and unwelcome, *images, such as had never haunted it before, of naked savages stealing behind me with uplifted tomahawks.* Again and again this illusion recurred, and even *after I had thought it over and tried to shake it off, I could not help starting and looking behind me.* What I liked best was to sit on Table Rock close to the great fall; *there all power of observing details, all separate consciousness was quite lost.*

The truthfulness of the passages italicized will be felt by all; the feelings described are, perhaps, experienced by every (imaginative) person who visits the fall; but most persons, through predominant subjectiveness, would scarcely be conscious of the feelings, or, at best, would never think of employing them in an attempt to convey to others an impression of the scene. Hence so many desperate failures to convey it on the part of ordinary tourists. Mr. William W. Lord, to be sure, in his poem *Niagara,* is sufficiently

objective; he describes not the fall, but very properly the effect of the fall upon *him*. He says that it made him think of his *own* greatness, of his *own* superiority, and so forth, and so forth; and it is only when we come to think that the thought of Mr. Lord's greatness is quite idiosyncratic, confined exclusively to Mr. Lord, that we are in condition to understand how, in despite of his objectiveness, he has failed to convey an idea of anything beyond one Mr. William W. Lord.

From the essay entitled *Philip Van Artevelde,* I copy a paragraph which will serve at once to exemplify Miss Fuller's more earnest (declamatory) style, and to show the tenor of her prospective speculations:

> At Chicago I read again *Philip Van Artevelde,* and certain passages in it will always be in my mind associated with the deep sound of the lake, as heard in the night. I used to read a short time at night, and then open the blind to look out. The moon would be full upon the lake, and the calm breath, pure light, and the deep voice, harmonized well with the thought of the Flemish hero. When will this country have such a man? It is what she needs—no thin Idealist, no coarse Realist, but a man whose eye reads the heavens while his feet step firmly on the ground, and his hands are strong and dexterous in the use of human instruments. A man, religious, virtuous, and—sagacious; a man of universal sympathies, but self-possessed; a man who knows the region of emotion, though he is not its slave; a man to whom this world is no mere spectacle or fleeting shadow, but a great, solemn game, to be played with good heed, for its stakes are of eternal value, yet who, if his own play be true, heeds not what he loses by the falsehood of others. A man who lives from the past, yet knows that its honey can but moderately avail him; whose comprehensive eye scans the present, neither infatuated by its golden lures nor chilled by its many ventures; who possesses prescience, as the wise man must, but not so far as to be driven mad today by the gift which discerns tomorrow. When there is such a man for America, the thought which urges her on will be expressed.

From what I have quoted, a general conception of the prose style of the authoress may be gathered. Her manner, however, is infinitely varied. It is always forcible—but I

am not sure that it is always anything else, unless I say picturesque. It rather indicates than evinces scholarship. Perhaps only the scholastic, or, more properly, those accustomed to look narrowly at the structure of phrases, would be willing to acquit her of ignorance of grammar—would be willing to attribute her slovenliness to disregard of the shell in anxiety for the kernel, or to waywardness, or to affectation, or to blind reverence for Carlyle—would be able to detect, in her strange and continual inaccuracies, a capacity for the accurate:

I cannot sympathize with such an apprehension; the spectacle is *capable to* swallow *up* all such objects.

It is fearful, too, to know, as you look, that whatever has been swallowed by the cataract, is *like* to rise suddenly to light.

I took our *mutual* friends to see her.

It was always obvious that they had nothing in common *between them.*

The Indian cannot be looked at truly *except* by a poetic eye.

McKenney's *Tour to the Lakes* gives some facts not to be met *with* elsewhere.

There is that mixture of culture and rudeness in the aspect of things *as* gives a feeling of freedom, etc., etc., etc.

These are merely a few, a very few instances, taken at random from among a multitude of willful murders committed by Miss Fuller on the American of President Polk. She uses, too, the word "ignore," a vulgarity adopted only of late days (and to no good purpose, since there is no necessity for it) from the barbarisms of the law, and makes no scruple of giving the Yankee interpretation to the verbs "witness" and "realize," to say nothing of "use," as in the sentence, "I used to read a short time at night." It will not do to say, in defense of such words, that in such senses they may be found in certain dictionaries—in that of Bolles, for instance;—*some* kind of "authority" may be found for *any* kind of vulgarity under the sun.

In spite of these things, however, and of her frequent unjustifiable Carlyleisms (such as that of writing sentences which are no sentences, since, to be parsed, reference must be had to sentences preceding), the style of Miss Fuller is

one of the very best with which I am acquainted. In general effect, I know no style which surpasses it. It is singularly piquant, vivid, terse, bold, luminous; leaving details out of sight, it is everything that a style need be.

I believe that Miss Fuller has written much poetry, although she has published little. That little is tainted with the affectation of the transcendentalists (I use this term, of course, in the sense which the public of late days seem resolved to give it), but is brimful of the poetic sentiment. Here, for example, is something in Coleridge's manner, of which the author of *Genevieve* might have had no reason to be ashamed:

A maiden sat beneath a tree;
Tear-bedewed her pale cheeks be,
And she sighed heavily.

From forth the wood into the *light*
A hunter strides with carol *light,*
And a glance so bold and bright.

He careless stopped and eyed the maid:
"Why weepest thou?" he gently said;
"I love thee well, be not afraid."

He takes her hand and leads her on—
She should have waited there alone,
For he was not her chosen one.

He *leans* her head upon his breast—
She knew 'twas not her home of rest,
But, ah, she had been sore distrest.

The sacred stars looked sadly down;
The parting moon appeared to frown,
To see thus dimmed the diamond crown.

Then from the thicket starts a deer—
The huntsman, seizing *on* his spear,
Cries, "Maiden, wait thou for me here."

She sees him vanish into night—
She starts from sleep in deep affright,
For it was not her own true knight.

Though but in dream Gunhilda failed,
Though but a fancied ill assailed,
Though she but fancied fault bewailed,—

Yet thought of day makes dream of night;
She is not worthy of the knight;
The inmost altar burns not bright.

If loneliness thou canst not bear—
Cannot the dragon's venom dare—
Of the pure meed thou shouldst despair.

Now sadder that lone maiden sighs;
Far bitterer tears profane her eyes;
Crushed in the dust her heart's flower lies.

To show the evident carelessness with which this poem was constructed, I have italicized an identical rhyme (of about the same force in versification as an identical proposition in logic) and two grammatical improprieties. *To lean* is a neuter verb, and "seizing *on*" is not properly to be called a pleonasm, merely because it is—nothing at all. The concluding line is difficult of pronunciation through excess of consonants. I should have preferred, indeed, the antipenultimate tristich as the *finale* of the poem.

The supposition that the book of an author is a thing apart from the author's self is, I think, ill-founded. The soul is a cipher, in the sense of a cryptograph; and the shorter a cryptograph is, the more difficulty there is in its comprehension—at a certain point of brevity it would bid defiance to an army of Champollions. And thus he who has written very little, may in that little either conceal his spirit or convey quite an erroneous idea of it—of his acquirements, talents, temper, manner, tenor, and depth (or shallowness) of thought—in a word, of his character, of himself. But this is impossible with him who has written much. Of such a person we get, from his books, not merely a just, but the most just representation. Bulwer, the individual, personal man, in a green velvet waistcoat and amber gloves, is not by any means the veritable Sir Edward Lytton, who is discoverable only in *Ernest Maltravers,* where his soul is de-

liberately and nakedly set forth. And who would ever know Dickens by looking at him or talking with him, or doing anything with him except reading his *Old Curiosity Shop?* What poet, in especial, but must feel at least the better portion of himself more fairly represented in even his commonest sonnet (earnestly written) than in his most elaborate or most intimate personalities?

I put all this as a general proposition, to which Miss Fuller affords a marked exception—to this extent, that her personal character and her printed book are merely one and the same thing. We get access to her soul *as* directly from the one as from the other—no *more* readily from this than from that—easily from either. Her acts are bookish, and her books are less thoughts than acts. Her literary and her conversational manner are identical. Here is a passage from her *Summer on the Lakes:*

> The rapids enchanted me far beyond what I expected; they are so swift that they cease to *seem* so—you can think only of their *beauty*. The fountain beyond the Moss islands I discovered for myself, and thought it for some time an *accidental* beauty which it would not do to *leave,* lest I might never see it again. After I found it *permanent,* I returned many times to watch the play of its crest. In the little waterfall beyond, Nature seems, as she often does, to have made a *study* for some larger design. She delights in this—a sketch within a sketch—a dream within *a dream.* Wherever we see it, the lines of the great buttress in the fragment of stone, the hues of the waterfall, copied in the flowers that *star* its bordering mosses, we are *delighted;* for all the lineaments become *fluent,* and we mold the scene in congenial thought with its *genius.*

Now all this is precisely as Miss Fuller would speak it. She is perpetually saying just such things in just such words. To get the conversational woman in the mind's eye, all that is needed is to imagine her reciting the paragraph just quoted; but first let us have the personal woman. She is of the medium height; nothing remarkable about the figure; a profusion of lustrous light hair; eyes a bluish gray, full of fire; capacious forehead; the mouth when in repose indicates profound sensibility, capacity for affection, for

love—when moved by a slight smile, it becomes even beautiful in the intensity of this expression; but the upper lip, as if impelled by the action of involuntary muscles, habitually uplifts itself, conveying the impression of a sneer. Imagine, now, a person of this description looking you at one moment earnestly in the face, at the next seeming to look only within her own spirit or at the wall; moving nervously every now and then in her chair; speaking in a high key, but musically, deliberately (not hurriedly or loudly), with a delicious distinctness of enunciation—speaking, I say, the paragraph in question, and emphasizing the words which I have italicized, not by impulsion of the breath (as is usual) but by drawing them out as long as possible, nearly closing her eyes the while—imagine all this, and we have both the woman and the authoress before us.

HAWTHORNE'S *TALES*

November 1847

THE REPUTATION of the author of *Twice-Told Tales* has been confined, until very lately, to literary society; and I have not been wrong, perhaps, in citing him as *the* example, *par excellence,* in this country, of the privately-admired and publicly-unappreciated man of genius. Within the last year or two, it is true, an occasional critic has been urged, by honest indignation, into very warm approval. Mr. Webber, for instance (than whom no one has a keener relish for that kind of writing which Mr. Hawthorne has best illustrated), gave us, in a late number of the *American Review,* a cordial and certainly a full tribute to his talents; and since the issue of the *Mosses from an Old Manse* criticisms of similar tone have been by no means infrequent in our more authoritative journals. I can call to mind few reviews of Hawthorne published *before* the *Mosses.* One I

remember in *Arcturus* (edited by Mathews and Duyckinck) for May 1841; another in the *American Monthly* (edited by Hoffman and Herbert) for March 1838; a third in the ninety-sixth number of the *North American Review*. These criticisms, however, seemed to have little effect on the popular taste; at least, if we are to form any idea of the popular taste by reference to its expression in the newspapers, or by the sale of the author's book. It was never the fashion (until lately) to speak of him in any summary of our best authors.

The daily critics would say, on such occasions, "Is there not Irving, and Cooper, and Bryant, and Paulding, and—Smith?" or, "Have we not Halleck, and Dana, and Longfellow, and—Thompson?" or, "Can we not point triumphantly to our own Sprague, Willis, Channing, Bancroft, Prescott, and—Jenkins?" but these unanswerable queries were never wound up by the name of Hawthorne.

Beyond doubt, this inappreciation of him on the part of the public arose chiefly from the two causes to which I have referred—from the facts that he is neither a man of wealth nor a quack; but these are insufficient to account for the whole effect. No small portion of it is attributable to the very marked idiosyncrasy of Mr. Hawthorne himself. In one sense, and in great measure, to be peculiar is to be original, and than the true originality there is no higher literary virtue. This true or commendable originality, however, implies not the uniform, but the continuous peculiarity —a peculiarity springing from ever-active vigor of fancy—better still if from ever-present force of imagination, giving its own hue, its own character, to everything it touches, and, especially, *self-impelled to touch everything*.

It is often said, inconsiderately, that very original writers always fail in popularity, that such and such persons are too original to be comprehended by the mass. "Too peculiar," should be the phrase, "too idiosyncratic." It is, in fact, the excitable, undisciplined, and childlike popular mind which most keenly feels the original.

The criticism of the conservatives, of the hackneys, of the cultivated old clergymen of the *North American Review*, is precisely the criticism which condemns, and alone con-

demns it. "It becometh not a divine," saith Lord Coke, "to be of a fiery and salamandrine spirit." Their conscience allowing them to move nothing themselves, these dignitaries have a holy horror of being moved. "Give us *quietude*," they say. Opening their mouths with proper caution, they sigh forth the word "*Repose.*" And this is, indeed, the one thing they should be permitted to enjoy, if only upon the Christian principle of give and take.

The fact is, that if Mr. Hawthorne were really original, he could not fail of making himself felt by the public. But the fact is, he is not original in any sense. Those who speak of him as original mean nothing more than that he differs in his manner or tone, and in his choice of subjects, from any author of their acquaintance—their acquaintance not extending to the German Tieck, whose manner, in *some* of his works, is absolutely identical with that *habitual* to Hawthorne. But it is clear that the element of the literary originality is novelty. The element of its appreciation by the reader is the reader's sense of the new. Whatever gives him a new, and, insomuch, a pleasurable emotion, he considers original; and whoever frequently gives him such emotion, he considers an original writer. In a word, it is by the sum total of these emotions that he decides upon the writer's claim to originality. I may observe here, however, that there is clearly a point at which even novelty itself would cease to produce the legitimate originality, if we judge this originality, as we should, by the effect designed; this point is that at which *novelty becomes nothing novel,* and here the artist, *to preserve his originality,* will subside into the commonplace. No one, I think, has noticed that, merely through inattention to this matter, Moore has comparatively failed in his *Lalla Rookh.* Few readers, and indeed few critics, have commended this poem for originality—and, in fact, the effect, originality, is not produced by it; yet no work of equal size so abounds in the happiest originalities, individually considered. They are so excessive as, in the end, to deaden in the reader all capacity for their appreciation.

These points properly understood, it will be seen that the critic (unacquainted with Tieck) who reads a single

tale or essay by Hawthorne, may be justified in thinking him original; but the tone, or manner, or choice of subject, which induces in this critic the sense of the new, will—if not in a second tale, at least in a third and all subsequent ones—not only fail of inducing it, but bring about an exactly antagonistic impression. In concluding a volume, and more especially in concluding all the volumes of the author, the critic will abandon his first design of calling him "original," and content himself with styling him "peculiar."

With the vague opinion that to be original is to be unpopular, I could, indeed, agree, were I to adopt an understanding of originality which, to my surprise, I have known adopted by many who have a right to be called critical. They have limited, in a love for mere words, the literary to the metaphysical originality. They regard as original in letters only such combinations of thought, of incident, and so forth, as are, in fact, absolutely novel. It is clear, however, not only that it is the novelty of effect alone which is worth consideration, but that this effect is best wrought, for the end of all fictitious composition, pleasure, by shunning rather than by seeking the absolute novelty of combination. Originality, thus understood, tasks and startles the intellect, and so brings into undue action the faculties to which, in the lighter literature, we least appeal. And thus understood, it cannot fail to prove unpopular with the masses, who, seeking in this literature amusement, are positively offended by instruction. But the true originality—true in respect of its purposes—is that which, in bringing out the half-formed, the reluctant, or the unexpressed fancies of mankind, or in exciting the more delicate pulses of the heart's passion, or in giving birth to some universal sentiment or instinct in embryo, thus combines with the pleasurable effect of *apparent* novelty a real egotistic delight. The reader, in the case first supposed (that of the absolute novelty), is excited, but embarrassed, disturbed, in some degree even pained, at his own want of perception, at his own folly in not having himself hit upon the idea. In the second case, his pleasure is doubled. He is filled with an intrinsic and extrinsic delight. He feels and intensely enjoys the seeming novelty of

the thought, enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer—*and* himself. They two, he fancies, have, alone of all men, thought thus. They two have, together, created this thing. Henceforward there is a bond of sympathy between them—a sympathy which irradiates every subsequent page of the book.

There is a species of writing which, with some difficulty, may be admitted as a lower degree of what I have called the true original. In its perusal, we say to ourselves, not "how original this is!" nor "here is an idea which I and the author have alone entertained," but "here is a charmingly obvious fancy," or sometimes even, "here is a thought which I am not sure has ever occurred to myself, but which, of course, has occurred to all the rest of the world." This kind of composition (which still appertains to a high order) is usually designated as "the natural." It has little external resemblance, but strong internal affinity to the true original, if, indeed, as I have suggested, it is not of this latter an inferior degree. It is best exemplified, among English writers, in Addison, Irving, and *Hawthorne*. The "ease" which is so often spoken of as its distinguishing feature, it has been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone, as a point of really difficult attainment. This idea, however, must be received with some reservation. The natural style is difficult only to those who should never intermeddle with it—to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the understanding, or with the instinct, that the *tone*, in composition, should be that which, at any given point or upon any given topic, would be the tone of the great mass of humanity. The author who, after the manner of the "North Americans," is merely at *all* times *quiet*, is, of course, upon *most* occasions, merely silly or stupid, and has no more right to be thought "easy" or "natural" than has a cockney exquisite, or the sleeping beauty in the waxworks.

The "peculiarity," or sameness, or monotone of Hawthorne, would, in its mere character of "peculiarity," and without reference to what *is* the peculiarity, suffice to deprive him of all chance of popular appreciation. But at his failure to be appreciated, we can, of course, no longer won-

der, when we find him monotonous at decidedly the worst of all possible points—at that point which, having the least concern with Nature, is the farthest removed from the popular intellect, from the popular sentiment, and from the popular taste. I allude to the strain of allegory which completely overwhelms the greater number of his subjects, and which in some measure interferes with the direct conduct of absolutely all.

In defense of allegory (however or for whatever object employed) there is scarcely one respectable word to be said. Its best appeals are made to the fancy—that is to say, to our sense of adaptation, not of matters proper, but of matters improper for the purpose, of the real with the unreal; having never more of intelligible connection than has something with nothing, never half so much of effective affinity as has the substance for the shadow. The deepest emotion aroused within us by the happiest allegory, *as* allegory, is a very, very imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer's ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. The fallacy of the idea that allegory, in any of its moods, can be made to enforce a truth, that metaphor, for example, may illustrate as well as embellish an argument, could be promptly demonstrated; the converse of the supposed fact might be shown, indeed, with very little trouble; but these are topics foreign to my present purpose. One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction. Where the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a *very* profound undercurrent, so as never to interfere with the upper one without our own volition, so as never to show itself unless *called* to the surface, there only, for the proper uses of fictitious narrative, is it available at all. Under the best circumstances, it must always interfere with that unity of effect which, to the artist, is worth all the allegory in the world. Its vital injury, however, is rendered to the most vitally important point in fiction—that of earnestness or verisimilitude. That *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a ludicrously overrated book, owing its seeming popularity to one or two of those accidents in critical litera-

ture which by the critical are sufficiently well understood, is a matter upon which no two thinking people disagree; but the pleasure derivable from it, in any sense, will be found in the direct ratio of the reader's capacity to smother its true purpose, in the direct ratio of his ability to keep the allegory out of sight, or of his *in*ability to comprehend it. Of allegory properly handled, judiciously subdued, seen only as a shadow or by suggestive glimpses, and making its nearest approach to truth in a not obtrusive and therefore not unpleasant *appositeness,* the *Undine* of De La Motte Fouqué is the best, and undoubtedly a very remarkable specimen.

The obvious causes, however, which have prevented Mr. Hawthorne's *popularity* do not suffice to condemn him in the eyes of the few who belong properly to books, and to whom books, perhaps, do not quite so properly belong. These few estimate an author, not as do the public, altogether by what he does, but in great measure—indeed, even in the greatest measure—by what he evinces a capability of doing. In this view, Hawthorne stands among literary people in America much in the same light as did Coleridge in England. The few, also, through a certain warping of the taste, which long pondering upon books as books merely never fails to induce, are not in condition to view the errors of a scholar as errors altogether. At any time these gentlemen are prone to think the public not right rather than an educated author wrong. But the simple truth is that the writer who aims at impressing the people is *always* wrong when he fails in forcing that people to receive the impression. How far Mr. Hawthorne has addressed the people at all, is, of course, not a question for me to decide. His books afford strong internal evidence of having been written to himself and his particular friends alone.

There has long existed in literature a fatal and unfounded prejudice, which it will be the office of this age to overthrow, the idea that the mere bulk of a work must enter largely into our estimate of its merit. I do not suppose even the weakest of the *Quarterly* reviewers weak enough to maintain that in a book's size or mass, abstractly considered,

there is anything which especially calls for our admiration. A mountain, simply through the sensation of physical magnitude which it conveys, does, indeed, affect us with a sense of the sublime, but we cannot admit any such influence in the contemplation even of *The Columbiad*. The Quarterlies themselves will not admit it. And yet, what else are we to understand by their continual prating about "sustained effort"? Granted that this sustained effort has accomplished an epic—let us then admire the effort (if this be a thing admirable), but certainly not the epic on the effort's account. Common sense, in the time to come, may possibly insist upon measuring a work of art rather by the object it fulfills, by the impression it makes, than by the time it took to fulfill the object, or by the extent of "sustained effort" which became necessary to produce the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another; nor can all the transcendentalists in Heathendom confound them.

II

The pieces in the volumes entitled *Twice-Told Tales* are now in their third republication, and, of course, are thrice-told. Moreover, they are by no means *all* tales, either in the ordinary or in the legitimate understanding of the term. Many of them are pure essays; for example, *Sights from a Steeple, Sunday at Home, Little Annie's Ramble, A Rill from the Town Pump, The Toll-Gatherer's Day, The Haunted Mind, The Sister Years, Snow Flakes, Night Sketches,* and *Footprints on the Sea Shore.* I mention these matters chiefly on account of their discrepancy with that marked precision and finish by which the body of the work is distinguished.

Of the essays just named, I must be content to speak in brief. They are each and all beautiful, without being characterized by the polish and adaptation so visible in the tales proper. A painter would at once note their leading or predominant feature, and style it *repose*. There is no attempt at effect. All is quiet, thoughtful, subdued. Yet this repose

may exist simultaneously with high originality of thought; and Mr. Hawthorne has demonstrated the fact. At every turn we meet with novel combinations; yet these combinations never surpass the limits of the quiet. We are soothed as we read; and withal is a calm astonishment that ideas so apparently obvious have never occurred or been presented to us before. Herein our author differs materially from Lamb or Hunt or Hazlitt—who, with vivid originality of manner and expression, have less of the true novelty of thought than is generally supposed, and whose originality, at best, has an uneasy and meretricious quaintness, replete with startling effects unfounded in nature, and inducing trains of reflection which lead to no satisfactory result. The essays of Hawthorne have much of the character of Irving, with more of originality, and less of finish; while, compared with *The Spectator,* they have a vast superiority at all points. *The Spectator,* Mr. Irving, and Hawthorne have in common that tranquil and subdued manner which I have chosen to denominate *repose;* but, in the case of the two former, this repose is attained rather by the absence of novel combination, or of originality, than otherwise, and consists chiefly in the calm, quiet, unostentatious expression of commonplace thoughts, in an unambitious, unadulterated Saxon. In them, by strong effort, we are made to conceive the absence of all. In the essays before me the absence of effort is too obvious to be mistaken, and a strong undercurrent of *suggestion* runs continuously beneath the upper stream of the tranquil thesis. In short, these effusions of Mr. Hawthorne are the product of a truly imaginative intellect, restrained, and in some measure repressed, by fastidiousness of taste, by constitutional melancholy, and by indolence.

But it is of his tales that I desire principally to speak. The tale proper, in my opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent, which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were I bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, I should answer, without hesitation—in the composition of a rhymed

poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. I need only here say, upon this topic, that, in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And, without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign is no more. A poem *too* brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring impression. Without a certain continuity of effort—without a certain duration or repetition of purpose—the soul is never deeply moved. There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock. De Béranger has wrought brilliant things, pungent and spirit-stirring; but, like all immassive bodies, they lack *momentum,* and thus fail to satisfy the Poetic Sentiment. They sparkle and excite, but, from want of continuity, fail deeply to impress. Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*

Were I called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as I have suggested, should best fulfill the demands of high genius—should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion—I should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale, as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. I allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality.* Worldly interests

intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fullness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences—resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided.

We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the *rhythm* of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea —the idea of the Beautiful—the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *Truth*. But Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. Thus the field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of Mind, is a tableland of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere poem. Its products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous, and

more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression (the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic, or the humorous)—which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added, here, *par parenthèse,* that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at a great disadvantage. For Beauty can be better treated in the poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those *tales of effect,* many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of *Blackwood.* The impressions produced were wrought in a legitimate sphere of action, and constituted a legitimate although sometimes an exaggerated interest. They were relished by every man of genius: although there were found many men of genius who condemned them without just ground. The true critic will but demand that the design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by the means most advantageously applicable.

We have very few American tales of real merit—we may say, indeed, none, with the exception of *The Tales of a Traveller* of Washington Irving, and these *Twice-Told Tales* of Mr. Hawthorne. Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal abound in vigor and originality; but, in general, his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of Art. Articles at random are, now and then, met with in our periodicals which might be advantageously compared with the best effusions of the British magazines; but, upon the whole, we are far behind our progenitors in this department of literature.

Of Mr. Hawthorne's *Tales* we would say, emphatically, that they belong to the highest region of Art—an Art subservient to genius of a very lofty order. We had supposed, with good reason for so supposing, that he had been thrust into his present position by one of the impudent cliques

which beset our literature, and whose pretensions it is our full purpose to expose at the earliest opportunity; but we have been most agreeably mistaken. We know of few compositions which the critic can more honestly commend than these *Twice-Told Tales.* As Americans, we feel proud of the book.

Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality—a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest. But the nature of the originality, so far as regards its manifestation in letters, is but imperfectly understood. The inventive or original mind as frequently displays itself in novelty of *tone* as in novelty of matter. Mr. Hawthorne is original in *all* points.

It would be a matter of some difficulty to designate the best of these tales; we repeat that, without exception, they are beautiful. *Wakefield* is remarkable for the skill with which an old idea—a well-known incident—is worked up or discussed. A man of whims conceives the purpose of quitting his wife and residing *incognito,* for twenty years, in her immediate neighborhood. Something of this kind actually happened in London. The force of Mr. Hawthorne's tale lies in the analysis of the motives which must or might have impelled the husband to such folly, in the first instance, with the possible causes of his perseverance. Upon this thesis a sketch of singular power has been constructed. *The Wedding Knell* is full of the boldest imagination—an imagination fully controlled by taste. The most captious critic could find no flaw in this production. *The Minister's Black Veil* is a masterly composition of which the sole defect is that to the rabble its exquisite skill will be *caviare.* The obvious meaning of this article will be found to smother its insinuated one. The moral put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the true import of the narrative; and that a crime of dark dye (having reference to the "young lady") has been committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive. *Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe* is vividly original and managed most dexterously. *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* is exceedingly well imagined, and executed with sur-

passing ability. The artist breathes in every line of it. *The White Old Maid* is objectionable, even more than *The Minister's Black Veil,* on the score of its mysticism. Even with the thoughtful and analytic, there will be much trouble in penetrating its entire import.

The Hollow of the Three Hills we would quote in full, had we space; not as evincing higher talent than any of the other pieces, but as affording an excellent example of the author's peculiar ability. The subject is commonplace. A witch subjects the Distant and the Past to the view of a mourner. It has been the fashion to describe, in such cases, a mirror in which the images of the absent appear; or a cloud of smoke is made to arise, and thence the figures are gradually unfolded. Mr. Hawthorne has wonderfully heightened his effect by making the ear, in place of the eye, the medium by which the fantasy is conveyed. The head of the mourner is enveloped in the cloak of the witch, and within its magic folds there arise sounds which have an all-sufficient intelligence. Throughout this article also, the artist is conspicuous—not more in positive than in negative merits. Not only is all done that should be done, but (what perhaps is an end with more difficulty attained) there is nothing done which should not be. Every word *tells,* and there is not a word which does *not* tell.

In *Howe's Masquerade* we observe something which resembles a plagiarism,—but which *may be* a very flattering coincidence of thought. We quote the passage in question.

With a dark flush of wrath upon his brow, they saw the General *draw his sword* and *advance to meet* the figure *in the cloak* before the latter had stepped one pace upon the floor. "*Villain, unmuffle yourself,*" cried he. "You pass no farther!" The figure, without blenching a hair's breadth from the sword which was pointed at his breast, made a solemn pause, and *lowered the cape of the cloak* from about his face, yet not sufficiently for the spectators to catch a glimpse of it. But Sir William Howe had evidently seen enough. The sternness of his countenance gave place to a look of wild amazement, if not horror, while he recoiled several steps from the figure, *and let fall his sword* upon the floor. ii. 21.

The idea here is, that the figure in the cloak is the phantom or reduplication of Sir William Howe; but in an article called *William Wilson,* one of the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque,*[1] we have not only the same idea, but the same idea similarly presented in several respects. We quote two paragraphs, which our readers may compare with what has been already given. We have italicized, above, the immediate particulars of resemblance.

The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangement at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror, it appeared to me, now stood where none had been perceptible before: and as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, *advanced* with a feeble and tottering gait to meet me.

Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of dissolution. Not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of that face which was not even identically mine own. *His mask and cloak lay where he had thrown them, upon the floor.* ii. 57.

Here, it will be observed that, not only are the two general conceptions identical, but there are various *points* of similarity. In each case the figure seen is the wraith or duplication of the beholder. In each case the scene is a masquerade. In each case the figure is cloaked. In each there is a quarrel,—that is to say, angry words pass between the parties. In each the beholder is enraged. In each the cloak and sword fall upon the floor. The "villain, unmuffle yourself," of Mr. Hawthorne is precisely paralleled by a passage at page 56 of *William Wilson.*

III

I must hasten to conclude this paper with a summary of Mr. Hawthorne's merits and demerits.

He is peculiar and not original—unless in those detailed fancies and detached thoughts which his want of general originality will deprive of the appreciation due to them, in

[1] By Poe himself. E. W.

preventing them from ever reaching the public eye. He is infinitely too fond of allegory, and can never hope for popularity so long as he persists in it. This he will not do, for allegory is at war with the whole tone of his nature, which disports itself never so well as when escaping from the mysticism of his *Goodman Browns* and *White Old Maids* into the hearty, genial, but still Indian-summer sunshine of his *Wakefields* and *Little Annie's Rambles*. Indeed, his spirit of "metaphor run mad" is clearly imbibed from the phalanx and phalanstery atmosphere in which he has been so long struggling for breath. He has not half the material for the exclusiveness of authorship that he possesses for its universality. He has the purest style, the finest taste, the most available scholarship, the most delicate humor, the most touching pathos, the most radiant imagination, the most consummate ingenuity; and with these varied good qualities he has done *well* as a mystic. But is there any one of these qualities which should prevent his doing doubly as well in a career of honest, upright, sensible, prehensible, and comprehensible things? Let him mend his pen, get a bottle of visible ink, come out from the Old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of the *Dial*, and throw out of the window to the pigs all his odd numbers of the *North American Review*.

LOWELL'S *A FABLE FOR CRITICS*

February 1849

WHAT have we Americans accomplished in the way of satire? *The Vision of Rubeta*, by Laughton Osborn, is probably our best composition of the kind: but, in saying this, we intend no excessive commendation. Trumbull's clumsy and imitative work is scarcely worth mention; and then we have Halleck's *Croakers*, local and ephemeral; but what is there

besides? Park Benjamin has written a clever address, with the title *Infatuation,* and Holmes has an occasional scrap, piquant enough in its way; but we can think of nothing more that can be fairly called "satire." Some matters we have produced, to be sure, which were excellent in the way of burlesque—the *Poems* of William Ellery Channing, for example—without meaning a syllable that was not utterly solemn and serious. Odes, ballads, songs, sonnets, epics, and epigrams, possessed of this unintentional excellence, we should have no difficulty in designating by the dozen; but in the particular of direct and obvious satire, it cannot be denied that we are unaccountably deficient.

It has been suggested that this deficiency arises from the want of a suitable field for satirical display. In England, it is said, satire abounds, because the people there find a proper target in the aristocracy, whom they (the people) regard as a distinct race with whom they have little in common; relishing even the most virulent abuse of the upper classes with a gusto undiminished by any feeling that they (the people) have any concern in it. In Russia, or Austria, on the other hand, it is urged, satire is unknown; because there is danger in touching the aristocracy, and self-satire would be odious to the mass. In America, also, the people who write are, it is maintained, the people who read; thus in satirizing the people we satirize only ourselves, and are never in condition to sympathize with the satire.

All this is more verisimilar than true. It is forgotten that no individual considers himself as one of the mass. Each person, in his own estimate, is the pivot on which all the rest of the world spins round. We may abuse *the people* by wholesale, and yet with a clear conscience, so far as regards any compunction for offending any one from among the multitude of which that "people" is composed. Everyone of the crowd will cry *"Encore!*—give it to them, the vagabonds! —it serves them right." It seems to us that, in America, we have refused to encourage satire—not because what we have had touches us too nearly—but because it has been too pointless to touch us at all. Its namby-pambyism has arisen, in part, from the general want, among our men of letters, of

that minute polish, of that skill in details, which, in combination with natural sarcastic power, satire, more than any other form of literature, so imperatively demands. In part, also, we may attribute our failure to the colonial sin of imitation. We content ourselves, at this point, not less supinely than at all others, with doing what not only has been done before, but what, however well done, has yet been done *ad nauseam*. We should not be able to endure infinite repetitions of even absolute excellence; but what is *McFingal* more than a faint echo from *Hudibras*?—and what is *The Vision of Rubeta* more than a vast gilded swill-trough overflowing with *Dunciad* and water? Although we are not all Archilochuses, however—although we have few pretensions to the ἠχεῆντες ἰάμβοι—although, in short, we are no satirists ourselves, there can be no question that we answer sufficiently well as subjects for satire.

The Vision is bold enough, if we leave out of sight its anonymous issue, and bitter enough, and witty enough, if we forget its pitiable punning on names, and long enough (Heaven knows), and well constructed and decently versified; but it fails in the principal element of all satire—sarcasm—because the intention to be sarcastic (as in the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and in all the more classical satires) is permitted to render itself manifest. The malevolence appears. The author is never very severe, because he is at no time particularly cool. We laugh not so much at his victims as at himself, for letting them put him in such a passion. And where a deeper sentiment than mirth is excited—where it is pity or contempt that we are made to feel—the feeling is too often reflected, in its object, from the satirized to the satirist, with whom we sympathize in the discomfort of his animosity. Mr. Osborn has not many superiors in downright invective; but this is the awkward left arm of the satiric Muse. That satire alone is worth talking about which at least appears to be the genial, good-humored outpouring of irrepressible merriment.

The *Fable for Critics*, just issued, has not the name of its author on the title page; and but for some slight foreknowledge of the literary opinions, likes, dislikes, whims,

prejudices, and crotchets of Mr. James Russell Lowell, we should have had much difficulty in attributing so very loose a brochure to him. The *Fable* is essentially "loose"—ill-conceived and feebly executed, as well in detail as in general. Some good hints and some sparkling witticisms do not serve to compensate us for its rambling plot (if plot it can be called) and for the want of artistic finish so particularly noticeable throughout the work—especially in its versification. In Mr. Lowell's prose efforts we have before observed a certain *disjointedness,* but never, until now, in his verse; and we confess some surprise at his putting forth so unpolished a performance. The author of *The Legend of Brittany* (which is decidedly the noblest poem, of the same length, written by an American) could not do a better thing than to take the advice of those who mean him well, in spite of his fanaticism, and leave prose, with satiric verse, to those who are better able to manage them; while he contents himself with that class of poetry for which, and for which alone, he seems to have an especial vocation—the poetry of *sentiment.* This, to be sure, is not the very loftiest order of verse, for it is far inferior to either that of the imagination or that of the passions; but it is the loftiest region in which Mr. Lowell can get his breath without difficulty.

Our primary objection to this *Fable for Critics* has reference to a point which we have already touched in a general way. "The malevolence appears." We laugh not so much at the author's victims as at himself, for letting them put him in such a passion. The very title of the book shows the want of a due sense in respect to the satirical essence, *sarcasm.* This *Fable*—this severe lesson—is meant *"for Critics."* "Ah!" we say to ourselves at once—"we see how it is. Mr. Lowell is a poor-devil poet, and some critic has been reviewing him, and making him feel very uncomfortable; whereupon, bearing in mind that Lord Byron, when similarly assailed, avenged his wrongs in a satire which he called *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* he (Mr. Lowell), imitative as usual, has been endeavoring to get redress in a parallel manner—by a satire with a parallel title—*A Fable for Critics.*"

All this the reader says to himself; and all this tells against

Mr. Lowell in two ways—first, by suggesting unlucky comparisons between Byron and Lowell, and, secondly, by reminding us of the various criticisms in which we have been amused (rather ill-naturedly) at seeing Mr. Lowell "used up."

The title starts us on this train of thought, and the satire sustains us in it. Every reader versed in our literary gossip is at once put *dessous des cartes* as to the particular provocation which engendered the *Fable*. Miss Margaret Fuller, some time ago, in a silly and conceited piece of Transcendentalism, which she called an *Essay on American Literature,* or something of that kind, had the consummate pleasantry, after selecting, from the list of American poets, Cornelius Mathews and William Ellery Channing for especial commendation, to speak of Longfellow as a booby, and of Lowell as so wretched a poetaster "as to be disgusting even to his best friends." All this Miss Fuller said, if not in our precise words, still in words quite as much to the purpose. Why she said it, Heaven only knows—unless it was because she was Margaret Fuller, and wished to be taken for nobody else. Messrs. Longfellow and Lowell, so pointedly picked out for abuse as the worst of our poets, are, upon the whole, perhaps, our best—although Bryant, and one or two others, are scarcely inferior. As for the two favorites, selected just as pointedly for laudation by Miss Fuller—it is really difficult to think of them, in connection with poetry, without laughing. Mr. Mathews once wrote some sonnets *On Man,* and Mr. Channing some lines on *A Tin Can,* or something of that kind; and if the former gentleman be not the very worst poet that ever existed on the face of the earth, it is only because he is not quite so bad as the latter. To speak algebraically: Mr. Mathews is *ex*ecrable, but Mr. Channing is $x + 1$-ecrable.

Mr. Lowell has obviously aimed his *Fable* at Miss Fuller's head, in the first instance, with an eye to its ricocheting so as to knock down Mr. Mathews in the second. Miss Fuller is first introduced as "Miss ——," rhyming to "cooler," and afterwards as "Miranda"; while poor Mr. Mathews is brought in upon all occasions, head and shoulders; and now and then a

sharp thing, although never very original, is said of them or at them; but all the true satiric effect wrought is that produced by the satirist against himself. The reader is all the time smiling to think that so unsurpassable a—(what shall we call her?—we wish to be civil)—a transcendentalist as Miss Fuller should, by such a criticism, have had the power to put a respectable poet in such a passion.

As for the plot or conduct of this *Fable,* the less we say of it the better. It is so weak, so flimsy, so ill put together, as to be not worth the trouble of understanding: something, as usual, about Apollo and Daphne. Is there no originality on the face of the earth? Mr. Lowell's total want of it is shown at all points—very especially in his preface of rhyming verse written without distinction by lines or initial capitals (a hackneyed matter, originating, we believe, with *Fraser's Magazine*), very especially also in his long continuations of some particular rhyme—a fashion introduced, if we remember aright, by Leigh Hunt, more than twenty-five years ago, in his *Feast of the Poets,* which, by the way, has been Mr. Lowell's model in many respects.

Although ill-temper has evidently engendered this *Fable,* it is by no means a satire throughout. Much of it is devoted to panegyric; but our readers would be quite puzzled to know the grounds of the author's laudations, in many cases, unless made acquainted with a fact which we think it as well they should be informed of at once. Mr. Lowell is one of the most rabid of the Abolition fanatics; and no Southerner, who does not wish to be insulted, and at the same time revolted by a bigotry the most obstinately blind and deaf, should ever touch a volume by this author.[1] His fanaticism about slavery is a mere local outbreak of the same innate wrong-headedness which, if he owned slaves, would manifest itself in atrocious ill-treatment of them, with murder of any abolitionist who should endeavor to set them free. A fanatic of

[1]This *Fable* for Critics—this *literary* satire—this benevolent *jeu d'esprit,* is disgraced by such passages as the following:

> Forty fathers of Freedom, of whom twenty bred
> Their sons for the rice swamps, at so much a head,
> And their daughters for—faugh! E. A. P.

Mr. Lowell's species is simply a fanatic for the sake of fanaticism, and must be a fanatic in whatever circumstances you place him.

His prejudices on the topic of slavery break out everywhere in his present book. Mr. Lowell has not the common honesty to speak well, even in a literary sense, of any man who is not a ranting abolitionist. With the exception of Mr. Poe (who has written some commendatory criticisms on his poems), no Southerner is mentioned at all in this *Fable*. It is a fashion among Mr. Lowell's set to affect a belief that there is no such thing as Southern literature. Northerners, people who have really nothing to speak of as men of letters, are cited by the dozen, and lauded by this candid critic without stint, while Legaré, Simms, Longstreet, and others of equal note, are passed by in contemptuous silence. Mr. Lowell cannot carry his frail honesty of opinion even so far South as New York. All whom he praises are Bostonians. Other writers are barbarians, and satirized accordingly, if mentioned at all.

To show the general manner of the *Fable*, we quote a portion of what he says about Mr. Poe:

There comes Poe with his Raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge,
Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
In a way to make all men of common sense damn meters,
Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,
But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind.

We may observe here that profound ignorance on any particular topic is always sure to manifest itself by some allusion to "common sense" as an all-sufficient instructor. So far from Mr. Poe's talking "like a book" on the topic at issue, his chief purpose has been to demonstrate that there exists no book on the subject worth talking about; and "common sense," after all, has been the basis on which he relied, in contradistinction from the uncommon nonsense of Mr. Lowell and the small pedants.

And now let us see how far the unusual "common sense" of our satirist has availed him in the structure of his verse.

First, by way of showing what his intention was, we quote three accidentally accurate lines:

But a boy | he could ne | ver be right | ly defined.

As I said | he was ne | ver precise | ly unkind.

But as Ci | cero says | he won't say | this or that.

Here it is clearly seen that Mr. Lowell intends a line of four anapæsts. (An anapæst is a foot composed of two short syllables followed by a long.) With this observation, we will now simply copy a few of the lines which constitute the body of the poem; asking any of our readers to *read them if they can;* that is to say, we place the question, without argument, on the broad basis of the very commonest "common sense."

They're all from one source, monthly, weekly, diurnal.

Disperse all one's good and condense all one's poor traits.

The one's two-thirds Norseman, the other half Greek.

He has imitators in scores who omit.

Should suck milk, strong-will-giving brave, such as runs.

Along the far railroad the steam-snake glide white.

From the same runic type-fount and alphabet.

Earth has six truest patriots: four discoverers of ether.

Every cockboat that swims clear its fierce (pop) gun deck at him.

Is some of it pr—— No, 'tis not even prose.

O'er his principles, when something else turns up trumps.

But a few silly-(syllo-I mean) gisms that squat 'em.

Nos, we don't want *extra* freezing in winter.

Plow, sail, forge, build, carve, paint, make all over new.

But enough: we have given a fair specimen of the general versification. It might have been better—but we are quite sure that it *could not have been worse*. So much for "common sense," in Mr. Lowell's understanding of the term. Mr. Lowell should not have meddled with the anapæstic rhythm: it is exceedingly awkward in the hands of one who knows nothing about it and who *will* persist in fancying that he can write it by ear. Very especially, he should have avoided this rhythm in satire, which, more than any other branch of Letters, is dependent upon seeming trifles for its effect. Two thirds of the force of the *Dunciad*, may be referred to its exquisite finish; and had the *Fable for Critics* been (what it is *not*) the quintessence of the satiric spirit itself, it would, nevertheless, in so slovenly a form, have failed. As it is, no failure was ever more complete or more pitiable. By the publication of a book at once so ambitious and so feeble, so malevolent in design and so harmless in execution, a work so roughly and clumsily yet so weakly constructed, so very different in body and spirit from anything that he has written before, Mr. Lowell has committed an irrevocable *faux pas* and lowered himself at least fifty per cent in the literary public opinion.

BAYARD TAYLOR

April 1849

I BLUSH TO SEE, in the *Literary World*, an invidious notice of Bayard Taylor's *Rhymes of Travel*. What makes the matter worse, the critique is from the pen of one who, although undeservedly, holds, himself, some position as a poet; and what makes the matter worst, the attack is anonymous, and (while ostensibly commending) most zealously endeavors to damn the young writer "with faint praise." In his whole life, the author of the criticism never published a poem, long

or short, which could compare, either in the higher merits or in the minor morals of the Muse, with the worst of Mr. Taylor's compositions.

Observe the generalizing, disingenuous, patronizing tone:

> It is the empty charlatan, to whom all things are alike impossible, who attempts everything. He can do one thing as well as another; for he can really do nothing. . . . Mr. Taylor's volume, as we have intimated, is an advance upon his previous publication. We could have wished, indeed, something more of restraint in the rhetoric, *but,* etc., etc., etc.

The concluding sentence, here, is an excellent example of one of the most ingeniously malignant of critical ruses—that of condemning an author, in especial, for what the world, in general, feel to be his principal merit. In fact, the "rhetoric" of Mr. Taylor, in the sense intended by the critic, is Mr. Taylor's distinguishing excellence. He is, unquestionably, the most terse, glowing, and vigorous of all our poets, young or old,—in point, I mean, of *expression.* His sonorous, well-balanced rhythm puts me often in mind of Campbell (in spite of our anonymous friend's implied sneer at "mere jingling of rhymes, brilliant and successful for the moment"), and his rhetoric in general is of the highest order. By "rhetoric," I intend the mode generally in which thought is presented. Where shall we find more magnificent passages than these?

> First queenly Asia, from the fallen thrones
> Of twice three thousand years,
> Came *with the woe a grieving goddess owns*
> *Who longs for mortal tears.*
> The dust of ruin to her mantle clung
> And dimmed her crown of gold,
> While *the majestic sorrows of her tongue*
> *From Tyre to Indus rolled:*
>
> "Mourn with me, sisters, in my realm of woe
> *Whose only glory streams*
> *From its lost childhood, like the arctic glow*
> *Which sunless Winter dreams!*
> *In the red desert molders Babylon,*
> *And the wild serpent's hiss*

Echoes in Petra's palaces of stone
And waste Persepolis."

. . . . . .

Then from her seat, *amid the palms embowered*
That shade the Lion-land,
Swart Africa in dusky aspect towered,
The fetters on her hand.
Backward she saw, from out her drear eclipse,
The mighty Theban years,
And the deep anguish of her mournful lips
Interpreted her tears.

I copy these passages first, because the critic in question has copied them, without the slightest appreciation of their grandeur—for they are grand; and secondly, to put the question of "rhetoric" at rest. No artist who reads them will deny that they are the perfection of skill in their way. But thirdly, I wish to call attention to the glowing imagination evinced in the lines italicized. My very soul revolts at such efforts (as the one I refer to) to depreciate such poems as Mr. Taylor's. Is there no honor—no chivalry left in the land? Are our most deserving writers to be forever sneered down, or hooted down, or damned down with faint praise, by a set of men who possess little other ability than that which assures temporary success to *them,* in common with Swaim's Panacea or Morrison's Pills? The fact is, some person should write, at once, a magazine paper exposing—*ruthlessly* exposing—the *dessous des cartes* of our literary affairs. He should show how and why it is that the ubiquitous quack in letters can always "succeed," while *genius* (which implies self-respect, with a scorn of creeping and crawling) must inevitably succumb. He should point out the "easy arts" by which anyone, base enough to do it, can get himself placed at the very head of American Letters by an article in that magnanimous journal, the —— *Review.* He should explain, too, how readily the same work can be induced (as in the case of Simms) to vilify, and vilify personally, anyone not a Northerner, for a trifling "consideration." In fact, our criticism needs a thorough regeneration, *and must have it.*

HEADLEY'S *THE SACRED MOUNTAINS*

October 1850[1]

THE *Reverend* Mr. Headley (why *will* he not put his full title in his title pages?) has in his *Sacred Mountains* been reversing the facts of the old fable about the mountains that brought forth the mouse—*parturiunt montes: nascitur ridiculus mus*—for in this instance it appears to be the mouse—the little *ridiculus mus*—that has been bringing forth the *Mountains,* and a great litter of them, too. The epithet, "funny," however, is perhaps the only one which can be considered as thoroughly applicable to the book. We say that a book is a "funny" book, and nothing else, when it spreads over two hundred pages an amount of matter which could be conveniently presented in twenty of a magazine; that a book is a "funny" book—"only this and nothing more"—when it is written in that kind of phraseology in which John Philpot Curran, when drunk, would have made a speech at a public dinner; and, moreover, we do say, emphatically, that a book is a "funny" book, and nothing but a "funny" book, whenever it happens to be penned by Mr. Headley.

We should like to give some account of *The Sacred Mountains,* if the thing were only possible, but we cannot conceive that it is. Mr. Headley belongs to that numerous class of authors who must be read to be understood, and who, for that reason, very seldom are as thoroughly comprehended as they should be. Let us endeavor, however, to give some general idea of the work. "The design," says the author, in his preface, "is to render more familiar and lifelike some of the scenes of the Bible." Here, in the very first sentence of his preface, we suspect the Reverend Mr. Headley of fibbing: for his design, as it appears to ordinary apprehension, is merely that of making a little money by selling a little book.

[1]Poe had died October 7, 1849. E. W.

The mountains described are Ararat, Moriah, Sinai, Hor, Pisgah, Horeb, Carmel, Lebanon, Zion, Tabor, Olivet, and Calvary. Taking up these, one by one, the author proceeds, in his own very peculiar way, to *elocutionize* about them: we really do not know how else to express what it is that Mr. Headley does with these eminences. Perhaps if we were to say that he stood up before the reader and "made a speech" about them, one after the other, we should come still nearer the truth. By way of carrying out his design, as announced in the preface—that of rendering "more familiar and lifelike some of the scenes" and so forth—he tells not only how each mountain is, and was, but how it might have been and ought to be, in his own opinion. To hear him talk, anybody would suppose that he had been at the laying of the corner stone of Solomon's Temple—to say nothing of being born and brought up in the ark with Noah, and hail-fellow-well-met with every one of the beasts that went into it. If any person really desires to know how and why it was that the deluge took place—but especially *how*—if any person wishes to get minute and accurate information on the topic, let him read *The Sacred Mountains,* let him only listen to the Reverend Mr. Headley. He explains to us precisely how it all took place—what Noah said, and thought, while the ark was building, and what the people, who saw him building the ark, said and thought about his undertaking such a work; and how the beasts, birds, and fishes looked, as they came in, arm in arm; and what the dove did, and what the raven did not—in short, all the rest of it: nothing could be more beautifully posted up. What *can* Mr. Headley mean, at page 17, by the remark that "there is no one who does not lament that there is not a fuller antediluvian history"? We are quite sure that nothing that ever happened before the flood has been omitted in the scrupulous researches of the author of *The Sacred Mountains.*

He might, perhaps, wrap up the fruits of these researches in rather better English than that which he employs:

> Yet *still* the water rose around them till all through the valleys nothing but little black islands of human beings *were* seen on the surface. . . . The more fixed the irrevocable

decree, *the heavier* he leaned on the Omnipotent arm. . . . And lo! a solitary cloud comes drifting along the morning sky and *catches* against the top of the mountain. . . . At length emboldened by their own numbers they *assembled* tumultuously *together*. . . . Aaron never appears *so perfect* a character as Moses. . . . As he advanced from rock to rock the sobbing of the multitude that *followed after* tore his heart-strings. . . . Friends were *following after* whose sick Christ had healed. . . . The steady mountain threatened *to lift* from its base and be carried away. . . . Sometimes God's hatred of sin, sometimes His care for His children, sometimes the discipline of His church, *were* the motives. . . . Surely it was His mighty hand that *laid* on that trembling, tottering mountain.

These things are not exactly as we could wish them, perhaps; but that a gentleman should know so much about Noah's ark and know anything about anything else, is scarcely to be expected. We have no right to require English grammar and accurate information about Moses and Aaron at the hands of one and the same author. For our parts, now we come to think of it, if we only understood as much about Mount Sinai and other matters as Mr. Headley does, we should make a point of always writing bad English upon principle, whether we knew better or not.

It may well be made a question, moreover, how far a man of genius is justified in discussing topics so serious as those handled by Mr. Headley, in any ordinary kind of *style*. One should not talk about Scriptural subjects as one would talk about the rise and fall of stocks or the proceedings of Congress. Mr. Headley has seemed to feel this and has therefore elevated his manner—a little. For example:

The fields were smiling in verdure before his eyes; the perfumed breezes *floated* by. . . . The sun is *sailing* over the encampment. . . . That cloud was God's pavilion; the thunder was its sentinels; and the lightning the lances' points as they moved round the sacred trust. . . . And how could he part with his children whom he had *borne on his brave heart* for more than forty years? . . . Thus everything conspired to render Zion the spell-word of the nation and on its summit the *heart of Israel seemed to lie and throb*. . . . The sun died in

the heavens; *an earthquake thundered* on to complete the dismay, etc., etc.

Here no one can fail to perceive the beauty (in an antediluvian, or at least in a Pickwickian, sense) of these expressions in general, about the floating of the breeze, the sailing of the sun, the thundering of the earthquake, and the throbbing of the heart as it lay on the top of the mountain.

The true artist, however, always rises as he proceeds, and in his last page or so brings all his elocution to a climax. Only hear Mr. Headley's *finale*. He has been describing the crucifixion, and now soars into the sublime:

How Heaven regarded this disaster, and the Universe felt at the sight, I cannot tell. I know not but tears fell like raindrops from angelic eyes when they saw Christ spit upon and struck. I know not but there was silence on high for *more* than "half an hour" when the scene of the crucifixion was transpiring [a scene, as well as an event, always "transpires" with Mr. Headley], a silence unbroken save by the solitary sound of some harp string on which unconsciously fell the agitated, trembling fingers of a seraph. I know not but all the radiant ranks on high, and even Gabriel himself, turned with the deepest solicitude to the Father's face, to see if He was calm and untroubled amid it all. I know not but His composed brow and serene majesty were all that restrained Heaven from one universal shriek of horror when they heard groans on Calvary—*dying* groans. I know not but they thought God had given His glory to another, but one thing I *do* know [Ah, there *is* really one thing Mr. Headley knows!]—that when they saw through the vast design, comprehended the stupendous scene, the hills of God shook to a shout that never before rung over their bright tops, and the crystal sea trembled to a song that had never before stirred its bright depths, and the "Glory to God in the Highest" was a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.

Here we have direct evidence of Mr. Headley's accuracy not less than of his eloquence. "I know not but that" one is as vast as the other. The one thing that he does know he knows to perfection:—he knows not only what the chorus was (it was one of "hallelujahs and harping symphonies") but also how much of it there was—it was a "sevenfold

chorus." Mr. Headley is a mathematical man. Moreover, he is a modest man; for he confesses (no doubt with tears in his eyes) that really there is one thing that he does not know. "How Heaven regarded this disaster, and the Universe felt at the sight, I cannot tell." Only think of that! *I* cannot!—*I*, Headley, really cannot tell how the Universe "felt" once upon a time! This is downright bashfulness on the part of Mr. Headley. He *could* tell if he would only try. Why did he not inquire? Had he demanded of the Universe how it felt, can anyone doubt that the answer would have been—"Pretty well, I thank you, my dear Headley; how do you feel yourself?"

"Quack" is a word that sounds well only in the mouth of a duck; and upon our honor we feel a scruple in using it:—nevertheless the truth should be told; and the simple fact is, that the author of *The Sacred Mountains* is the Autocrat of all the Quacks. In saying this, we beg not to be misunderstood. We mean no disparagement to Mr. Headley. We admire that gentleman as much as any individual ever did except that gentleman himself. He looks remarkably well at all points—although perhaps best, ἑκάς—at a distance—as the lying Pindar says he saw Archilochus, who died ages before the vagabond was born:—the reader will excuse the digression; but talking of one great man is very apt to put us in mind of another. We were saying—were we not?—that Mr. Headley is by no means to be sneered at as a quack. This might be justifiable, indeed, were he only a quack in a small way—a quack doing business by retail. But the wholesale dealer is entitled to respect. Besides, the Reverend author of *Napoleon and his Marshals* was a quack to some purpose. He knows what he is about. We like perfection wherever we see it. We readily forgive a man for being a fool if he only be a *perfect* fool—and this is a particular in which we cannot put our hands upon our hearts and say that Mr. Headley is deficient. He acts upon the principle that if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well:—and the thing that he "does" especially well is the public.

THIS ELOQUENT ESSAY by Melville on Hawthorne appeared in a weekly called *The Literary World* for August 17 and August 24, 1850.

Melville has of course, for the purposes of his essay, assumed a fictitious character. He was not a Southerner but a New Yorker. In the autumn of 1850, he bought a house in the Berkshires near Lenox, where Hawthorne was already living. Hawthorne was working on *The House of Seven Gables,* and he had published *The Scarlet Letter* that April —so that it is perhaps a little strange that Melville should declare that *Mosses from an Old Manse,* published in 1846, would be "ultimately accounted his masterpiece." Melville had started *Moby Dick* in the latter part of the summer of 1850 and, working with terrific intensity, finished it the following summer. His remarks about Shakespeare, thus uttered on the brink of his own great moment of creative energy, must have been inspired by his sense of his own genius rather than by any clear perception of the quality of Hawthorne's.

He seems to have laid siege to his neighbor, tried to carry Hawthorne along with him into his own world of fierce frus-

trations and apocalyptic visions; and Hawthorne, who was fifteen years the older, seems to have let Melville dash past him as he did many other things. The story is that the two men at first were rather shy of one another till they had been driven one day by a thunderstorm to take shelter under the same rocks. They saw thereafter a good deal of one another. Mr. Raymond M. Weaver, the biographer of Melville, regards this relationship as a tragedy for Melville; but, though it is true that Melville hardly found in Hawthorne the ideal companion he desired and seems usually to be in the position of seeking out the more recessive man, they evidently had some good evenings "that lasted pretty deep into the night," during which they drank cider or brandy and talked "about time and eternity," as Hawthorne says of one such occasion, "things of this world and of the next, and books, and publishers, and all possible and impossible matters." Julian Hawthorne tells a story of a visit Melville paid them one evening, in the course of which he entertained them with an account of a fight between some natives that he had seen in the South Seas. The next day Hawthorne inquired of his wife: "Where is that club with which Mr. Melville was laying about him so?" Hawthorne thought that Melville had taken it home; Mrs. Hawthorne thought he had put it in a corner. But there had never been a club.

It will be noted that Melville here, in his enthusiasm for native literature and no doubt in the pride of his own genius, recommends a policy the opposite of Poe's and one which it would always have been dangerous to follow: "Let America first praise mediocrity even, in her children, before she praises . . . the best excellence in the children of other lands."

HAWTHORNE AND HIS *MOSSES*

By a Virginian Spending July in Vermont

A PAPERED CHAMBER in a fine old farmhouse, a mile from any other dwelling, and dipped to the eaves in foliage—surrounded by mountains, old woods, and Indian pools,—this, surely, is the place to write of Hawthorne. Some charm is in this northern air, for love and duty seem both impelling to the task. A man of a deep and noble nature has seized me in this seclusion. His wild witch voice rings through me; or, in softer cadences, I seem to hear it in the songs of the hillside birds that sing in the larch trees at my window.

Would that all excellent books were foundlings, without father or mother, that so it might be we could glorify them, without including their ostensible authors! Nor would any true man take exception to this; least of all, he who writes, "When the artist rises high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he makes it perceptible to mortal senses becomes of little value in his eyes, while his spirit possesses itself in the enjoyment of the reality."

But more than this. I know not what would be the right name to put on the title page of an excellent book; but this I feel, that the names of all fine authors are fictitious ones, far more so than that of Junius; simply standing, as they

do, for the mystical, ever-eluding spirit of all beauty, which ubiquitously possesses men of genius. Purely imaginative as this fancy may appear, it nevertheless seems to receive some warranty from the fact that on a personal interview no great author has ever come up to the idea of his reader. But that dust of which our bodies are composed, how can it fitly express the nobler intelligences among us? With reverence be it spoken, that not even in the case of one deemed more than man, not even in our Savior, did his visible frame betoken anything of the augustness of the nature within. Else, how could those Jewish eyewitnesses fail to see heaven in his glance!

It is curious how a man may travel along a country road, and yet miss the grandest or sweetest of prospects by reason of an intervening hedge, so like all other hedges, as in no way to hint of the wide landscape beyond. So has it been with me concerning the enchanting landscape in the soul of this Hawthorne, this most excellent Man of Mosses. His *Old Manse* has been written now four years, but I never read it till a day or two since. I had seen it in the bookstores —heard of it often—even had it recommended to me by a tasteful friend, as a rare, quiet book, perhaps too deserving of popularity to be popular. But there are so many books called "excellent," and so much unpopular merit, that amid the thick stir of other things, the hint of my tasteful friend was disregarded, and for four years the *Mosses on the Old Manse* never refreshed me with their perennial green. It may be, however, that all this while the book, likewise, was only improving in flavor and body. At any rate, it so chanced that this long procrastination eventuated in a happy result. At breakfast the other day, a mountain girl, a cousin of mine, who for the last two weeks has every morning helped me to strawberries and raspberries, which, like the roses and pearls in the fairy tale, seemed to fall into the saucer from those strawberry beds, her cheeks—this delightful creature, this charming Cherry says to me—"I see you spend your mornings in the haymow; and yesterday I found there Dwight's *Travels in New England*. Now I have something far better than that, something more congenial to our summer on these

hills. Take these raspberries, and then I will give you some moss." "Moss!" said I. "Yes, and you must take it to the barn with you, and good-by to Dwight."

With that she left me, and soon returned with a volume, verdantly bound, and garnished with a curious frontispiece in green; nothing less than a fragment of real moss, cunningly pressed to a fly-leaf. "Why, this," said I, spilling my raspberries, "this is the *Mosses from an Old Manse*." "Yes," said Cousin Cherry, "Yes, it is that flowery Hawthorne." "Hawthorne and Mosses," said I, "no more it is morning: it is July in the country: and I am off for the barn."

Stretched on that new-mown clover, the hillside breeze blowing over me through the wide barn door, and soothed by the hum of the bees in the meadows around, how magically stole over me this Mossy Man! and how amply, how bountifully, did he redeem that delicious promise to his guests in the Old Manse, of whom it is written: "Others could give them pleasure, or amusement, or instruction—these could be picked up anywhere; but it was for me to give them rest—rest, in a life of trouble! What better could be done for those weary and world-worn spirits? . . . what better could be done for anybody who came within our magic circle than to throw the spell of a tranquil spirit over him?" So all that day, half buried in the new clover, I watched this Hawthorne's "Assyrian dawn, and Paphian sunset and moonrise from the summit of our eastern hill."

The soft ravishments of the man spun me round about in a web of dreams, and when the book was closed, when the spell was over, this wizard "dismissed me with but misty reminiscences, as if I had been dreaming of him."

What a wild moonlight of contemplative humor bathes that Old Manse!—the rich and rare distilment of a spicy and slowly-oozing heart. No rollicking rudeness, no gross fun fed on fat dinners, and bred in the lees of wine,—but a humor so spiritually gentle, so high, so deep, and yet so richly relishable, that it were hardly inappropriate in an angel. It is the very religion of mirth; for nothing so human but it may be advanced to that. The orchard of the Old Manse seems the visible type of the fine mind that has

described it—those twisted and contorted old trees, "they stretch out their crooked branches, and take such hold of the imagination that we remember them as humorists and odd-fellows." And then, as surrounded by these grotesque forms, and hushed in the noonday repose of this Hawthorne's spell, how aptly might the still fall of his ruddy thoughts into your soul be symbolized by: "In the stillest afternoon, if I listened, the thump of a great apple was audible, falling without a breath of wind, from the mere necessity of perfect ripeness." For no less ripe than ruddy are the apples of the thoughts and fancies in this sweet Man of Mosses.

Buds and Bird Voices. What a delicious thing is that! "Will the world ever be so decayed, that spring may not renew its greenness?" And the *Fire Worship.* Was ever the hearth so glorified into an altar before? The mere title of that piece is better than any common work in fifty folio volumes. How exquisite is this: "Nor did it lessen the charm of his soft, familiar courtesy and helpfulness that the mighty spirit, were opportunity offered him, would run riot through the peaceful house, wrap its inmates in his terrible embrace, and leave nothing of them save their whitened bones. This possibility of mad destruction only made his domestic kindness the more beautiful and touching. It was so sweet of him, being endowed with such power, to dwell day after day, and one long lonesome night after another, on the dusky hearth, only now and then betraying his wild nature by thrusting his red tongue out of the chimney top! True, he had done much mischief in the world, and was pretty certain to do more; but his warm heart atoned for all. He was kindly to the race of man; and they pardoned his characteristic imperfections."

But he has still other apples, not quite so ruddy, though full as ripe: apples that have been left to wither on the tree, after the pleasant autumn gathering is past. The sketch of *The Old Apple Dealer* is conceived in the subtlest spirit of sadness; he whose "subdued and nerveless boyhood prefigured his abortive prime, which likewise contained within itself the prophecy and image of his lean and torpid age." Such touches as are in this piece cannot proceed from any

common heart. They argue such a depth of tenderness, such a boundless sympathy with all forms of being, such an omnipresent love, that we must needs say that this Hawthorne is here almost alone in his generation—at least, in the artistic manifestation of these things. Still more. Such touches as these—and many, very many similar ones, all through his chapters—furnish clues whereby we enter a little way into the intricate, profound heart where they originated. And we see that suffering, sometime or other, and in some shape or other—this only can enable any man to depict it in others. All over him, Hawthorne's melancholy rests like an Indian summer, which, though bathing a whole country in one softness, still reveals the distinctive hue of every towering hill and each far-winding vale.

But it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. Where Hawthorne is known, he seems to be deemed a pleasant writer, with a pleasant style,—a sequestered, harmless man, from whom any deep and weighty thing would hardly be anticipated—a man who means no meanings. But there is no man in whom humor and love, like mountain peaks, soar to such a rapt height as to receive the irradiations of the upper skies; there is no man in whom humor and love are developed in that high form called genius; no such man can exist without also possessing, as the indispensable complement of these, a great, deep intellect, which drops down into the universe like a plummet. Or, love and humor are only the eyes through which such an intellect views this world. The great beauty in such a mind is but the product of its strength. What, to all readers, can be more charming than the piece entitled *Monsieur du Miroir;* and to a reader at all capable of fully fathoming it, what, at the same time, can possess more mystical depth of meaning?—yes, there he sits and looks at me—this "shape of mystery," this "identical MONSIEUR DU MIROIR!" "Methinks I should tremble now were his wizard power of gliding through all impediments in search of me to place him suddenly before my eyes."

How profound, nay, appalling, is the moral evolved by the *Earth's Holocaust;* where—beginning with the hollow follies and affectations of the world—all vanities and empty

theories and forms are, one after another, and by an admirably graduated, growing comprehensiveness, thrown into the allegorical fire, till, at length, nothing is left but the all-engendering heart of man; which remaining still unconsumed, the great conflagration is naught.

Of a piece with this is the *Intelligence Office*, a wondrous symbolizing of the secret workings in men's souls. There are other sketches still more charged with ponderous import.

The Christmas Banquet and *The Bosom Serpent* would be fine subjects for a curious and elaborate analysis, touching the conjectural parts of the mind that produced them. For spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side—like the dark half of the physical sphere—is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black. But this darkness but gives more effect to the ever-moving dawn, that forever advances through it, and circumnavigates his world. Whether Hawthorne has simply availed himself of this mystical blackness as a means to the wondrous effects he makes it to produce in his lights and shades; or whether there really lurks in him, perhaps unknown to himself, a touch of Puritanic gloom,—this, I cannot altogether tell. Certain it is, however, that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. For, in certain moods, no man can weigh this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance. At all events, perhaps no writer has ever wielded this terrific thought with greater terror than this same harmless Hawthorne. Still more: this black conceit pervades him through and through. You may be witched by his sunlight—transported by the bright gildings in the skies he builds over you; but there is the blackness of darkness beyond; and even his bright gildings but fringe and play upon the edges of thunder-clouds. In one word, the world is mistaken in this Nathaniel Hawthorne. He himself must often have smiled at its absurd misconception of him. He is immeasurably deeper than the plummet of the mere critic. For it is not

the brain that can test such a man; it is only the heart. You cannot come to know greatness by inspecting it; there is no glimpse to be caught of it, except by intuition; you need not ring it, you but touch it, and you find it is gold.

Now, it is that blackness in Hawthorne, of which I have spoken, that so fixes and fascinates me. It may be, nevertheless, that it is too largely developed in him. Perhaps he does not give us a ray of light for every shade of his dark. But however this may be, this blackness it is that furnishes the infinite obscure of his background—that background against which Shakespeare plays his grandest conceits, the things that have made for Shakespeare his loftiest but most circumscribed renown, as the profoundest of thinkers. For by philosophers Shakespeare is not adored, as the great man of tragedy and comedy: "Off with his head; so much for Buckingham!" This sort of rant, interlined by another hand, brings down the house—those mistaken souls, who dream of Shakespeare as a mere man of Richard the Third humps and Macbeth daggers. But it is those deep, far-away things in him; those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality, —these are the things that make Shakespeare, Shakespeare. Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear, and Iago, he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things which we feel to be so terrifically true that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them. Tormented into desperation, Lear, the frantic king, tears off the mask, and speaks the same madness of vital truth. But, as I before said, it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. And so, much of the blind, unbridled admiration that has been heaped upon Shakespeare has been lavished upon the least part of him. And few of his endless commentators and critics seem to have remembered, or even perceived, that the immediate products of a great mind are not so great as that undeveloped and sometimes undevelopable yet dimly-discernible greatness to which those immediate products are but the infallible indices. In Shakespeare's tomb lies infinitely more than Shakespeare ever wrote. And if I magnify

Shakespeare, it is not so much for what he did do as for what he did not do, or refrained from doing. For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a sacred white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakespeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth, even though it be covertly and by snatches.

But if this view of the all-popular Shakespeare be seldom taken by his readers, and if very few who extol him have ever read him deeply, or, perhaps, only have seen him on the tricky stage (which alone made, and is still making him, his mere mob renown)—if few men have time, or patience, or palate, for the spiritual truth as it is in that great genius—it is then no matter of surprise that in a contemporaneous age Nathaniel Hawthorne is a man as yet almost utterly mistaken among men. Here and there, in some quiet armchair in the noisy town, or some deep nook among the noiseless mountains, he may be appreciated for something of what he is. But unlike Shakespeare, who was forced to the contrary course by circumstances, Hawthorne (either from simple disinclination, or else from inaptitude) refrains from all the popularizing noise and show of broad farce and blood-besmeared tragedy; content with the still, rich utterance of a great intellect in repose, and which sends few thoughts into circulation, except they be arterialized at his large warm lungs, and expanded in his honest heart.

Nor need you fix upon that blackness in him, if it suit you not. Nor, indeed, will all readers discern it; for it is, mostly, insinuated to those who may best understand it, and account for it; it is not obtruded upon everyone alike.

Some may start to read of Shakespeare and Hawthorne on the same page. They may say that if an illustration were needed, a lesser light might have sufficed to elucidate this Hawthorne, this small man of yesterday. But I am not willingly one of those who, as touching Shakespeare at least, exemplify the maxim of Rochefoucauld, that "we exalt the reputation of some, in order to depress that of others"—who, to teach all noble-souled aspirants that there is no hope for them, pronounce Shakespeare absolutely unapproachable. But Shakespeare has been approached. There are minds that

have gone as far as Shakespeare into the universe. And hardly a mortal man, who, at some time or other, has not felt as great thoughts in him as any you will find in Hamlet. We must not inferentially malign mankind for the sake of any one man, whoever he may be. This is too cheap a purchase of contentment for conscious mediocrity to make. Besides, this absolute and unconditional adoration of Shakespeare has grown to be a part of our Anglo-Saxon superstitions. The Thirty-Nine Articles are now forty. Intolerance has come to exist in this matter. You must believe in Shakespeare's unapproachability, or quit the country. But what sort of a belief is this for an American, a man who is bound to carry republican progressiveness into Literature as well as into Life? Believe me, my friends, that men not very much inferior to Shakespeare are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio. And the day will come when you shall say, Who reads a book by an Englishman that is a modern? The great mistake seems to be, that even with those Americans who look forward to the coming of a great literary genius among us, they somehow fancy he will come in the costume of Queen Elizabeth's day; be a writer of dramas founded upon old English history or the tales of Boccaccio. Whereas, great geniuses are parts of the times, they themselves are the times, and possess a corresponding coloring. It is of a piece with the Jews, who, while their Shiloh was meekly walking in their streets, were still praying for his magnificent coming; looking for him in a chariot, who was already among them on an ass. Nor must we forget that, in his own lifetime, Shakepeare was not Shakespeare, but only Master William Shakespeare of the shrewd, thriving business firm of Condell, Shakespeare and Co., proprietors of the Globe Theater in London; and by a courtly author, of the name of Chettle, was looked at as an "upstart crow," beautified "with other birds' feathers." For, mark it well, imitation is often the first charge brought against originality. Why this is so, there is not space to set forth here. You must have plenty of sea-room to tell the Truth in; especially when it seems to have an aspect of newness, as America did in 1492, though it was then just as old, and perhaps older than Asia,

only those sagacious philosophers, the common sailors, had never seen it before, swearing it was all water and moonshine there.

Now I do not say that Nathaniel of Salem is a greater man than William of Avon, or as great. But the difference between the two men is by no means immeasurable. Not a very great deal more, and Nathaniel were verily William.

This, too, I mean: that if Shakespeare has not been equaled, give the world time, and he is sure to be surpassed in one hemisphere or the other. Nor will it at all do to say that the world is getting gray and grizzled now, and has lost that fresh charm which she wore of old, and by virtue of which the great poets of past times made themselves what we esteem them to be. Not so. The world is as young today as when it was created; and this Vermont morning dew is as wet to my feet as Eden's dew to Adam's. Nor has nature been all over ransacked by our progenitors, so that no new charms and mysteries remain for this latter generation to find. Far from it. The trillionth part has not yet been said; and all that has been said but multiplies the avenues to what remains to be said. It is not so much paucity as superabundance of material that seems to incapacitate modern authors.

Let America, then, prize and cherish her writers; yea, let her glorify them. They are not so many in number as to exhaust her goodwill. And while she has good kith and kin of her own to take to her bosom, let her not lavish her embraces upon the household of an alien. For believe it or not, England, after all, is in many things an alien to us. China has more bonds of real love for us than she. But even were there no strong literary individualities among us, as there are some dozens at least, nevertheless, let America first praise mediocrity even, in her children, before she praises (for everywhere, merit demands acknowledgment from everyone) the best excellence in the children of any other land. Let her own authors, I say, have the priority of appreciation. I was much pleased with a hot-headed Carolina cousin of mine, who once said, "If there were no other American to stand by, in literature, why, then, I would stand by Pop Emmons and his

Fredoniad, and till a better epic came along, swear it was not very far behind the *Iliad.*" Take away the words, and in spirit he was sound.

Not that American genius needs patronage in order to expand. For that explosive sort of stuff will expand though screwed up in a vise, and burst it, though it were triple steel. It is for the nation's sake, and not for her authors' sake, that I would have America be heedful of the increasing greatness among her writers. For how great the shame, if other nations should be before her, in crowning her heroes of the pen! But this is almost the case now. American authors have received more just and discriminating praise (however loftily and ridiculously given, in certain cases) even from some Englishmen, than from their own countrymen. There are hardly five critics in America; and several of them are asleep. As for patronage, it is the American author who now patronizes his country, and not his country him. And if at times some among them appeal to the people for more recognition, it is not always with selfish motives, but patriotic ones.

It is true that but few of them as yet have evinced that decided originality which merits great praise. But that graceful writer who perhaps of all Americans has received the most plaudits from his own country for his productions—that very popular and amiable writer, however good and self-reliant in many things, perhaps owes his chief reputation to the self-acknowledged imitation of a foreign model, and to the studied avoidance of all topics but smooth ones.[1] But it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation. He who has never failed somewhere, that man cannot be great. Failure is the true test of greatness. And if it be said that continual success is a proof that a man wisely knows his powers, it is only to be added that, in that case, he knows them to be small. Let us believe it, then, once for all, that there is no hope for us in these smooth, pleasing writers that know their powers. Without malice, but to speak the plain fact, they but furnish an appendix to Goldsmith and other English authors. And we want no American Goldsmiths,

[1]Washington Irving. E. W.

nay, we want no American Miltons. It were the vilest thing you could say of a true American author that he were an American Tompkins. Call him an American and have done, for you cannot say a nobler thing of him. But it is not meant that all American writers should studiously cleave to nationality in their writings; only this, no American writer should write like an Englishman or a Frenchman; let him write like a man, for then he will be sure to write like an American. Let us away with this leaven of literary flunkeyism toward England. If either must play the flunkey in this thing, let England do it, not us. While we are rapidly preparing for that political supremacy among the nations which prophetically awaits us at the close of the present century, in a literary point of view, we are deplorably unprepared for it; and we seem studious to remain so. Hitherto, reasons might have existed why this should be; but no good reason exists now. And all that is requisite to amendment in this matter is simply this: that while fully acknowledging all excellence everywhere, we should refrain from unduly lauding foreign writers, and, at the same time, duly recognize the meritorious writers that are our own; those writers who breathe that unshackled, democratic spirit of Christianity in all things, which now takes the practical lead in this world, though at the same time led by ourselves—us Americans. Let us boldly condemn all imitation, though it comes to us graceful and fragrant as the morning; and foster all originality, though at first it be crabbed and ugly as our own pine knots. And if any of our authors fail, or seem to fail, then, in the words of my Carolina cousin, let us clap him on the shoulder and back him against all Europe for his second round. The truth is, that in one point of view this matter of a national literature has come to such a pass with us, that in some sense we must turn bullies, else the day is lost, or superiority so far beyond us, that we can hardly say it will ever be ours.

And now, my countrymen, as an excellent author of your own flesh and blood—an unimitating, and, perhaps, in his way, an inimitable man—whom better can I commend to you, in the first place, than Nathaniel Hawthorne? He is

one of the new, and far better generation of your writers. The smell of young beeches and hemlocks is upon him; your own broad prairies are in his soul; and if you travel away inland into his deep and noble nature, you will hear the far roar of his Niagara. Give not over to future generations the glad duty of acknowledging him for what he is. Take that joy to yourself, in your own generation; and so shall he feel those grateful impulses on him, that may possibly prompt him to the full flower of some still greater achievement in your eyes. And by confessing him you thereby confess others; you brace the whole brotherhood. For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round.

In treating of Hawthorne, or rather of Hawthorne in his writings (for I never saw the man; and in the chances of a quiet plantation life, remote from his haunts, perhaps never shall); in treating of his works, I say, I have thus far omitted all mention of his *Twice-Told Tales* and *Scarlet Letter*. Both are excellent, but full of such manifold, strange, and diffusive beauties, that time would all but fail me to point the half of them out. But there are things in those two books which, had they been written in England a century ago, Nathaniel Hawthorne had utterly displaced many of the bright names we now revere on authority. But I am content to leave Hawthorne to himself, and to the infallible finding of posterity; and however great may be the praise I have bestowed upon him, I feel that in so doing I have served and honored myself, rather than him. For, at bottom, great excellence is praise enough to itself; but the feeling of a sincere and appreciative love and admiration toward it, this is relieved by utterance, and warm, honest praise ever leaves a pleasant flavor in the mouth; and it is an honorable thing to confess to what is honorable in others.

But I cannot leave my subject yet. No man can read a fine author, and relish him to his very bones while he reads, without subsequently fancying to himself some ideal image of the man and his mind. And if you rightly look for it, you will almost always find that the author himself has somewhere furnished you with his own picture. For poets

(whether in prose or verse), being painters by nature, are like their brethren of the pencil, the true portrait-painters, who, in the multitude of likenesses to be sketched, do not invariably omit their own; and in all high instances, they paint them without any vanity, though at times with a lurking something that would take several pages to properly define.

I submit it, then, to those best acquainted with the man personally, whether the following is not Nathaniel Hawthorne; and to himself, whether something involved in it does not express the temper of his mind—that lasting temper of all true, candid men—a seeker, not a finder yet:

A man now entered, in neglected attire, with the aspect of a thinker, but somewhat too roughhewn and brawny for a scholar. His face was full of sturdy vigor, with some finer and keener attribute beneath; though harsh at first, it was tempered with the glow of a large, warm heart, which had force enough to heat his powerful intellect through and through. He advanced to the Intelligencer, and looked at him with a glance of such stern sincerity, that perhaps few secrets were beyond its scope.

"I seek for Truth," said he.

Twenty-four hours have elapsed since writing the foregoing. I have just returned from the haymow, charged more and more with love and admiration of Hawthorne. For I have just been gleaning through the *Mosses*, picking up many things here and there that had previously escaped me. And I found that but to glean after this man is better than to be in at the harvest of others. To be frank (though, perhaps, rather foolish), notwithstanding what I wrote yesterday of these *Mosses*, I had not then culled them all; but had, nevertheless, been sufficiently sensible of the subtle essence in them as to write as I did. To what infinite height of loving wonder and admiration I may yet be borne, when by repeatedly banqueting on these *Mosses* I shall have thoroughly incorporated their whole stuff into my being—that, I cannot tell. But already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him; and further and

further, shoots his strong New England roots into the hot soil in my Southern soul.

By careful reference to the table of contents, I now find that I have gone through all the sketches; but that when I yesterday wrote, I had not at all read two particular pieces, to which I now desire to call special attention—*A Select Party* and *Young Goodman Brown*. Here, be it said to all those whom this poor fugitive scrawl of mine may tempt to the perusal of the *Mosses*, that they must on no account suffer themselves to be trifled with, disappointed, or deceived by the triviality of many of the titles to these sketches. For in more than one instance the title utterly belies the piece. It is as if rustic demijohns containing the very best and costliest of Falernian and Tokay were labeled "Cider," "Perry," and "Elderberry wine." The truth seems to be, that like many other geniuses, this Man of Mosses takes great delight in hoodwinking the world—at least, with respect to himself. Personally, I doubt not that he rather prefers to be generally esteemed but a so-so sort of author; being willing to reserve the thorough and acute appreciation of what he is, to that party most qualified to judge—that is, to himself. Besides, at the bottom of their natures, men like Hawthorne, in many things, deem the plaudits of the public such strong presumptive evidence of mediocrity in the object of them, that it would in some degree render them doubtful of their own powers did they hear much and vociferous braying concerning them in the public pastures. True, I have been braying myself (if you please to be witty enough to have it so), but then I claim to be the first that has so brayed in this particular matter; and, therefore, while pleading guilty to the charge, still claim all the merit due to originality.

But with whatever motive, playful or profound, Nathaniel Hawthorne has chosen to entitle his pieces in the manner he has, it is certain that some of them are directly calculated to deceive—egregiously deceive, the superficial skimmer of pages. To be downright and candid once more, let me cheerfully say that two of these titles did dolefully dupe no less an eager-eyed reader than myself; and that, too, after I had been impressed with a sense of the great depth and breadth

of this American man. "Who in the name of thunder" (as the country people say in this neighborhood), "who in the name of thunder would anticipate any marvel in a piece entitled *Young Goodman Brown?*" You would, of course, suppose that it was a simple little tale, intended as a supplement to *Goody Two Shoes*. Whereas, it is deep as Dante; nor can you finish it without addressing the author in his own words—"It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin." . . . And with Young Goodman, too, in allegorical pursuit of his Puritan wife, you cry out in your anguish:

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

Now this same piece entitled *Young Goodman Brown* is one of the two that I had not all read yesterday; and I allude to it now, because it is, in itself, such a strong, positive illustration of the blackness in Hawthorne which I had assumed from the mere occasional shadows of it, as revealed in several of the other sketches. But had I previously perused *Young Goodman Brown,* I should have been at no pains to draw the conclusion, which I came to at a time when I was ignorant that the book contained one such direct and unqualified manifestation of it.

The other piece of the two referred to is entitled *A Select Party,* which, in my first simplicity upon originally taking hold of the book, I fancied must treat of some pumpkin-pie party in old Salem; or some chowder party on Cape Cod. Whereas, by all the gods of Peedee, it is the sweetest and sublimest thing that has been written since Spenser wrote. Nay, there is nothing in Spenser that surpasses it, perhaps nothing that equals it. And the test is this. Read any canto in *The Faerie Queene* and then read *A Select Party,* and decide which pleases you most, that is, if you are qualified to judge. Do not be frightened at this; for when Spenser was alive, he was thought of very much as Hawthorne is now—was generally accounted just such a "gentle," harmless

man. It may be that to common eyes the sublimity of Hawthorne seems lost in his sweetness,—as perhaps in that same *Select Party* of his; for whom he has builded so august a dome of sunset clouds, and served them on richer plate than Belshazzar when he banqueted his lords in Babylon.

But my chief business now is to point out a particular page in this piece, having reference to an honored guest, who under the name of the Master Genius but in the guise "of a young man of poor attire, with no insignia of rank or acknowledged eminence," is introduced to the Man of Fancy, who is the giver of the feast. Now, the page having reference to this Master Genius so happily expresses much of what I yesterday wrote, touching the coming of the literary Shiloh of America, that I cannot but be charmed by the coincidence; especially when it shows such a parity of ideas, at least in this one point, between a man like Hawthorne and a man like me.

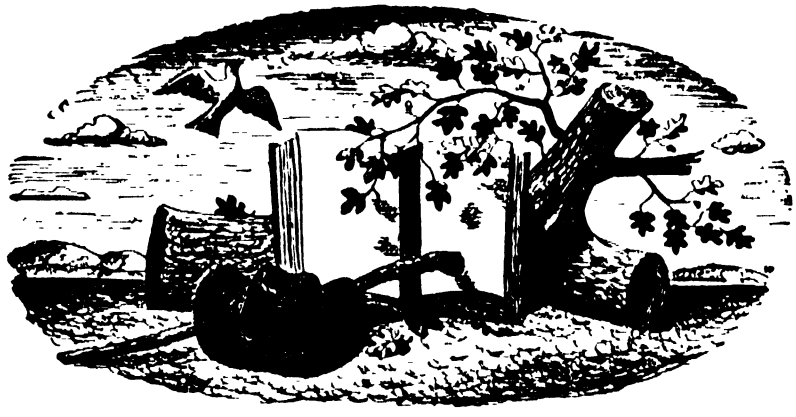
And here let me throw out another conceit of mine touching this American Shiloh, or Master Genius, as Hawthorne calls him. May it not be that this commanding mind has not been, is not, and never will be, individually developed in any one man? And would it, indeed, appear so unreasonable to suppose that this great fullness and overflowing may be, or may be destined to be, shared by a plurality of men of genius? Surely, to take the very greatest example on record, Shakespeare cannot be regarded as in himself the concretion of all the genius of his time; nor as so immeasurably beyond Marlowe, Webster, Ford, Beaumont, Jonson, that these great men can be said to share none of his power? For one, I conceive that there were dramatists in Elizabeth's day, between whom and Shakespeare the distance was by no means great. Let anyone, hitherto little acquainted with those neglected old authors, for the first time read them thoroughly, or even read Charles Lamb's *Specimens* of them, and he will be amazed at the wondrous ability of those Anaks of men, and shocked at this renewed example of the fact that Fortune has more to do with fame than merit,—though without merit, lasting fame there can be none.

Nevertheless, it would argue too ill of my country were

this maxim to hold good concerning Nathaniel Hawthorne, a man who already in some few minds has shed "such a light as never illuminates the earth save when a great heart burns as the household fire of a grand intellect."

The words are his—in the *Select Party;* and they are a magnificent setting to a coincident sentiment of my own, but ramblingly expressed yesterday, in reference to himself. Gainsay it who will, as I now write, I am Posterity speaking by proxy—and after-times will make it more than good, when I declare that the American who up to the present day has evinced, in literature, the largest brain with the largest heart, that man is Nathaniel Hawthorne. Moreover, that whatever Nathaniel Hawthorne may hereafter write, *Mosses from an Old Manse* will be ultimately accounted his masterpiece. For there is a sure, though secret sign in some works which proves the culmination of the powers (only the developable ones, however) that produced them. But I am by no means desirous of the glory of a prophet. I pray Heaven that Hawthorne may yet prove me an impostor in this prediction. Especially, as I somehow cling to the strange fancy that, in all men, hiddenly reside certain wondrous, occult properties—as in some plants and minerals—which by some happy but very rare accident (as bronze was discovered by the melting of the iron and brass at the burning of Corinth) may chance to be called forth here on earth; not entirely waiting for their better discovery in the more congenial, blessed atmosphere of heaven.

Once more—for it is hard to be finite upon an infinite subject, and all subjects are infinite. By some people this entire scrawl of mine may be esteemed altogether unnecessary, inasmuch "as years ago" (they may say) "we found out the rich and rare stuff in this Hawthorne, whom you now parade forth, as if only you *yourself* were the discoverer of this Portuguese diamond in your literature." But even granting all this—and adding to it the assumption that the books of Hawthorne have sold by the five thousand—what does that signify? They should be sold by the hundred thousand; and read by the million; and admired by every one who is capable of admiration.



HENRY DAVID THOREAU died in 1862, and both Emerson and Lowell wrote about him.

Emerson had read an address at Thoreau's funeral, and his essay is based on this. It came out in *The Atlantic Monthly* in the summer of 1863. Thoreau had been born in Concord, and Emerson, whose father's family came from Boston, went to live there when he was thirty-one. The two men were constant companions; and Thoreau, who was fourteen years the younger, became a sort of disciple of Emerson's.

In August 1837, in an oration called *The American Scholar* before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, Emerson had spoken as follows: "The scholar is that man who must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be an university of knowledges. If there be one lesson more than another which should pierce his ear, it is, The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all; it is for you to dare all. Mr. Presi-

dent and Gentlemen, this confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs, by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar. We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame. Public and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat. The scholar is decent, indolent, complaisant. See already the tragic consequence. The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself. There is no work for any but the decorous and the complaisant. Young men of the fairest promise, who begin life upon our shores, inflated by the mountain winds, shined upon by all the stars of God, find the earth below not in unison with these, but are hindered from action by the disgust which the principles on which business is managed inspire, and turn drudges, or die of disgust, some of them suicides. What is the remedy? They did not yet see, and thousands of young men as hopeful now crowding to the barriers for the career do not yet see, that if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him. Patience—patience; with the shades of all the good and great for company; and for solace the perspective of your own infinite life; and for work the study and the communication of principles, the making those instincts prevalent, the conversion of the world. Is it not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit; not to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south? Not so, brothers and friends,—please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds."

Thoreau's life and work were like an exemplification of this text. Alone at Walden Pond, in his hut, with his ax and his Indian meal, with his head full of Greek poetry and oriental wisdom, and in his heart the contempt of commercial New England, he lived and wrote *Walden*, the

masterpiece of prose that Emerson lacked the concentration to make.

Lowell's essay was written in 1865, and it is written by a different Lowell from the author of the paper on Poe and the *Fable for Critics*. The change in Lowell has often been noted, and has been attributed to the death of his first wife in 1853. Maria White Lowell had herself been a poet, and it was she who had enlisted Lowell for the Abolitionist cause. Her death left him suddenly blank, in the discomfiting and dreary situation of living alone in Cambridge with the daughter who had been the only one of their children to survive. He employed as a governess a Boston lady who had some taste for literature but did not enjoy Lowell's humor, and a few years later married her. From being a young and brilliant journalist living in the center of things, he became a Harvard professor and later our minister to Spain and England. He grew more official and snobbish, complained much, after his return from England, about the way things were done in America. He had returned to live at Elmwood, the eighteenth-century house where he had been born; and Cambridge eventually closed over him.

We shall see his growing hostility to Whitman; and the tone of this paper on Thoreau is not merely grudging but surly. It is occupied almost entirely with jeering at the Transcendentalists in general and pointing out the limitations of Thoreau, and it would not be appropriate to include it here if it were not that just before the end the old frank and generous Lowell reasserts himself, rather startlingly after what has gone before, with the declaration that, after all, a master is a master; and goes on in the small margin he has left himself to pay Thoreau one of the aptest of tributes.

THOREAU

A queen rejoices in her peers,
And wary Nature knows her own,
By court and city, dale and down,
And like a lover volunteers,
And to her son will treasures more,
And more to purpose, freely pour
In one wood walk, than learned men
Will find with glass in ten times ten.

. . . .

It seemed as if the breezes brought him,
It seemed as if the sparrows taught him,
As if by secret sign he knew
Where in far fields the orchis grew.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU was the last male descendant of a French ancestor who came to this country from the Isle of Guernsey. His character exhibited occasional traits drawn from this blood, in singular combination with a very strong Saxon genius.

He was born in Concord, Massachusetts, on the twelfth of July, 1817. He was graduated at Harvard College in 1837, but without any literary distinction. An iconoclast in

literature, he seldom thanked colleges for their services to him, holding them in small esteem, whilst yet his debt to them was important. After leaving the University, he joined his brother in teaching a private school, which he soon renounced. His father was a manufacturer of lead pencils, and Henry applied himself for a time to this craft, believing he could make a better pencil than was then in use. After completing his experiments, he exhibited his work to chemists and artists in Boston, and having obtained their certificates to its excellence and to its equality with the best London manufacture, he returned home contented. His friends congratulated him that he had now opened his way to fortune. But he replied that he should never make another pencil. "Why should I? I would not do again what I have done once." He resumed his endless walks and miscellaneous studies, making every day some new acquaintance with Nature, though as yet never speaking of zoölogy or botany, since, though very studious of natural facts, he was incurious of technical and textual science.

At this time, a strong, healthy youth, fresh from college, whilst all his companions were choosing their profession, or eager to begin some lucrative employment, it was inevitable that his thoughts should be exercised on the same question, and it required rare decision to refuse all the accustomed paths and keep his solitary freedom at the cost of disappointing the natural expectations of his family and friends: all the more difficult that he had a perfect probity, was exact in securing his own independence, and in holding every man to the like duty. But Thoreau never faltered. He was a born protestant. He declined to give up his large ambition of knowledge and action for any narrow craft or profession, aiming at a much more comprehensive calling, the art of living well. If he slighted and defied the opinions of others, it was only that he was more intent to reconcile his practice with his own belief. Never idle or self-indulgent, he preferred, when he wanted money, earning it by some piece of manual labor agreeable to him, as building a boat or a fence, planting, grafting, surveying, or other short work, to any long engagements. With his hardy habits and few

wants, his skill in woodcraft, and his powerful arithmetic, he was very competent to live in any part of the world. It would cost him less time to supply his wants than another. He was therefore secure of his leisure.

A natural skill for mensuration, growing out of his mathematical knowledge and his habit of ascertaining the measures and distances of objects which interested him, the size of trees, the depth and extent of ponds and rivers, the height of mountains, and the air-line distance of his favorite summits —this, and his intimate knowledge of the territory about Concord, made him drift into the profession of land surveyor. It had the advantage for him that it led him continually into new and secluded grounds, and helped his studies of Nature. His accuracy and skill in this work were readily appreciated, and he found all the employment he wanted.

He could easily solve the problems of the surveyor, but he was daily beset with graver questions, which he manfully confronted. He interrogated every custom, and wished to settle all his practice on an ideal foundation. He was a protestant *à outrance,* and few lives contain so many renunciations. He was bred to no profession; he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he refused to pay a tax to the State; he ate no flesh, he drank no wine, he never knew the use of tobacco; and, though a naturalist, he used neither trap nor gun. He chose, wisely no doubt for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and Nature. He had no talent for wealth, and knew how to be poor without the least hint of squalor or inelegance. Perhaps he fell into his way of living without forecasting it much, but approved it with later wisdom. "I am often reminded," he wrote in his journal, "that if I had bestowed on me the wealth of Cræsus, my aims must be still the same, and my means essentially the same." He had no temptations to fight against—no appetites, no passions, no taste for elegant trifles. A fine house, dress, the manners and talk of highly cultivated people were all thrown away on him. He much preferred a good Indian, and considered these refinements as impediments to conversation, wishing to meet his companion

on the simplest terms. He declined invitations to dinner parties, because there each was in everyone's way, and he could not meet the individuals to any purpose. "They make their pride," he said, "in making their dinner cost much; I make my pride in making my dinner cost little." When asked at table what dish he preferred, he answered, "The nearest." He did not like the taste of wine, and never had a vice in his life. He said, "I have a faint recollection of pleasure derived from smoking dried lily stems, before I was a man. I had commonly a supply of these. I have never smoked anything more noxious."

He chose to be rich by making his wants few, and supplying them himself. In his travels, he used the railroad only to get over so much country as was unimportant to the present purpose, walking hundreds of miles, avoiding taverns, buying a lodging in farmers' and fishermen's houses, as cheaper, and more agreeable to him, and because there he could better find the men and the information he wanted.

There was somewhat military in his nature, not to be subdued, always manly and able, but rarely tender, as if he did not feel himself except in opposition. He wanted a fallacy to expose, a blunder to pillory, I may say required a little sense of victory, a roll of the drum, to call his powers into full exercise. It cost him nothing to say No; indeed he found it much easier than to say Yes. It seemed as if his first instinct on hearing a proposition was to controvert it, so impatient was he of the limitations of our daily thought. This habit, of course, is a little chilling to the social affections; and though the companion would in the end acquit him of any malice or untruth, yet it mars conversation. Hence, no equal companion stood in affectionate relations with one so pure and guileless. "I love Henry," said one of his friends, "but I cannot like him; and as for taking his arm, I should as soon think of taking the arm of an elm tree."

Yet, hermit and stoic as he was, he was really fond of sympathy, and threw himself heartily and childlike into the company of young people whom he loved, and whom he delighted to entertain, as he only could, with the varied and

endless anecdotes of his experiences by field and river; and he was always ready to lead a huckleberry party or a search for chestnuts or grapes. Talking, one day, of a public discourse, Henry remarked that whatever succeeded with the audience was bad. I said, "Who would not like to write something which all can read, like *Robinson Crusoe?* and who does not see with regret that his page is not solid with a right materialistic treatment which delights everybody?" Henry objected, of course, and vaunted the better lectures which reached only a few persons. But, at supper, a young girl, understanding that he was to lecture at the Lyceum, sharply asked him, "Whether his lecture would be a nice, interesting story, such as she wished to hear, or whether it was one of those old philosophical things that she did not care about." Henry turned to her, and bethought himself, and, I saw, was trying to believe that he had matter that might fit her and her brother, who were to sit up and go to the lecture, if it was a good one for them.

He was a speaker and actor of the truth, born such, and was ever running into dramatic situations from this cause. In any circumstance it interested all bystanders to know what part Henry would take, and what he would say; and he did not disappoint expectation, but used an original judgment on each emergency. In 1845 he built himself a small framed house on the shores of Walden Pond, and lived there two years alone, a life of labor and study. This action was quite native and fit for him. No one who knew him would tax him with affectation. He was more unlike his neighbors in his thought than in his action. As soon as he had exhausted the advantages of that solitude, he abandoned it. In 1847, not approving some uses to which the public expenditure was applied, he refused to pay his town tax, and was put in jail. A friend paid the tax for him, and he was released. The like annoyance was threatened the next year. But, as his friends paid the tax, notwithstanding his protest, I believe he ceased to resist. No opposition or ridicule had any weight with him. He coldly and fully stated his opinion without affecting to believe that it was the opinion of the company. It was of no consequence if everyone present held the opposite opinion.

On one occasion he went to the University Library to procure some books. The librarian refused to lend them. Mr. Thoreau repaired to the President, who stated to him the rules and usages, which permitted the loan of books to resident graduates, to clergymen who were alumni, and to some others resident within a circle of ten miles' radius from the College. Mr. Thoreau explained to the President that the railroad had destroyed the old scale of distances,—that the library was useless, yes, and President and College useless, on the terms of his rules,—that the one benefit he owed to the College was its library,—that, at this moment, not only his want of books was imperative but he wanted a large number of books, and assured him that he, Thoreau, and not the librarian, was the proper custodian of these. In short, the President found the petitioner so formidable, and the rules getting to look so ridiculous that he ended by giving him a privilege which in his hands proved unlimited thereafter.

No truer American existed than Thoreau. His preference of his country and condition was genuine, and his aversation from English and European manners and tastes almost reached contempt. He listened impatiently to news or *bon mots* gleaned from London circles; and though he tried to be civil, these anecdotes fatigued him. The men were all imitating each other, and on a small mold. Why can they not live as far apart as possible, and each be a man by himself? What he sought was the most energetic nature; and he wished to go to Oregon, not to London. "In every part of Great Britain," he wrote in his diary, "are discovered traces of the Romans, their funereal urns, their camps, their roads, their dwellings. But New England, at least, is not based on any Roman ruins. We have not to lay the foundations of our houses on the ashes of a former civilization."

But, idealist as he was, standing for abolition of slavery, abolition of tariffs, almost for abolition of government, it is needless to say he found himself not only unrepresented in actual politics, but almost equally opposed to every class of reformers. Yet he paid the tribute of his uniform respect to the Anti-Slavery party. One man, whose personal acquaintance he had formed, he honored with exceptional regard.

Before the first friendly word had been spoken for Captain John Brown, he sent notices to most houses in Concord that he would speak in a public hall on the condition and character of John Brown, on Sunday evening, and invited all people to come. The Republican Committee, the Abolitionist Committee, sent him word that it was premature and not advisable. He replied, "I did not send to you for advice, but to announce that I am to speak." The hall was filled at an early hour by people of all parties, and his earnest eulogy of the hero was heard by all respectfully, by many with a sympathy that surprised themselves.

It was said of Plotinus that he was ashamed of his body, and 'tis very likely he had good reason for it,—that his body was a bad servant, and he had not skill in dealing with the material world, as happens often to men of abstract intellect. But Mr. Thoreau was equipped with a most adapted and serviceable body. He was of short stature, firmly built, of light complexion, with strong, serious blue eyes, and a grave aspect—his face covered in the late years with a becoming beard. His senses were acute, his frame well knit and hardy, his hands strong and skillful in the use of tools. And there was a wonderful fitness of body and mind. He could pace sixteen rods more accurately than another man could measure them with rod and chain. He could find his path in the woods at night, he said, better by his feet than his eyes. He could estimate the measure of a tree very well by his eye; he could estimate the weight of a calf or a pig, like a dealer. From a box containing a bushel or more of loose pencils, he could take up with his hands fast enough just a dozen pencils at every grasp. He was a good swimmer, runner, skater, boatman, and would probably outwalk most countrymen in a day's journey. And the relation of body to mind was still finer than we have indicated. He said he wanted every stride his legs made. The length of his walk uniformly made the length of his writing. If shut up in the house he did not write at all.

He had a strong common sense, like that which Rose Flammock the weaver's daughter in Scott's romance commends in her father, as resembling a yardstick, which, whilst

it measures dowlas and diaper, can equally well measure tapestry and cloth of gold. He had always a new resource. When I was planting forest trees, and had procured half a peck of acorns, he said that only a small portion of them would be sound, and proceeded to examine them and select the sound ones. But finding this took time, he said, "I think if you put them all into water the good ones will sink"; which experiment we tried with success. He could plan a garden or a house or a barn; would have been competent to lead a "Pacific Exploring Expedition"; could give judicious counsel in the gravest private or public affairs.

He lived for the day, not cumbered and mortified by his memory. If he brought you yesterday a new proposition, he would bring you today another not less revolutionary. A very industrious man, and setting, like all highly organized men, a high value on his time, he seemed the only man of leisure in town always ready for any excursion that promised well, or for conversation prolonged into late hours. His trenchant sense was never stopped by his rules of daily prudence, but was always up to the new occasion. He liked and used the simplest food, yet, when someone urged a vegetable diet, Thoreau thought all diets a very small matter, saying that "the man who shoots the buffalo lives better than the man who boards at the Graham House." He said: "You can sleep near the railroad, and never be disturbed: Nature knows very well what sounds are worth attending to, and has made up her mind not to hear the railroad whistle. But things respect the devout mind, and a mental ecstasy was never interrupted." He noted what repeatedly befell him, that, after receiving from a distance a rare plant, he would presently find the same in his own haunts. And those pieces of luck which happen only to good players happened to him. One day, walking with a stranger, who inquired where Indian arrowheads could be found, he replied, "Everywhere," and, stooping forward, picked one on the instant from the ground. At Mount Washington, in Tuckerman's Ravine, Thoreau had a bad fall, and sprained his foot. As he was in the act of getting up from his fall, he saw for the first time the leaves of the *Arnica mollis.*

His robust common sense, armed with stout hands, keen perceptions, and strong will, cannot yet account for the superiority which shone in his simple and hidden life. I must add the cardinal fact, that there was an excellent wisdom in him, proper to a rare class of men, which showed him the material world as a means and symbol. This discovery, which sometimes yields to poets a certain casual and interrupted light, serving for the ornament of their writing, was in him an unsleeping insight; and whatever faults or obstructions of temperament might cloud it, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. In his youth, he said, one day, "The other world is all my art; my pencils will draw no other; my jack-knife will cut nothing else; I do not use it as a means." This was the muse and genius that ruled his opinions, conversation, studies, work, and course of life. This made him a searching judge of men. At first glance he measured his companion, and, though insensible to some fine traits of culture, could very well report his weight and caliber. And this made the impression of genius which his conversation sometimes gave.

He understood the matter in hand at a glance, and saw the limitations and poverty of those he talked with, so that nothing seemed concealed from such terrible eyes. I have repeatedly known young men of sensibility converted in a moment to the belief that this was the man they were in search of, the man of men, who could tell them all they should do. His own dealing with them was never affectionate, but superior, didactic, scorning their petty ways—very slowly conceding, or not conceding at all, the promise of his society at their houses, or even at his own. "Would he not walk with them?" "He did not know. There was nothing so important to him as his walk; he had no walks to throw away on company." Visits were offered him from respectful parties, but he declined them. Admiring friends offered to carry him at their own cost to the Yellowstone River, to the West Indies, to South America. But though nothing could be more grave or considered than his refusals, they remind one, in quite new relations, of that fop Brummel's reply to the gentleman who offered him his carriage in a shower, "But where

will *you* ride, then?"—and what accusing silences, and what searching and irresistible speeches, battering down all defenses, his companions can remember!

Mr. Thoreau dedicated his genius with such entire love to the fields, hills, and waters of his native town that he made them known and interesting to all reading Americans, and to people over the sea. The river on whose banks he was born and died he knew from its springs to its confluence with the Merrimack. He had made summer and winter observations on it for many years, and at every hour of the day and night. The result of the recent survey of the Water Commissioners appointed by the State of Massachusetts he had reached by his private experiments several years earlier. Every fact which occurs in the bed, on the banks, or in the air over it; the fishes, and their spawning and nests, their manners, their food; the shad flies which fill the air on a certain evening once a year, and which are snapped at by the fishes so ravenously that many of these die of repletion; the conical heaps of small stones on the river shallows, the huge nests of small fishes, one of which will sometimes overfill a cart; the birds which frequent the stream, heron, duck, sheldrake, loon, osprey; the snake, muskrat, otter, woodchuck, and fox, on the banks; the turtle, frog, hyla, and cricket, which make the banks vocal,—were all known to him, and, as it were, townsmen and fellow creatures; so that he felt an absurdity or violence in any narrative of one of these by itself apart, and still more of its dimensions on an inch rule, or in the exhibition of its skeleton, or the specimen of a squirrel or a bird in brandy. He liked to speak of the manners of the river, as itself a lawful creature, yet with exactness, and always to an observed fact. As he knew the river, so the ponds in this region.

One of the weapons he used, more important to him than microscope or alcohol receiver to other investigators, was a whim which grew on him by indulgence, yet appeared in gravest statement, namely, of extolling his own town and neighborhood as the most favored center for natural observation. He remarked that the flora of Massachusetts embraced almost all the important plants of America—most of the

oaks, most of the willows, the best pines, the ash, the maple, the beech, the nuts. He returned Kane's *Arctic Voyage* to a friend of whom he had borrowed it, with the remark that "Most of the phenomena noted might be observed in Concord." He seemed a little envious of the Pole, for the coincident sunrise and sunset, or five minutes' day after six months: a splendid fact, which Annursnuc had never afforded him. He found red snow in one of his walks, and told me that he expected to find yet the *Victoria regia* in Concord. He was the attorney of the indigenous plants, and owned to a preference of the weeds to the imported plants as of the Indian to the civilized man, and noticed, with pleasure, that the willow bean poles of his neighbor had grown more than his beans. "See these weeds," he said, "which have been hoed at by a million farmers all spring and summer, and yet have prevailed, and just now come out triumphant over all lanes, pastures, fields, and gardens, such is their vigor. We have insulted them with low names, too—as Pigweed, Wormwood, Chickweed, Shad-blossom." He says, "They have brave names, too—Ambrosia, Stellaria, Amelanchier, Amaranth, etc."

I think his fancy for referring everything to the meridian of Concord did not grow out of any ignorance or depreciation of other longitudes or latitudes, but was rather a playful expression of his conviction of the indifferency of all places, and that the best place for each is where he stands. He expressed it once in this wise: "I think nothing is to be hoped from you, if this bit of mold under your feet is not sweeter to you to eat than any other in this world, or in any world."

The other weapon with which he conquered all obstacles in science was patience. He knew how to sit immovable, a part of the rock he rested on, until the bird, the reptile, the fish, which had retired from him, should come back and resume its habits, nay, moved by curiosity, should come to him and watch him.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to walk with him. He knew the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it as freely by paths of his own. He knew every track in the

snow or on the ground, and what creature had taken this path before him. One must submit abjectly to such a guide, and the reward was great. Under his arm he carried an old music book to press plants; in his pocket, his diary and pencil, a spyglass for birds, microscope, jackknife, and twine. He wore a straw hat, stout shoes, strong gray trousers, to brave scrub oaks and smilax, and to climb a tree for a hawk's or a squirrel's nest. He waded into the pool for the water plants, and his strong legs were no insignificant part of his armor. On the day I speak of he looked for the Menyanthes, detected it across the wide pool, and, on examination of the florets, decided that it had been in flower five days. He drew out of his breast pocket his diary, and read the names of all the plants that should bloom on this day, whereof he kept account as a banker when his notes fall due. The Cypripedium not due till tomorrow. He thought that, if waked up from a trance, in this swamp, he could tell by the plants what time of the year it was within two days. The redstart was flying about, and presently the fine grosbeaks, whose brilliant scarlet "makes the rash gazer wipe his eye," and whose fine clear note Thoreau compared to that of a tanager which has got rid of its hoarseness. Presently he heard a note which he called that of the night warbler, a bird he had never identified, had been in search of twelve years, which always, when he saw it, was in the act of diving down into a tree or bush, and which it was vain to seek; the only bird which sings indifferently by night and by day. I told him he must beware of finding and booking it, lest life should have nothing more to show him. He said, "What you seek in vain for, half your life, one day you come full upon, all the family at dinner. You seek it like a dream, and as soon as you find it you become its prey."

His interest in the flower or the bird lay very deep in his mind, was connected with Nature,—and the meaning of Nature was never attempted to be defined by him. He would not offer a memoir of his observations to the Natural History Society. "Why should I? To detach the description from its connections in my mind would make it no longer

true or valuable to me: and they do not wish what belongs to it." His power of observation seemed to indicate additional senses. He saw as with microscope, heard as with ear trumpet, and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard. And yet none knew better than he that it is not the fact that imports, but the impression or effect of the fact on your mind. Every fact lay in glory in his mind, a type of the order and beauty of the whole.

His determination on Natural History was organic. He confessed that he sometimes felt like a hound or a panther, and, if born among Indians, would have been a fell hunter. But, restrained by his Massachusetts culture, he played out the game in this mild form of botany and ichthyology. His intimacy with animals suggested what Thomas Fuller records of Butler the apiologist, that "either he had told the bees things or the bees had told him." Snakes coiled round his leg; the fishes swam into his hand, and he took them out of the water; he pulled the woodchuck out of its hole by the tail and took the foxes under his protection from the hunters. Our naturalist had perfect magnanimity; he had no secrets: he would carry you to the heron's haunt, or even to his most prized botanical swamp—possibly knowing that you could never find it again, yet willing to take his risks.

No college ever offered him a diploma, or a professor's chair; no academy made him its corresponding secretary, its discoverer, or even its member. Perhaps these learned bodies feared the satire of his presence. Yet so much knowledge of Nature's secret and genius few others possessed; none in a more large and religious synthesis. For not a particle of respect had he to the opinions of any man or body of men, but homage solely to the truth itself; and as he discovered everywhere among doctors some leaning of courtesy, it discredited them. He grew to be revered and admired by his townsmen, who had at first known him only as an oddity. The farmers who employed him as a surveyor soon discovered his rare accuracy and skill, his knowledge of their lands, of trees, of birds, of Indian remains and the like, which enabled him to tell every farmer more than he knew before of his own farm; so that he began to feel a little as if Mr. Thoreau had better

rights in his land than he. They felt, too, the superiority of character which addressed all men with a native authority.

Indian relics abound in Concord—arrowheads, stone chisels, pestles, and fragments of pottery; and on the river-bank, large heaps of clam shells and ashes mark spots which the savages frequented. These, and every circumstance touching the Indian, were important in his eyes. His visits to Maine were chiefly for love of the Indian. He had the satisfaction of seeing the manufacture of the bark canoe, as well as of trying his hand in its management on the rapids. He was inquisitive about the making of the stone arrowhead, and in his last days charged a youth setting out for the Rocky Mountains to find an Indian who could tell him that: "It was well worth a visit to California to learn it." Occasionally, a small party of Penobscot Indians would visit Concord, and pitch their tents for a few weeks in summer on the riverbank. He failed not to make acquaintance with the best of them; though he well knew that asking questions of Indians is like catechizing beavers and rabbits. In his last visit to Maine he had great satisfaction from Joseph Polis, an intelligent Indian of Oldtown, who was his guide for some weeks.

He was equally interested in every natural fact. The depth of his perception found likeness of law throughout Nature, and I know not any genius who so swiftly inferred universal law from the single fact. He was no pedant of a department. His eye was open to beauty, and his ear to music. He found these, not in rare conditions, but wheresoever he went. He thought the best of music was in single strains; and he found poetic suggestion in the humming of the telegraph wire.

His poetry might be bad or good; he no doubt wanted a lyric facility and technical skill, but he had the source of poetry in his spiritual perception. He was a good reader and critic, and his judgment on poetry was to the ground of it. He could not be deceived as to the presence or absence of the poetic element in any composition, and his thirst for this made him negligent and perhaps scornful of superficial graces. He would pass by many delicate rhythms, but he would have detected every live stanza or line in a volume,

and knew very well where to find an equal poetic charm in prose. He was so enamored of the spiritual beauty that he held all actual written poems in very light esteem in the comparison. He admired Æschylus and Pindar; but, when someone was commending them, he said that Æschylus and the Greeks, in describing Apollo and Orpheus, had given no song, or no good one. "They ought not to have moved trees, but to have chanted to the gods such a hymn as would have sung all their old ideas out of their heads, and new ones in." His own verses are often rude and defective. The gold does not yet run pure, is drossy and crude. The thyme and marjoram are not yet honey. But if he want lyric fineness and technical merits, if he have not the poetic temperament, he never lacks the casual thought, showing that his genius was better than his talent. He knew the worth of the Imagination for the uplifting and consolation of human life, and liked to throw every thought into a symbol. The fact you tell is of no value, but only the impression. For this reason his presence was poetic, always piqued the curiosity to know more deeply the secrets of his mind. He had many reserves, an unwillingness to exhibit to profane eyes what was still sacred in his own, and knew well how to throw a poetic veil over his experience. All readers of *Walden* will remember his mythical record of his disappointments:

"I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travelers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks, and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who have heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud; and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves."[1]

His riddles were worth the reading, and I confide that if at any time I do not understand the expression, it is yet just. Such was the wealth of his truth that it was not worth his while to use words in vain. His poem entitled *Sympathy* reveals the tenderness under that triple steel of stoicism, and the intellectual subtility it could animate. His classic poem on *Smoke* suggests Simonides, but is better than any poem

[1] *Walden:* p. 20. R. W. E.

of Simonides. His biography is in his verses. His habitual thought makes all his poetry a hymn to the Cause of causes, the Spirit which vivifies and controls his own:

> I hearing get, who had but ears,
> And sight, who had but eyes before;
> I moments live, who lived but years,
> And truth discern, who knew but learning's lore.

And still more in these religious lines:

> Now chiefly is my natal hour,
> And only now my prime of life;
> I will not doubt the love untold,
> Which not my worth nor want have bought,
> Which wooed me young, and woos me old,
> And to this evening hath me brought.

Whilst he used in his writings a certain petulance of remark in reference to churches or churchmen, he was a person of a rare, tender, and absolute religion, a person incapable of any profanation, by act or by thought. Of course, the same isolation which belonged to his original thinking and living detached him from the social religious forms. This is neither to be censured nor regretted. Aristotle long ago explained it, when he said, "One who surpasses his fellow citizens in virtue is no longer a part of the city. Their law is not for him, since he is a law to himself."

Thoreau was sincerity itself, and might fortify the convictions of prophets in the ethical laws by his holy living. It was an affirmative experience which refused to be set aside. A truth-speaker he, capable of the most deep and strict conversation; a physician to the wounds of any soul; a friend, knowing not only the secret of friendship, but almost worshiped by those few persons who resorted to him as their confessor and prophet, and knew the deep value of his mind and great heart. He thought that without religion or devotion of some kind nothing great was ever accomplished: and he thought that the bigoted sectarian had better bear this in mind.

His virtues, of course, sometimes ran into extremes. It was easy to trace to the inexorable demand on all for exact truth that austerity which made this willing hermit more solitary even than he wished. Himself of a perfect probity, he required not less of others. He had a disgust at crime, and no worldly success would cover it. He detected paltering as readily in dignified and prosperous persons as in beggars, and with equal scorn. Such dangerous frankness was in his dealing that his admirers called him "that terrible Thoreau," as if he spoke when silent, and was still present when he had departed. I think the severity of his ideal interfered to deprive him of a healthy sufficiency of human society.

The habit of a realist to find things the reverse of their appearance inclined him to put every statement in a paradox. A certain habit of antagonism defaced his earlier writings—a trick of rhetoric not quite outgrown in his later, or substituting for the obvious word and thought its diametrical opposite. He praised wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air, in snow and ice he would find sultriness, and commended the wilderness for resembling Rome and Paris. "It was so dry, that you might call it wet."

The tendency to magnify the moment, to read all the laws of Nature in the one object or one combination under your eye, is of course comic to those who do not share the philosopher's perception of identity. To him there was no such thing as size. The pond was a small ocean; the Atlantic, a large Walden Pond. He referred every minute fact to cosmical laws. Though he meant to be just, he seemed haunted by a certain chronic assumption that the science of the day pretended completeness, and he had just found out that the *savans* had neglected to discriminate a particular botanical variety, had failed to describe the seeds or count the sepals. "That is to say," we replied, "the blockheads were not born in Concord; but who said they were? It was their unspeakable misfortune to be born in London, or Paris, or Rome; but, poor fellows, they did what they could, considering that they never saw Bateman's Pond, or Nine-Acre Corner, or Becky Stow's Swamp; besides, what were you sent into the world for, but to add this observation?"

Had his genius been only contemplative, he had been fitted to his life, but with his energy and practical ability he seemed born for great enterprise and for command; and I so much regret the loss of his rare powers of action that I cannot help counting it a fault in him that he had no ambition. Wanting this, instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry party. Pounding beans is good to the end of pounding empires one of these days; but if, at the end of years, it is still only beans!

But these foibles, real or apparent, were fast vanishing in the incessant growth of a spirit so robust and wise, and which effaced its defeats with new triumphs. His study of Nature was a perpetual ornament to him, and inspired his friends with curiosity to see the world through his eyes, and to hear his adventures. They possessed every kind of interest.

He had many elegancies of his own, whilst he scoffed at conventional elegance. Thus, he could not bear to hear the sound of his own steps, the grit of gravel; and therefore never willingly walked in the road, but in the grass, on mountains, and in woods. His senses were acute, and he remarked that by night every dwelling house gives out bad air, like a slaughterhouse. He liked the pure fragrance of melilot. He honored certain plants with special regard, and, over all, the pond lily,—then, the gentian, and the *Mikania scandens,* and "life-everlasting," and a bass tree which he visited every year when it bloomed, in the middle of July. He thought the scent a more oracular inquisition than the sight—more oracular and trustworthy. The scent, of course, reveals what is concealed from the other senses. By it he detected earthiness. He delighted in echoes, and said they were almost the only kind of kindred voices that he heard. He loved Nature so well, was so happy in her solitude, that he became very jealous of cities and the sad work which their refinements and artifices made with man and his dwelling. The ax was always destroying his forest. "Thank God," he said, "they cannot cut down the clouds!" "All kinds of figures are drawn on the blue ground with this fibrous white paint."

I subjoin a few sentences taken from his unpublished

manuscripts, not only as records of his thought and feeling, but for their power of description and literary excellence:

Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.

The chub is a soft fish, and tastes like boiled brown paper salted.

The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or, perchance, a palace or temple on the earth, and, at length the middle-aged man concludes to build a woodshed with them.

The locust z-ing.

Devil's-needles zigzagging along the Nut-Meadow brook.

Sugar is not so sweet to the palate as sound to the healthy ear.

I put on some hemlock boughs, and the rich salt crackling of their leaves was like mustard to the ear, the crackling of uncountable regiments. Dead trees love the fire.

The bluebird carries the sky on his back.

The tanager flies through the green foliage as if it would ignite the leaves.

If I wish for a horsehair for my compass sight I must go to the stable; but the hair-bird, with her sharp eyes, goes to the road.

Immortal water, alive even to the superficies.

Fire is the most tolerable third party.

Nature made ferns for pure leaves, to show what she could do in that line.

No tree has so fair a bole and so handsome an instep as the beech.

How did these beautiful rainbow tints get into the shell of the fresh-water clam, buried in the mud at the bottom of our dark river?

Hard are the times when the infant's shoes are second-foot.

We are strictly confined to our men to whom we give liberty.

Nothing is so much to be feared as fear. Atheism may comparatively be popular with God himself.

Of what significance the things you can forget? A little thought is sexton to all the world.

How can we expect a harvest of thought who have not had a seed-time of character?

Only he can be trusted with gifts who can present a face of bronze to expectations.

I ask to be melted. You can only ask of the metals that they be tender to the fire that melts them. To nought else can they be tender.

There is a flower known to botanists, one of the same genus with our summer plant called "Life-Everlasting," a *Gnaphalium* like that, which grows on the most inaccessible cliffs of the Tyrolese mountains, where the chamois dare hardly venture, and which the hunter, tempted by its beauty, and by his love (for it is immensely valued by the Swiss maidens), climbs the cliffs to gather, and is sometimes found dead at the foot, with the flower in his hand. It is called by botanists the *Gnaphalium leontopodium,* but by the Swiss *Edelweiss,* which signifies *Noble Purity.* Thoreau seemed to me living in the hope to gather this plant, which belonged to him of right. The scale on which his studies proceeded was so large as to require longevity, and we were the less prepared for his sudden disappearance. The country knows not yet, or in the least part, how great a son it has lost. It seems an injury that he should leave in the midst his broken task which none else can finish, a kind of indignity to so noble a soul that he should depart out of Nature before yet he has been really shown to his peers for what he is. But he, at least, is content. His soul was made for the noblest society; he had in a short life exhausted the capabilities of this world; wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home.

In Emerson's journal of 1863, the following note is found:

April 28

I have never recorded a fact, which perhaps ought to have gone into my sketch of *Thoreau* that, on the 1st August 1844, when I read my Discourse on Emancipation (in the British West Indies), in the Town Hall, in Concord, and the selectmen would not direct the sexton to ring the meeting-house bell, Henry went himself, and rung the bell at the appointed hour.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

THOREAU

WHAT CONTEMPORARY, if he was in the fighting period o his life (since Nature sets limits about her conscription fo spiritual fields, as the state does in physical warfare), wi ever forget what was somewhat vaguely called the "Tra scendental Movement" of thirty years ago? Apparently s astir by Carlyle's essays on the *Signs of the Times,* and o *History,* the final and more immediate impulse seemed t be given by *Sartor Resartus.* At least the republication i Boston of that wonderful Abraham à Sancta Clara sermo on Falstaff's text of the miserable forked radish gave th signal for a sudden mental and moral mutiny. *Ecce nun tempus acceptabile!* was shouted on all hands with ever variety of emphasis, and by voices of every conceivable pitch representing the three sexes of men, women, and Lady Mar Wortley Montagues. The nameless eagle of the tree Ygdras was about to sit at last, and wild-eyed enthusiasts rushe from all sides, each eager to thrust under the mystic bir that chalk egg from which the new and fairer Creation wa to be hatched in due time. *Redeunt Saturnia regna*—so fa was certain, though in what shape, or by what methods, wa still a matter of debate. Every possible form of intellectua

and physical dyspepsia brought forth its gospel. Bran had its prophets, and the presartorial simplicity of Adam its martyrs, tailored impromptu from the tar pot by incensed neighbors, and sent forth to illustrate the "feathered Mercury," as defined by Webster and Worcester. Plainness of speech was carried to a pitch that would have taken away the breath of George Fox; and even swearing had its evangelists, who answered a simple inquiry after their health with an elaborate ingenuity of imprecation that might have been honorably mentioned by Marlborough in general orders. Everybody had a mission (with a capital M) to attend to everybody else's business. No brain but had its private maggot, which must have found pitiably short commons sometimes. Not a few impecunious zealots abjured the use of money (unless earned by other people), professing to live on the internal revenues of the spirit. Some had an assurance of instant millennium so soon as hooks and eyes should be substituted for buttons. Communities were established where everything was to be common but common sense. Men renounced their old gods, and hesitated only whether to bestow their furloughed allegiance on Thor or Budh. Conventions were held for every hitherto inconceivable purpose. The belated gift of tongues, as among the Fifth Monarchy men, spread like a contagion, rendering its victims incomprehensible to all Christian men; whether equally so to the most distant possible heathen or not was unexperimented, though many would have subscribed liberally that a fair trial might be made. It was the pentecost of Shinar. The day of utterances reproduced the day of abuses and anagrams, and there was nothing so simple that uncial letters and the style of Diphilus the Labyrinth could not turn it into a riddle. Many foreign revolutionists out of work added to the general misunderstanding their contribution of broken English in every most ingenious form of fracture. All stood ready at a moment's notice to reform everything but themselves. The general motto was:

> And we'll *talk* with them, too,
> And take upon 's the mystery of things
> As if we were God's spies.

Nature is always kind enough to give even her clouds a humorous lining. I have barely hinted at the comic side of the affair, for the material was endless. This was the whistle and trailing fuse of the shell, but there was a very solid and serious kernel, full of the most deadly explosiveness. Thoughtful men divined it, but the generality suspected nothing. The word "transcendental" then was the maid of all work for those who could not think, as "Pre-Raphaelite" has been more recently for people of the same limited housekeeping. The truth is that there was a much nearer metaphysical relation and a much more distant aesthetic and literary relation between Carlyle and the Apostles of the Newness, as they were called in New England, than has commonly been supposed. Both represented the reaction and revolt against *Philisterei,* a renewal of the old battle begun in modern times by Erasmus and Reuchlin, and continued by Lessing, Goethe, and, in a far narrower sense, by Heine in Germany, and of which Fielding, Sterne, and Wordsworth in different ways have been the leaders in England. It was simply a struggle for fresh air, in which, if the windows could not be opened, there was danger that panes would be broken, though painted with images of saints and martyrs. Light, colored by these reverend effigies, was none the more respirable for being picturesque. There is only one thing better than tradition, and that is the original and eternal life out of which all tradition takes its rise. It was this life which the reformers demanded, with more or less clearness of consciousness and expression, life in politics, life in literature, life in religion. Of what use to import a gospel from Judaea, if we leave behind the soul that made it possible, the God who keeps it forever real and present? Surely Abana and Pharpar *are* better than Jordan, if a living faith be mixed with those waters and none with these.

Scotch Presbyterianism as a motive of spiritual progress was dead; New England Puritanism was in like manner dead; in other words, Protestantism had made its fortune and no longer protested; but till Carlyle spoke out in the Old World and Emerson in the New, no one had dared to proclaim, *Le roi est mort: vive le roi!* The meaning of which

proclamation was essentially this: the vital spirit has long since departed out of this form once so kingly, and the great seal has been in commission long enough; but meanwhile the soul of man, from which all power emanates and to which it reverts, still survives in undiminished royalty; God still survives, little as you gentlemen of the Commission seem to be aware of it—nay, will possibly outlive the whole of you, incredible as it may appear. The truth is that both Scotch Presbyterianism and New England Puritanism made their new avatar in Carlyle and Emerson, the heralds of their formal decease, and the tendency of the one toward Authority and of the other toward Independency might have been prophesied by whoever had studied history. The necessity was not so much in the men as in the principles they represented and the traditions which overruled them. The Puritanism of the past found its unwilling poet in Hawthorne, the rarest creative imagination of the century, the rarest in some ideal respects since Shakespeare; but the Puritanism that cannot die, the Puritanism that made New England what it is, and is destined to make America what it should be, found its voice in Emerson. Though holding himself aloof from all active partnership in movements of reform, he has been the sleeping partner who has supplied a great part of their capital.

The artistic range of Emerson is narrow, as every well-read critic must feel at once; and so is that of Æschylus, so is that of Dante, so is that of Montaigne, so is that of Schiller, so is that of nearly everyone except Shakespeare; but there is a gauge of height no less than of breadth, of individuality as well as of comprehensiveness, and, above all, there is the standard of genetic power, the test of the masculine as distinguished from the receptive minds. There are staminate plants in literature that make no fine show of fruit, but without whose pollen, quintessence of fructifying gold, the garden had been barren. Emerson's mind is emphatically one of these, and there is no man to whom our aesthetic culture owes so much. The Puritan revolt had made us ecclesiastically and the Revolution politically independent, but we were still socially and intellectually moored to Eng-

lish thought, till Emerson cut the cable and gave us a chance at the dangers and the glories of blue water. No man young enough to have felt it can forget or cease to be grateful for the mental and moral *nudge* which he received from the writings of his high-minded and brave-spirited countryman. That we agree with him, or that he always agrees with himself, is aside from the question; but that he arouses in us something that we are the better for having awakened, whether that something be of opposition or assent, that he speaks always to what is highest and least selfish in us, few Americans of the generation younger than his own would be disposed to deny. His oration before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, some thirty years ago, was an event without any former parallel in our literary annals, a scene to be always treasured in the memory for its picturesqueness and its inspiration. What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of foregone dissent! It was our Yankee version of a lecture by Abelard, our Harvard parallel to the last public appearances of Schelling.

I said that the Transcendental Movement was the protestant spirit of Puritanism seeking a new outlet and an escape from forms and creeds which compressed rather than expressed it. In its motives, its preaching, and its results, it differed radically from the doctrine of Carlyle. The Scotchman, with all his genius, and his humor gigantesque as that of Rabelais, has grown shriller and shriller with years, degenerating sometimes into a common scold, and emptying very unsavory vials of wrath on the head of the sturdy British Socrates of worldly common sense. The teaching of Emerson tended much more exclusively to self-culture and the independent development of the individual man. It seemed to many almost Pythagorean in its voluntary seclusion from commonwealth affairs. Both Carlyle and Emerson were disciples of Goethe, but Emerson in a far truer sense; and while the one, from his bias toward the eccentric, has degenerated more and more into mannerism, the other has clarified steadily toward perfection of style—exquisite fineness of material, unobtrusive lowness of tone and simplicity of

fashion, the most high-bred garb of expression. Whatever may be said of his thought, nothing can be finer than the delicious limpidness of his phrase. If it was ever questionable whether democracy could develop a gentleman, the problem has been affirmatively solved at last. Carlyle, in his cynicism and his admiration of force in and for itself, has become at last positively inhuman; Emerson, reverencing strength, seeking the highest outcome of the individual, has found that society and politics are also main elements in the attainment of the desired end, and has drawn steadily manward and worldward. The two men represent respectively those grand personifications in the drama of Æschylus, Βία and Κράτος.

Among the pistillate plants kindled to fruitage by the Emersonian pollen, Thoreau is thus far the most remarkable; and it is something eminently fitting that his posthumous works should be offered us by Emerson, for they are strawberries from his own garden. A singular mixture of varieties, indeed, there is—alpine, some of them, with the flavor of rare mountain air; others wood, tasting of sunny roadside banks or shy openings in the forest; and not a few seedlings swollen hugely by culture, but lacking the fine natural aroma of the more modest kinds. Strange books these are of his, and interesting in many ways—instructive chiefly as showing how considerable a crop may be raised on a comparatively narrow close of mind, and how much a man may make of his life if he will assiduously follow it, though perhaps never truly finding it at last.

I have just been renewing my recollection of Mr. Thoreau's writings, and have read through his six volumes in the order of their production. I shall try to give an adequate report of their impression upon me both as critic and as mere reader. He seems to me to have been a man with so high a conceit of himself that he accepted without questioning, and insisted on our accepting, his defects and weaknesses of character as virtues and powers peculiar to himself. Was he indolent, he finds none of the activities which attract or employ the rest of mankind worthy of him. Was he wanting in the qualities that make success, it is success that is contemptible, and not himself that lacks persistency and

purpose. Was he poor, money was an unmixed evil. Did his life seem a selfish one, he condemns doing good as one of the weakest of superstitions. To be of use was with him the most killing bait of the wily tempter Uselessness. He had no faculty of generalization from outside of himself, or at least no experience which would supply the material of such, and he makes his own whim the law, his own range the horizon of the universe. He condemns a world, the hollowness of whose satisfactions he had never had the means of testing, and we recognize Apemantus behind the mask of Timon. He had little active imagination; of the receptive he had much. His appreciation is of the highest quality; his critical power, from want of continuity of mind, very limited and inadequate. He somewhere cites a simile from Ossian, as an example of the superiority of the old poetry to the new, though, even were the historic evidence less convincing, the sentimental melancholy of those poems should be conclusive of their modernness. He had none of the artistic mastery which controls a great work to the serene balance of completeness, but exquisite mechanical skill in the shaping of sentences and paragraphs, or (more rarely) short bits of verse for the expression of a detached thought, sentiment, or image. His works give one the feeling of a sky full of stars—something impressive and exhilarating certainly, something high overhead and freckled thickly with spots of isolated brightness; but whether these have any mutual relation with each other, or have any concern with our mundane matters, is for the most part matter of conjecture—astrology as yet, and not astronomy.

It is curious, considering what Thoreau afterwards became, that he was not by nature an observer. He only saw the things he looked for, and was less poet than naturalist. Till he built his Walden shanty, he did not know that the hickory grew in Concord. Till he went to Maine, he had never seen phosphorescent wood, a phenomenon early familiar to most country boys. At forty he speaks of the seeding of the pine as a new discovery, though one should have thought that its gold dust of blowing pollen might have earlier drawn his eye. Neither his attention nor his genius

was of the spontaneous kind. He discovered nothing. He thought everything a discovery of his own, from moonlight to the planting of acorns and nuts by squirrels. This is a defect in his character, but one of his chief charms as a writer. Everything grows fresh under his hand. He delved in his mind and nature; he planted them with all manner of native and foreign seeds, and reaped assiduously. He was not merely solitary, he would be isolated, and succeeded at last in almost persuading himself that he was autochthonous. He valued everything in proportion as he fancied it to be exclusively his own. He complains in *Walden* that there is no one in Concord with whom he could talk of Oriental literature, though the man was living within two miles of his hut who had introduced him to it. This intellectual selfishness becomes sometimes almost painful in reading him. He lacked that generosity of "communication" which Johnson admired in Burke. De Quincey tells us that Wordsworth was impatient when anyone else spoke of mountains, as if he had a peculiar property in them. And we can readily understand why it should be so: no one is satisfied with another's appreciation of his mistress. But Thoreau seems to have prized a lofty way of thinking (often we should be inclined to call it a remote one) not so much because it was good in itself as because he wished few to share it with him. It seems now and then as if he did not seek to lure others up "above our lower region of turmoil," but to leave his own name cut on the mountain peak as the first climber. This itch of originality infects his thought and style. To be misty is not to be mystic. He turns commonplaces end for end, and fancies it makes something new of them. As we walk down Park Street, our eye is caught by Dr. Winship's dumbbells, one of which bears an inscription testifying that it is the heaviest ever put up at arm's length by any athlete; and in reading Mr. Thoreau's books we cannot help feeling as if he sometimes invited our attention to a particular sophism or paradox as the biggest yet maintained by any single writer. He seeks, at all risks, for perversity of thought, and revives the age of *concetti* while he fancies himself going back to a preclassical nature. "A day," he says, "passed in the society of

those Greek sages, such as described in the Banquet of Xenophon, would not be comparable with the dry wit of decayed cranberry vines and the fresh Attic salt of the moss beds." It is not so much the True that he loves as the Out-of-the-Way. As the Brazen Age shows itself in other men by exaggeration of phrase, so in him by extravagance of statement. He wishes always to trump your suit and to *ruff* when you least expect it. Do you love Nature because she is beautiful? He will find a better argument in her ugliness. Are you tired of the artificial man? He instantly dresses you up an ideal in a Penobscot Indian, and attributes to this creature of his otherwise-mindedness as peculiarities things that are common to all woodsmen, white or red, and this simply because he has not studied the pale-faced variety.

This notion of an absolute originality, as if one could have a patent right in it, is an absurdity. A man cannot escape in thought, any more than he can in language, from the past and the present. As no one ever invents a word, and yet language somehow grows by general contribution and necessity, so it is with thought. Mr. Thoreau seems to me to insist in public on going back to flint and steel when there is a matchbox in his pocket which he knows very well how to use at a pinch. Originality consists in power of digesting and assimilating thought, so that they become part of our life and substance. Montaigne, for example, is one of the most original of authors, though he helped himself to ideas in every direction. But they turn to blood and coloring in his style, and give a freshness of complexion that is forever charming. In Thoreau much seems yet to be foreign and unassimilated, showing itself in symptoms of indigestion. A preacher-up of Nature, we now and then detect under the surly and stoic garb something of the sophist and the sentimentalizer. I am far from implying that this was conscious on his part. But it is much easier for a man to impose on himself when he measures only with himself. A greater familiarity with ordinary men would have done Thoreau good, by showing him how many fine qualities are common to the race. The radical vice of his theory of life was that he confounded physical with spiritual remoteness from men. A

man is far enough withdrawn from his fellows if he keep himself clear of their weaknesses. He is not so truly withdrawn as exiled, if he refuse to share in their strength. "Solitude," says Cowley, "can be well fitted and set right but upon a very few persons. They must have enough knowledge of the world to see the vanity of it, and enough virtue to despise all vanity." It is a morbid self-consciousness that pronounces the world of men empty and worthless before trying it, the instinctive evasion of one who is sensible of some innate weakness, and retorts the accusation of it before any has made it but himself. To a healthy mind, the world is a constant challenge of opportunity. Mr. Thoreau had not a healthy mind, or he would not have been so fond of prescribing. His whole life was a search for the doctor. The old mystics had a wiser sense of what the world was worth. They ordained a severe apprenticeship to law, and even ceremonial, in order to the gaining of freedom and mastery over these. Seven years of service for Rachel were to be rewarded at last with Leah. Seven other years of faithfulness with her were to win them at last the true bride of their souls. Active Life was with them the only path to the Contemplative.

Thoreau had no humor, and this implies that he was a sorry logician. Himself an artist in rhetoric, he confounds thought with style when he undertakes to speak of the latter. He was forever talking of getting away from the world, but he must be always near enough to it, nay, to the Concord corner of it, to feel the impression he makes there. He verifies the shrewd remark of Sainte-Beuve, "*On touche encore à son temps et très-fort, même quand on le repousse.*" This egotism of his is a Stylites pillar after all, a seclusion which keeps him in the public eye. The dignity of man is an excellent thing, but therefore to hold one's self too sacred and precious is the reverse of excellent. There is something delightfully absurd in six volumes addressed to a world of such "vulgar fellows" as Thoreau affirmed his fellowmen to be. I once had a glimpse of a genuine solitary who spent his winters one hundred and fifty miles beyond all human communication, and there dwelt with his rifle as his only con-

fidant. Compared with this, the shanty on Walden Pond has something the air, it must be confessed, of the Hermitage of La Chevrette. I do not believe that the way to a true cosmopolitanism carries one into the woods or the society of musquashes. Perhaps the narrowest provincialism is that of Self; that of Kleinwinkel is nothing to it. The natural man, like the singing birds, comes out of the forest as inevitably as the natural bear and the wildcat stick there. To seek to be natural implies a consciousness that forbids all naturalness forever. It is as easy—and no easier—to be natural in a *salon* as in a swamp, if one do not aim at it, for what we call unnaturalness always has its spring in a man's thinking too much about himself. "It is impossible," said Turgot, "for a vulgar man to be simple."

I look upon a great deal of the modern sentimentalism about Nature as a mark of disease. It is one more symptom of the general liver complaint. To a man of wholesome constitution the wilderness is well enough for a mood or a vacation, but not for a habit of life. Those who have most loudly advertised their passion for seclusion and their intimacy with nature, from Petrarch down, have been mostly sentimentalists, unreal men, misanthropes on the spindle side, solacing an uneasy suspicion of themselves by professing contempt for their kind. They make demands on the world in advance proportioned to their inward measure of their own merit, and are angry that the world pays only by the visible measure of performance. It is true of Rousseau, the modern founder of the sect, true of Saint Pierre, his intellectual child, and of Châteaubriand, his grandchild, the inventor, we might almost say, of the primitive forest, and who first was touched by the solemn falling of a tree from natural decay in the windless silence of the woods. It is a very shallow view that affirms trees and rocks to be healthy, and cannot see that men in communities are just as true to the laws of their organization and destiny; that can tolerate the puffin and the fox, but not the fool and the knave; that would shun politics because of its demagogues, and snuff up the stench of the obscene fungus. The divine life of Nature is more wonderful, more various, more sublime in man than

in any other of her works, and the wisdom that is gained by commerce with men, as Montaigne and Shakespeare gained it, or with one's own soul among men, as Dante, is the most delightful, as it is the most precious, of all. In outward nature it is still man that interests us, and we care far less for the things seen than the way in which they are seen by poetic eyes like Wordsworth's or Thoreau's, and the reflections they cast there. To hear the to-do that is often made over the simple fact that a man sees the image of himself in the outward world, one is reminded of a savage when he for the first time catches a glimpse of himself in a looking glass. "Venerable child of Nature," we are tempted to say, "to whose science in the invention of the tobacco pipe, to whose art in the tattooing of thine undegenerate hide not yet enslaved by tailors, we are slowly striving to climb back, the miracle thou beholdest is sold in my unhappy country for a shilling!" If matters go on as they have done, and everybody must needs blab of all the favors that have been done him by roadside and river brink and woodland walk, as if to kiss and tell were no longer treachery, it will be a positive refreshment to meet a man who is as superbly indifferent to Nature as she is to him. By and by we shall have John Smith, of No. —12—12th Street, advertising that he is not the J. S. who saw a cow lily on Thursday last, as he never saw one in his life, would not see one if he could, and is prepared to prove an alibi on the day in question.

Solitary communion with Nature does not seem to have been sanitary or sweetening in its influence on Thoreau's character. On the contrary, his letters show him more cynical as he grew older. While he studied with respectful attention the minks and woodchucks, his neighbors, he looked with utter contempt on the august drama of destiny of which his country was the scene, and on which the curtain had already risen. He was converting us back to a state of nature "so eloquently," as Voltaire said of Rousseau, "that he almost persuaded us to go on all fours," while the wiser fates were making it possible for us to walk erect for the first time. Had he conversed more with his fellows, his sympathies would have widened with the assurance that his peculiar

genius had more appreciation, and his writings a larger circle of readers, or at least a warmer one, than he dreamed of. We have the highest testimony[1] to the natural sweetness, sincerity, and nobleness of his temper, and in his books an equally irrefragable one to the rare quality of his mind. He was not a strong thinker, but a sensitive feeler. Yet his mind strikes us as cold and wintry in its purity. A light snow has fallen everywhere in which he seems to come on the track of the shier sensations that would elsewhere leave no trace. We think greater compression would have done more for his fame. A feeling of sameness comes over us as we read so much. Trifles are recorded with an over-minute punctuality and conscientiousness of detail. He registers the state of his personal thermometer thirteen times a day. We cannot help thinking sometimes of the man who

> Watches, starves, freezes, and sweats
> To learn but catechisms and alphabets
> Of unconcerning things, matters of fact,

and sometimes of the saying of the Persian poet, that "when the owl would boast, he boasts of catching mice at the edge of a hole." We could readily part with some of his affectations. It was well enough for Pythagoras to say, once for all, "When I was Euphorbus at the siege of Troy"; not so well for Thoreau to travesty it into "When I was a shepherd on the plains of Assyria." A naïve thing said over again is anything but naïve. But with every exception, there is no writing comparable with Thoreau's in kind that is comparable with it in degree where it is best; where it disengages itself, that is, from the tangled roots and dead leaves of a second-hand Orientalism, and runs limpid and smooth and broadening as it runs, a mirror for whatever is grand and lovely in both worlds.

George Sand says neatly that "Art is not a study of positive reality" (*actuality* were the fitter word), "but a seeking after ideal truth." It would be doing very inadequate justice to Thoreau if we left it to be inferred that this ideal element

[1]Mr. Emerson, in the Biographical Sketch prefixed to the *Excursions*.

did not exist in him, and that, too, in larger proportion, if less obtrusive, than his nature worship. He took nature as the mountain path to an ideal world. If the path wind a good deal, if he record too faithfully every trip over a root, if he botanize somewhat wearisomely, he gives us now and then superb outlooks from some jutting crag, and brings us out at last into an illimitable ether, where the breathing is not difficult for those who have any true touch of the climbing spirit. His shanty life was a mere impossibility, so far as his own conception of it goes, as an entire independency of mankind. The tub of Diogenes had a sounder bottom. Thoreau's experiment actually presupposed all that complicated civilization which it theoretically abjured. He squatted on another man's land; he borrows an ax; his boards, his nails, his bricks, his mortar, his books, his lamp, his fishhooks, his plow, his hoe, all turn state's evidence against him as an accomplice in the sin of that artificial civilization which rendered it possible that such a person as Henry D. Thoreau should exist at all. *Magnis tamen excidit ausis.* His aim was a noble and a useful one, in the direction of "plain living and high thinking." It was a practical sermon on Emerson's text that "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," an attempt to solve Carlyle's problem (condensed from Johnson) of "lessening your denominator." His whole life was a rebuke of the waste and aimlessness of our American luxury, which is an abject enslavement to tawdry upholstery. He had "fine translunary things" in him. His better style as a writer is in keeping with the simplicity and purity of his life. We have said that his range was narrow, but to be a master is to be a master. He had caught his English at its living source, among the poets and prose writers of its best days; his literature was extensive and recondite; his quotations are always nuggets of the purest ore: there are sentences of his as perfect as anything in the language, and thoughts as clearly crystallized; his metaphors and images are always fresh from the soil; he had watched Nature like a detective who is to go upon the stand; as we read him, it seems as if all out-of-doors had kept a diary and become its own Montaigne; we look at the landscape as in a Claude Lorraine

glass; compared with his, all other books of similar aim, even White's *Selborne,* seem dry as a country clergyman's meteorological journal in an old almanac. He belongs with Donne and Browne and Novalis; if not with the originally creative men, with the scarcely smaller class who are peculiar, and whose leaves shed their invisible thought-seed like ferns.

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*

EMERSON'S LETTER to Whitman on reading the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* is like a spark that sets off a smoldering fire. It has been said by Mr. Ralph L. Rusk, the editor of Emerson's letters, that "the printing of this letter, with its later public use by Whitman, was perhaps an event of greater importance in the history of American literature than the printing of any other letter has ever been."

The relations between Emerson and Whitman that date from this occasion may be clearly traced in their writings and in the memoirs of their friends; and they provide a curious drama, sometimes comic, sometimes moving. Among our serious writers (leaving aside Mrs. Stowe) these two men were certainly the most influential in the United States of their time. They both seemed to give exalted expression to ideas, to ways of feeling, to forces, that had come out of the American situation: both had the Protestant belief in the importance of the individual and his right to speak for himself; and both were trying to help the new country to formulate its new self-consciousness in relation to the rest of the world.

But Emerson and Whitman, who at moments seem to

merge under the pressure of their common purpose, sometimes repel one another. Whitman tends to expand his ego so as to identify himself with and include all the other human beings in the United States; he wants to feel through physical and moral contact that he is of the same stuff as they. Emerson, more bourgeois and cannier, shrinks from promiscuous contacts; and if he fights dead convention on the one hand, he dreads vulgarization on the other.

Whitman (1818–92) was younger than Emerson (1803–82), and outlived him and in a sense superseded him. The commercial-industrial domination that followed the Civil War was a defeat for the idealism of both; but where it crushed the poet-preacher like Emerson, it still left people free to glorify the experience of the common man, though this common man had often been reduced in the progress of our mechanical development to something that seemed even more featureless than the types in the catalogues of Whitman.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON AND WALT WHITMAN

DOCUMENTS ON THEIR RELATIONS

IN 1855, *the first edition of* Leaves of Grass *was printed in Brooklyn. Walt Whitman himself set up the type. Only about a thousand copies were made. Whitman had the greatest difficulty inducing the New York bookstores to put the book on sale. One bookdealer on Nassau Street, after looking into the volume, told Whitman that he could not stock it because he was a religious man; and the poet was obliged to resort to a "phrenological depot" on Broadway. Those shops in Brooklyn, New York, and Boston that consented to stock it did not sell it.*

Even aside from the book's unconventional contents, it presented a queer and unkempt appearance. It was a quarto with enormous pages; and it was bound in dark green, with the title in gilt on both covers. The letters of the words Leaves of Grass *exfoliated irregularly and disturbingly in long gold tendrils of grass blades and grass roots. The author's name was not given on the title page, but there was a large portrait of Whitman opposite—a picture which showed him wearing a slouch hat and an open flannel shirt, one hand resting nonchalantly on his hip and the other in his trousers pocket. The text itself was not the book we know, but a sort*

of early version of the Song of Myself, *divided into sections with no subtitles but simply a reiterated* Leaves of Grass.

Whitman sent several copies to the press and to prominent men of letters, and did his best to attract attention to the book by himself writing three reviews and publishing them anonymously in different places. But the press was either silent or hostile. The Boston Intelligencer *declared that* Leaves of Grass *was "a heterogeneous mass of bombast, egotism, vulgarity, and nonsense. . . . The beastliness of the author is set forth in his own description of himself, and we can conceive of no better reward than the lash for such a violation of decency. The author should be kicked from all decent society as below the level of the brute. He must be some escaped lunatic raving in pitiable delirium."*

At this damping and humiliating moment, Whitman received a letter from Emerson, to whom, though he did not know him, he had sent a copy of his book:

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS, *21 July, 1855*

DEAR SIR—I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of *Leaves of Grass*. I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy. It meets the demand I am always making of what seemed the sterile and stingy Nature, as if too much handiwork, or too much lymph in the temperament, were making our Western wits fat and mean.

I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment which so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire.

I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start. I rubbed my eyes a little, to see if this sunbeam were no illusion; but the solid sense of the book is a sober certainty. It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying and encouraging.

I did not know until I last night saw the book advertised

in a newspaper that I could trust the name as real and available for a post-office. I wish to see my benefactor, and have felt much like striking my tasks and visiting New York to pay you my respects.

R. W. Emerson

Two months later Emerson wrote as follows to James Elliot Cabot:

Concord, 26 *Sept.* 1855

My Dear Cabot,

I fear you will lend me no more books. After straining your good nature as I have done by these, I will not add to my offense by detailing the causes that have hindered their return to your shelves. Meantime, I am heartily thankful for the books. I did not find my way into Hegel as readily as I hoped, nor was I as richly rewarded as probably better scholars have been. The Eastern poetry I looked through, but find the Persian still the best by far, and shall stay by the Van Hammer with all the more content. Have you seen the strange Whitman's poems? Many weeks ago I thought to send them to you, but they seemed presently to become more known & you have probably found them. He seems a Minotaur of a man, with such insight and equal expression, but hurt by hard life & too animal experience. But perhaps you have not read the American poem. . . .

And on October 1, 1855, he asked, in a letter to W. H. Furness:

Have you read that wonderful book—with all its formlessness & faults *Leaves of Grass*?

In the meantime, Charles Eliot Norton had written to Lowell, who was then abroad:

Sept. 23, 1855

A new book called *Leaves of Grass* has just come out which is worth knowing about. It is a quarto volume of unmetrical

"Walt Whitman, one of the roughs, a Kosmos." It is a book which has excited Emerson's enthusiasm. He has written a letter to this "one of the roughs," which I have seen, expressing the warmest admiration and encouragement. It is no wonder that he likes him, for Walt Whitman has read *The Dial, Nature,* and combines the characteristics of a Concord philosopher with those of a New York fireman. There is little original thought but much original expression in it. There are some passages of most vigorous and vivid writing, some superbly graphic description, great stretches of imagination—and then passages of intolerable coarseness—not gross and licentious, but simply disgustingly coarse. The book is such, indeed, that one cannot leave it about for chance readers, and would be sorry to know that any woman had looked into it past the title page. I have got a copy for you, for there are things in it that you will admire, and it is worth having merely as a literary curiosity, for the external appearance of it, the covers, the portrait, the print, are as odd as the inside. . . .

Lowell replied as follows—forgetting his Fable for Critics *of only seven years before, in which he had ridiculed the kind of man who "could gauge the old books by the old set of rules," but who, given "a new book just out of the heart," was at once put "at sea without compass or chart":*

DRESDEN, *Monday, Oct. 12, 1855*

I thank you for having thought of me in the copy of Whitman's book. Whitman—I remember him of old—he used to write for the *Democratic Review* under Sullivan.* He used to do stories then à la Hawthorne. No, no, the kind of thing you describe won't do. When a man aims at originality, he acknowledges himself consciously *un*original, a want of self-respect which does not often go along with the capacity for great things. The great fellows have always let the stream of their activity flow quietly—if one splashes in it he may make a sparkle, but he muddies it too, and the good folks down below (I mean posterity) will have none of it. We

have a feeling of quick and easygoing power in the really great that makes us willing to commit ourselves with them. Sometimes I have thought that Michel Angelo cocked his hat a little wee bit too much, but after seeing his Prophets and Sybils (i y) you'll say I'm a wretch. It is not the volcanoes, after all, that give a lasting and serene delight, but those quick old giants without a drop of fireblood in their veins that lie there basking their unwarmable old sides in the sun no more everlasting than they—patent unshiftable ballast that keep earth and human thought trimmed and true on an even keel. Ah, the cold-blooded old monsters, how little they care for you and me! Homer, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Goethe—are they not everlasting boundary-stones that work the limits of a noble reserve and self-restraint, and seem to say, "Outside of us is Chaos—go there if you like—*we* know better—it is a dreary realm where moan the ghosts of dead-born children, and where the ghost of mad old Lear is king"?

My dear Norton, upon my word I am not giving you an extract from my next lecture. . . .

On October 10, Charles A. Dana, the editor of the New York Tribune, *who was a friend of both Emerson's and Whitman's and who had published a favorable review of* Leaves of Grass, *printed Emerson's letter to Whitman in the* Tribune.

An acquaintance of Emerson's, Frank Bellew, in an article called Emerson and Walt Whitman *in the* Tribune *of June 22, 1884, has left a record of Emerson's reaction to this:*

One day, when I was calling upon Emerson, he drew my attention to an unbound volume of poems he had just received from New York, over which he was in raptures. It was called *Leaves of Grass*, by Walt Whitman. "I have just written off post-haste to thank him," he said. "It is really a most wonderful production, and gives promise of the greatest things, and if, as he says, it is his first writing, seems almost incredible. He must have taken a long run to make such a jump as this."

He read me some passages, raising his eyebrows here and there, remarking that it was hardly a book for the seminary or parlor table. Shortly after this I went off to the Wachusett Mountains, where I remained two months. On my return to Concord I again met Emerson, who was still enthusiastic over *Leaves of Grass*. "I wrote at once," he said, "a letter to the author, congratulating him." "Yes," I replied, "I read it." "How? When? Have you been to New York?" "No, I read it in the New York *Tribune*." "In the New York *Tribune*? No, no! Impossible! He cannot have published it!" he exclaimed, with much surprise. I assured him that I had read it a few weeks before in that paper.

"Dear! dear!" he muttered, "that was very wrong, very wrong indeed. That was merely a private letter of congratulation. Had I intended it for publication I should have enlarged the *but* very much—enlarged the *but*," repeating "enlarged the *but*" twice and biting the "but" off with his lips, and for a moment looking thoughtfully out of the window.

And on November 25, 1855, a Mr. J. P. Lesley, a geologist in Philadelphia, whose work Emerson knew, wrote Emerson,[1] "that he had examined the 'profane and obscene' *Leaves of Grass* and thought the author a pretentious ass without decency; then he had been confronted by a newspaper clipping containing what purported to be a letter of respect and gratitude to that same author over the name of one whom, of all American thinkers, he most revered. He asked now for Emerson's confirmation of his own immediate assertion that the quoted letter was not genuine but only a malicious jest."

Emerson to Thomas Carlyle the next spring:

CONCORD, *6 May, 1856*

DEAR CARLYLE,—There is no escape from the forces of time and life, and we do not write letters to the gods or to

[1]The letter has been paraphrased by Mr. Ralph L. Rusk in his edition of Emerson's correspondence.

our friends, but only to attorneys, landlords, and tenants. But the planes and platforms on which all stand remain the same, and we are ever expecting the descent of the heavens, which is to put us into familiarity with the first named. When I ceased to write to you for a long time, I said to myself,—if anything really good should happen here, —any stroke of good sense or virtue in our politics, or of great sense in a book,—I will send it on the instant to the formidable man; but I will not repeat to him every month, that there are no news. Thank me for my resolution, and for keeping it through the long night. One book, last summer, came out in New York, a nondescript monster which yet had terrible eyes and buffalo strength, and was indisputably American,—which I thought to send you; but the book throve so badly with the few to whom I showed it, and wanted good morals so much, that I never did. Yet I believe now again, I shall. It is called *Leaves of Grass*,—was written and printed by a journeyman printer in Brooklyn, New York, named Walter Whitman; and after you have looked into it, if you think, as you may, that it is only an auctioneer's inventory of a warehouse, you can light your pipe with it. . . .

Ever affectionately yours,
R. W. Emerson

A few weeks later, in June 1856, Whitman brought out Leaves of Grass *in a second edition, also published by himself and also distributed by the phrenological bookstore. On the back of this volume, under a title which was sprouting large plantain and clover of a phalliform appearance, Whitman had had stamped in gold a quotation from Emerson's earlier letter: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career. R. W. Emerson"; and in an appendix, along with selections from the reviews of the first edition, he printed Emerson's letter to him* in toto *with the following reply:*

Brooklyn, *August 1856*

Here are thirty-two Poems, which I send you, dear Friend and Master, not having found how I could satisfy myself

with sending any usual acknowledgment of your letter. The first edition, on which you mailed me that till now unanswered letter, was twelve poems—I printed a thousand copies, and they readily sold; these thirty-two Poems I stereotype, to print several thousand copies of. I much enjoy making poems. Other work I have set for myself to do, to meet people and The States face to face, to confront them with an American rude tongue; but the work of my life is making poems. I keep on till I make a hundred, and then several hundred—perhaps a thousand. The way is clear to me. A few years, and the average annual call for my Poems is ten or twenty thousand copies—more, quite likely. Why should I hurry or compromise? In poems or in speeches I say the word or two that has got to be said, adhere to the body, step with the countless common footsteps, and remind every man and woman of something.

Master, I am a man who has perfect faith. Master, we have not come through centuries, caste, heroisms, fables, to halt in this land today. Or I think it is to collect a ten-fold impetus that any halt is made. As nature, inexorable, onward, resistless, impassive amid the threats and screams of disputants, so America. Let all defer. Let all attend respectfully the leisure of These States, their politics, poems, literature, manners, and their free-handed modes of training their own offspring. Their own comes, just matured, certain, numerous and capable enough, with egotistical tongues, with sinewed wrists, seizing openly what belongs to them. They resume Personality, too long left out of mind. Their shadows are projected in employments, in books, in the cities, in trade; their feet are on the flights of the steps of the Capitol; they dilate, a larger, brawnier, more candid, more democratic, lawless, positive native to The States, sweet-bodied, completer, dauntless, flowing, masterful, beard-faced, new race of men.

Swiftly, on limitless foundations, the United States too are founding a literature. It is all as well done, in my opinion, as could be practicable. Each element here is in condition. Every day I go among the people of Manhattan Island, Brooklyn, and other cities, and among the young men, to

discover the spirit of them, and to refresh myself. These are to be attended to; I am myself more drawn here than to those authors, publishers, importations, reprints, and so forth. I pass coolly through those, understanding them perfectly well, and that they do the indispensable service, outside of men like me, which nothing else could do. In poems, the young men of The States shall be represented, for they outrival the best of the rest of the earth.

The lists of ready-made literature which America inherits by the mighty inheritance of the English language—all the rich repertoire of traditions, poems, histories, metaphysics, plays, classics, translations, have made, and still continue, magnificent preparations for that other plainly signified literature, to be our own, to be electric, fresh, lusty, to express the full-sized body, male and female—to give the modern meanings of things, to grow up beautiful, lasting, commensurate with America, with all the passions of home, with the inimitable sympathies of having been boys and girls together, and of parents who were with our parents.

What else can happen The States, even in their own despite? That huge English flow, so sweet, so undeniable, has done incalculable good here, and is to be spoken of for its own sake with generous praise and with gratitude. Yet the price The States have had to lie under for the same has not been a small price. Payment prevails; a nation can never take the issues of the needs of other nations for nothing. America, grandest of lands in the theory of its politics, in popular reading, in hospitality, breadth, animal beauty, cities, ships, machines, money, credit, collapses quick as lightning at the repeated, admonishing, stern words, Where are any mental expressions from you, beyond what you have copied or stolen? Where the born throngs of poets, literats, orators, you promised? Will you but tag after other nations? They struggled long for their literature, painfully working their way, some with deficient languages, some with priestcraft, some in the endeavor just to live—yet achieved for their times, works, poems, perhaps the only solid consolation left to them through ages afterwards of shame and decay. You are young, have the perfectest of dialects. a free press,

a free government, the world forwarding its best to be with you. As justice has been strictly done to you, from this hour do strict justice to yourself. Strangle the singers who will not sing you loud and strong. Open the doors of The West. Call for new great masters to comprehend new arts, new perfections, new wants. Submit to the most robust bard till he remedy your barrenness. Then you will not need to adopt the heirs of others; you will have true heirs, begotten of yourself, blooded with your own blood.

With composure I see such propositions, seeing more and more every day of the answers that serve. Expressions do not yet serve, for sufficient reasons; but that is getting ready, beyond what the earth has hitherto known, to take home the expressions when they come, and to identify them with the populace of The States, which is the schooling cheaply procured by any outlay any number of years. Such schooling The States extract from the swarms of reprints, and from the current authors and editors. Such service and extract are done after enormous, reckless, free modes, characteristic of The States. Here are to be attained results never elsewhere thought possible; the modes are very grand too. The instincts of the American people are all perfect, and tend to make heroes. It is a rare thing in a man here to understand The States.

All current nourishments to literature serve. Of authors and editors I do not know how many there are in The States, but there are thousands, each one building his or her step to the stairs by which giants shall mount. Of the twenty-four modern mammoth two-double, three-double, and four-double cylinder presses now in the world, printing by steam, twenty-one of them are in These States. The twelve thousand large and small shops for dispensing books and newspapers—the same number of public libraries, any one of which has all the reading wanted to equip a man or woman for American reading—the three thousand different newspapers, the nutriment of the imperfect ones coming in just as usefully as any—the story papers, various, full of strong-flavored romances, widely circulated—the one-cent and two-cent journals—the political ones, no matter what side—

the weeklies in the country—the sporting and pictorial papers —the monthly magazines, with plentiful imported feed— the sentimental novels, numberless copies of them—the low-priced flaring tales, adventures, biographies—all are prophetic; all waft rapidly on. I see that they swell wide, for reasons. I am not troubled at the movement of them, but greatly pleased. I see plying shuttles, the active ephemeral myriads of books also, faithfully weaving the garments of a generation of men, and a generation of women, they do not perceive or know. What a progress popular reading and writing has made in fifty years! What a progress fifty years hence! The time is at hand when inherent literature will be a main part of These States, as general and real as steam-power, iron, corn, beef, fish. First-rate American persons are to be supplied. Our perennial materials for fresh thoughts, histories, poems, music, orations, religions, recitations, amusements, will then not be disregarded, any more than our perennial fields, mines, rivers, seas. Certain things are established, and are immovable; in those things millions of years stand justified. The mothers and fathers of whom modern centuries have come, have not existed for nothing; they too had brains and hearts. Of course all literature, in all nations and years, will share marked attributes in common, as we all, of all ages, share the common human attributes. America is to be kept coarse and broad. What is to be done is to withdraw from precedents, and be directed to men and women—also to The States in their federalness; for the union of the parts of the body is not more necessary to their life than the union of These States is to their life.

A profound person can easily know more of the people than they know of themselves. Always waiting untold in the souls of the armies of common people, is stuff better than anything that can possibly appear in the leadership of the same. That gives final verdicts. In every department of These States, he who travels with a coterie, or with selected persons, or with imitators, or with infidels, or with the owners of slaves, or with that which is ashamed of the body of a man, or with that which is ashamed of the body of a woman, or with any thing less than the bravest

and the openest, travels straight for the slopes of dissolution. The genius of all foreign literature is clipped and cut small, compared to our genius, and is essentially insulting to our usages, and to the organic compacts of These States. Old forms, old poems, majestic and proper in their own lands here in this land are exiles; the air here is very strong. Much that stands well and has a little enough place provided for it in the small scales of European kingdoms, empires, and the like, here stands haggard, dwarfed, ludicrous, or has no place little enough provided for it. Authorities, poems, models, laws, names, imported into America, are useful to America today to destroy them, and so move disencumbered to great works, great days.

Just so long, in our country or any country, as no revolutionists advance, and are backed by the people, sweeping off the swarms of routine representatives, officers in power, book-makers, teachers, ecclesiastics, politicians, just so long, I perceive, do they who are in power fairly represent that country, and remain of use, probably of very great use. To supersede them, when it is the pleasure of These States, full provision is made; and I say the time has arrived to use it with a strong hand. Here also the souls of the armies have not only overtaken the souls of the officers, but passed on, and left the souls of the officers behind out of sight many weeks' journey; and the souls of the armies now go en-masse without officers. Here also formulas, glosses, blanks, minutiæ, are choking the throats of the spokesmen to death. Those things most listened for, certainly those are the things least said. There is not a single History of the World. There is not one of America, or of the organic compacts of These States, or of Washington, or of Jefferson, nor of Language, nor any Dictionary of the English Language. There is no great author; every one has demeaned himself to some etiquette or some impotence. There is no manhood or life-power in poems; there are shoats and geldings more like. Or literature will be dressed up, a fine gentleman, distasteful to our instinct, foreign to our soil. Its neck bends right and left wherever it goes. Its costumes and jewelry prove how little it knows Nature. Its flesh is soft; it shows less and less of the

indefinable hard something that is Nature. Where is any thing but the shaved Nature of synods and schools? Where is a savage and luxuriant man? Where is an overseer? In lives, in poems, in codes of law, in Congress, in tuitions, theaters, conversations, argumentations, not a single head lifts itself clean out, with proof that it is their master, and has subordinated them to itself, and is ready to try their superiors. None believes in These States, boldly illustrating them in himself. Not a man faces round at the rest with terrible negative voice, refusing all terms to be bought off from his own eyesight, or from the soul that he is, or from friendship, or from the body that he is, or from the soil and sea. To creeds, literature, art, the army, the navy, the executive, life is hardly proposed, but the sick and dying are proposed to cure the sick and dying. The churches are one vast lie; the people do not believe them, and they do not believe themselves; the priests are continually telling what they know well enough is not so, and keeping back what they know is so. The spectacle is a pitiful one. I think there can never be again upon the festive earth more bad-disordered persons deliberately taking seats, as of late in These States, at the heads of the public tables—such corpses' eyes for judges—such a rascal and thief in the Presidency.

Up to the present, as helps best, the people, like a lot of large boys, have no determined tastes, are quite unaware of the grandeur of themselves, and of their destiny, and of their immense strides—accept with voracity whatever is presented them in novels, histories, newspapers, poems, schools, lectures, every thing. Pretty soon through these and other means, their development makes the fibre that is capable of itself, and will assume determined tastes. The young men will be clear what they want, and will have it. They will follow none except him whose spirit leads them in the like spirit with themselves. Any such man will be welcome as the flowers of May. Others will be put out without ceremony. How much is there anyhow, to the young men of These States, in a parcel of helpless dandies, who can neither fight, work, shoot, ride, run, command—some of them devout, some quite insane, some castrated—all second-hand, or third,

fourth, or fifth hand—waited upon by waiters, putting not this land first, but always other lands first, talking of art, doing the most ridiculous things for fear of being called ridiculous, smirking and skipping along, continually taking off their hats—no one behaving, dressing, writing, talking, loving, out of any natural and manly tastes of his own, but each one looking cautiously to see how the rest behave, dress, write, talk, love—pressing the noses of dead books upon themselves and upon their country—favoring no poets, philosophs, literats here, but dog-like danglers at the heels of the poets, philosophs, literats, of enemies' lands—favoring mental expressions, models of gentlemen and ladies, social habitudes in These States, to grow up in sneaking defiance of the popular substratums of The States? Of course they and the likes of them can never justify the strong poems of America. Of course no feed of theirs is to stop and be made welcome to muscle the bodies, male and female, for Manhattan Island, Brooklyn, Boston, Worcester, Hartford, Portland, Montreal, Detroit, Buffalo, Cleveland, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Iowa City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Raleigh, Savannah, Charleston, Mobile, New Orleans, Galveston, Brownsville, San Francisco, Havana, and a thousand equal cities, present and to come. Of course what they and the likes of them have been used for, draws toward its close, after which they will all be discharged, and not one of them will ever be heard of any more.

America, having duly conceived, bears out of herself offspring of her own to do the workmanship wanted. To freedom, to strength, to poems, to personal greatness, it is never permitted to rest, not a generation or part of a generation. To be ripe beyond further increase is to prepare to die. The architects of These States laid their foundations, and passed to further spheres. What they laid is a work done; as much more remains. Now are needed other architects, whose duty is not less difficult, but perhaps more difficult. Each age forever needs architects. America is not finished, perhaps never will be; now America is a divine true sketch. There are Thirty-Two States sketched—the population thirty millions. In a few years there will be Fifty States. Again in a

few years there will be A Hundred States, the population hundreds of millions, the freshest and freest of men. Of course such men stand to nothing less than the freshest and freest expression.

Poets here, literats here, are to rest on organic different bases from other countries; not a class set apart, circling only in the circle themselves, modest and pretty, desperately scratching for rhymes, pallid with white paper, shut off, aware of the old pictures and traditions of the race, but unaware of the actual race around them—not breeding in and in among each other till they all have the scrofula. Lands of ensemble, bards of ensemble! Walking freely out from the old traditions, as our politics has walked out, American poets and literats recognize nothing behind them superior to what is present with them—recognize with joy the sturdy living forms of the men and women of These States, the divinity of sex, the perfect eligibility of the female with the male, all The States, liberty and equality, real articles, the different trades, mechanics, the young fellows of Manhattan Island, customs, instincts, slang, Wisconsin, Georgia, the noble Southern heart, the hot blood, the spirit that will be nothing less than master, the filibuster spirit, the Western man, native-born perceptions, the eye for forms, the perfect models of made things, the wild smack of freedom, California, money, electric-telegraphs, free-trade, iron and the iron mines—recognize without demur those splendid resistless black poems, the steam-ships of the seaboard states, and those other resistless splendid poems, the locomotives, followed through the interior states by trains of rail-road cars.

A word remains to be said, as of one ever present, not yet permitted to be acknowledged, discarded or made dumb by literature, and the results apparent. To the lack of an avowed, empowered, unabashed development of sex, (the only salvation for the same,) and to the fact of speakers and writers fraudulently assuming as always dead what every one knows to be always alive, is attributable the remarkable non-personality and indistinctness of modern productions in books, art, talk; also that in the scanned lives

of men and women most of them appear to have been for some time past of the neuter gender; and also the stinging fact that in orthodox society today, if the dresses were changed, the men might easily pass for women and the women for men.

Infidelism usurps most with fœtid polite face; among the rest infidelism about sex. By silence or obedience the pens of savans, poets, historians, biographers, and the rest, have long connived at the filthy law, and books enslaved to it, that what makes the manhood of a man, that sex, womanhood, maternity, desires, lusty animations, organs, acts, are unmentionable and to be ashamed of, to be driven to skulk out of literature with whatever belongs to them. This filthy law has to be repealed—it stands in the way of great reforms. Of women just as much as men, it is the interest that there should not be infidelism about sex, but perfect faith. Women in These States approach the day of that organic equality with men, without which, I see, men cannot have organic equality among themselves. This empty dish, gallantry, will then be filled with something. This tepid wash, this diluted deferential love, as in songs, fictions, and so forth, is enough to make a man vomit; as to manly friendship, everywhere observed in The States, there is not the first breath of it to be observed in print. I say that the body of a man or woman, the main matter, is so far quite unexpressed in poems; but that the body is to be expressed, and sex is. Of bards for These States, if it come to a question, it is whether they shall celebrate in poems the eternal decency of the amativeness of Nature, the motherhood of all, or whether they shall be the bards of the fashionable delusion of the inherent nastiness of sex, and of the feeble and querulous modesty of deprivation. This is important in poems, because the whole of the other expressions of a nation are but flanges out of its great poems. To me, henceforth, that theory of any thing, no matter what, stagnates in its vitals, cowardly and rotten, while it cannot publicly accept, and publicly name, with specific words, the things on which all existence, all souls, all realization, all decency, all health, all that is worth being here for, all of woman and of man, all beauty,

all purity, all sweetness, all friendship, all strength, all life, all immortality depend. The courageous soul, for a year or two to come, may be proved by faith in sex, and by disdaining concessions.

To poets and literats—to every woman and man, today or any day, the conditions of the present, needs, dangers, prejudices, and the like, are the perfect conditions on which we are here, and the conditions for wording the future with undissuadable words. These States; receivers of the stamina of past ages and lands, initiate the outlines of repayment a thousand fold. They fetch the American great masters, waited for by old worlds and new, who accept evil as well as good, ignorance as well as erudition, black as soon as white, foreign-born materials as well as home-born, reject none, force discrepancies into range, surround the whole, concentrate them on present periods and places, show the application to each and any one's body and soul, and show the true use of precedents. Always America will be agitated and turbulent. This day it is taking shape, not to be less so, but to be more so, stormily, capriciously, on native principles, with such vast proportions of parts! As for me, I love screaming, wrestling, boiling-hot days.

Of course, we shall have a national character, an identity. As it ought to be, and as soon as it ought to be, it will be. That, with much else, takes care of itself, is a result, and the cause of greater results. With Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Oregon—with the states around the Mexican sea—with cheerfully welcomed immigrants from Europe, Asia, Africa—with Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island—with all varied interests, facts, beliefs, parties, genesis—there is being fused a determined character, fit for the broadest use for the freewomen and freemen of The States, accomplished and to be accomplished, without any exception whatever—each indeed free, each idiomatic, as becomes live states and men, but each adhering to one enclosing general form of politics, manners, talk, personal style, as the plenteous varieties of the race adhere to one physical form. Such character is the brain and spine to all, including literature, including poems. Such character, strong, limber, just,

openmouthed, American-blooded, full of pride, full of ease, of passionate friendliness, is to stand compact upon that vast basis of the supremacy of Individuality—that new moral American continent without which, I see, the physical continent remained incomplete, may-be a carcass, a bloat—that newer America, answering face to face with The States, with ever-satisfying and ever-unsurveyable seas and shores.

Those shores you found. I say you have led The States there—have led Me there. I say that none has ever done, or ever can do, a greater deed for The States, than your deed. Others may line out the lines, build cities, work mines, break up farms; it is yours to have been the original true Captain who put to sea, intuitive, positive, rendering the first report, to be told less by any report, and more by the mariners of a thousand bays, in each tack of their arriving and departing, many years after you.

Receive, dear Master, these statements and assurances through me, for all the young men, and for an earnest that we know none before you, but the best following you; and that we demand to take your name into our keeping, and that we understand what you have indicated, and find the same indicated in ourselves, and that we will stick to it and enlarge upon it through These States.

WALT WHITMAN

But the new edition of Leaves of Grass *contained a good deal of new material, including pieces intended to combat that "infidelism about sex" of which Whitman complained in his epistle.*

Of the effect of all this on Emerson the following account has been left by Josiah P. Quincy of Boston[1]:

Mr. Emerson came into his study at Concord where I was sitting, bearing in his hand a book which he had just received. This was the new edition of Whitman's book with the words "I greet you at the beginning of a great career. R. W. Emerson," printed in gold letters upon the cover. Emerson looked troubled, and expressed annoyance that a

[1]Quoted in Bliss Perry's *Walt Whitman.*

sentence from a private letter should be wrenched from its context and so emblazoned. He afterwards gave me the book, saying that the inside was worthy attention even though it came from one capable of so misusing the cover. I noted the incident because at no other time had I seen a cloud of dissatisfaction darken that serene countenance.

Of this second edition Henry Thoreau wrote as follows in a letter to Harrison Blake[1]*:*

December 7 (1856)

That Walt Whitman, of whom I wrote to you, is the most interesting fact to me at present. I have just read his second edition (which he gave me), and it has done me more good than any reading for a long time. Perhaps I remember best the poem of Walt Whitman, an American, and the Sun-Down Poem. There are two or three pieces in the book which are disagreeable, to say the least; simply sensual. He does not celebrate love at all. It is as if the beasts spoke. I think that men have not been ashamed of themselves without reason. No doubt there have always been dens where such deeds were unblushingly recited, and it is no merit to compete with their inhabitants. But even on this side he has spoken more truth than any American or modern that I know. I have found his poem exhilarating, encouraging. As for its sensuality,—and it may turn out to be less sensual than it appears,—I do not so much wish that those parts were not written, as that men and women were so pure that they could read them without harm, that is, without understanding them. One woman told me that no woman could read it,—as if a man could read what a woman could not. Of course Walt Whitman can communicate to us no experience, and if we are shocked, whose experience is it that we are reminded of?

On the whole, it sounds to me very brave and American, after whatever deductions. I do not believe that all the sermons, so called, that have been preached in this land put together are equal to it for preaching.

[1]Quoted in Bliss Perry's *Walt Whitman.*

We ought to rejoice greatly in him. He occasionally suggests something a little more than human. You can't confound him with the other inhabitants of Brooklyn or New York. How they must shudder when they read him! He is awfully good.

To be sure I sometimes feel a little imposed on. By his heartiness and broad generalities he puts me into a liberal frame of mind prepared to see wonders,—as it were, sets me upon a hill or in the midst of a plain,—stirs me well up, and then—throws in a thousand of brick. Though rude, and sometimes ineffectual, it is a great primitive poem,—an alarum or trumpet-note ringing through the American camp. Wonderfully like the Orientals, too, considering that when I asked him if he had read them, he answered, "No; tell me about them."

I did not get far in conversation with him,—two more being present,—and among the few things which I chanced to say, I remember that one was, in answer to him as representing America, that I did not think much of America or of politics, and so on, which may have been somewhat of a damper to him.

Since I have seen him, I find that I am not disturbed by any brag or egoism in his book. He may turn out the least of a braggart of all, having a better right to be confident.

He is a great fellow.

Emerson to Caroline Sturgis Tappan, an American friend then in Europe:

CONCORD Oct^{r} 13, 1857

DEAR CAROLINE,

You will never write me again, I have been so ungrateful, I who value every line & word from you, or about you. Perhaps 'tis my too much writing in youth that makes it so repulsive now in these old days. What to tell you now that I have begun—you that are in the land of wine & oil, of us in the land of meal? Italy cannot excel the banks of glory wh. sun & mist paint in these very days on the forest by lake & river. But the Muses are as reticent as Nature is

flamboyant, & no fireeyed child has yet been born. 'Tis strange that the relations of your old friends here remain unchanged to the world of letters & society, I mean, that those who held of the Imagination & believed that the necessities of the New World would presently evoke the mystic Power, & we should not pass away without hearing the Choral Hymns of a new age & adequate to Nature, still find colleges & books as cramp & sterile as ever, & our discontent keeps us in the selfsame suspicious relation to beauties & elegant society. We are all the worse that you, & those who are like you, if any such there be, as there are not,—but persons of positive quality, & capacious of beauty—desert us, & abdicate their power at home. Why not a mind as wise & deep & subtle as your' Browning, with his trained talent? Why can we not breed a lyric man as exquisite as Tennyson; or such a Burke-like *longanimity* as E. Browning (whom you mention in interesting positions, but do not describe to me)? Our wild Whitman, with real inspiration but choked by Titanic abdomen, & Delia Bacon,[1] with genius, but mad, & clinging like a tortoise to English soil, are the sole producers that America has yielded in ten years. Is all the granite & forest & prairie & superfoetation of millions to no richer result? If I were writing to any other than you, I should render my wonted homage to the gods for my two gossips, Alcott & Henry T., whose existence I impute to America for righteousness, though they miss the fame of your praise. Charles Newcomb, too, proves the rich possibilities in the soil, tho' his result is zero. So does Ellery. But who cares? As soon as we walk out of doors Nature transcends all poets so far, that a little more or less skill in whistling is of no account. Out of doors we lose the lust of performance, & are content to pass silent, & see others pass silent, into the depths of a Universe so resonant & beaming. . . .

[1]Delia Bacon, the first exponent of the "Baconian theory," believed that Shakespeare's plays had been written by a group including Bacon, Raleigh, and Spenser, and that they contained a cipher which would reveal an esoteric system of thought. That year she published a book called *Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded.* E. W.

But the second edition of Leaves of Grass *provoked notices as angry as the first one, and the publishers who had been handling it became frightened and dropped it. Whitman, however, went on working on his book, revising it and adding to it, and in the May of 1860 he brought out a third edition.*

This edition was published in Boston, and Whitman went on to supervise it. Emerson came to see him. The Children of Adam *poems were appearing for the first time as a special section, which Whitman tried to veil a little by making it* Enfans [sic] d'Adam; *and Emerson made an attempt to dissuade him from having them printed. Whitman has left in* Specimen Days *an account of this conversation, written in 1881 on the occasion of a later trip to Boston:*

Up and down this breadth by Beacon street, between these same old elms, I walk'd for two hours, of a bright sharp February[1] mid-day twenty-one years ago, with Emerson, then in his prime, keen, physically and morally magnetic, arm'd at every point, and when he chose, wielding the emotional just as well as the intellectual. During those two hours he was the talker and I the listener. It was an argument-statement, reconnoitring, review, attack, and pressing home, (like an army corps in order, artillery, cavalry, infantry,) of all that could be said against that part (and a main part) in the construction of my poems, *Children of Adam*. More precious than gold to me that dissertion—it afforded me, ever after, this strange and paradoxical lesson; each point of E.'s statement was unanswerable, no judge's charge ever more complete or convincing, I could never hear the points better put—and then I felt down in my soul the clear and unmistakable conviction to disobey all, and pursue my own way. "What have you to say then to such things?" said E., pausing in conclusion. "Only that while I can't answer them at all, I feel more settled than ever to adhere to my own theory, and exemplify it," was my candid response. Whereupon we went and had a good dinner at the American House. And

[1]It appears from a letter from Whitman written to a friend at the time that his walk with Emerson took place, not in February, but just after the middle of March.

thenceforward I never waver'd or was touch'd with qualms, (as I confess I had been two or three times before.)

And Whitman amplified this account in a conversation with Horace Traubel on April 20, 1888:

Emerson's objections to the outcast passages in *Leaves of Grass* were neither moral nor literary, but were given with an eye to my worldly success. He believed the book would sell—said that the American people should know the book: yes, would know it but for its sex handicap: and he thought he saw the way by which to accomplish what he called "the desirable end." He did not say I should drop a single line —he did not put it that way at all: he asked whether I could consent to eliminate certain popularly objectionable poems and passages. Emerson's position has been misunderstood: he offered absolutely no spiritual argument against the book exactly as it stood. Give it a chance to be seen, give the people a chance to want to see it—that was the gist of his contention. If there was any weakness in his position it was in his idea that the particular poems could be dropped and the *Leaves* remain the *Leaves* still: he did not see the significance of the sex element as I had put it into the book and resolutely there stuck to it—he did not see that if I had cut sex out I might just as well have cut everything out—the full scheme would no longer exist—it would have been violated in its most sensitive spot.

Whitman also on the occasion of this visit saw the once famous writer of boys' books, John Taylor Trowbridge, who has left in his autobiography a report of a conversation with Whitman, in which the latter discussed the influence on him of Emerson:

Much of the talk was about himself and his poems, in every particular of which I was profoundly interested. He told me of his boyhood in Brooklyn; going to work in a printing office at the age of fourteen; teaching school at seventeen and eighteen; writing stories and sketches for periodicals under his full name, Walter Whitman (his first

Leaves of Grass was copyrighted by Walter Whitman, after which he discarded "Walter" for "Walt"); editing newspapers and making political speeches, on the Democratic side; leading an impulsive, irregular sort of life, and absorbing, as probably no other man ever did, the common aspects of the cities he was so proud of, Brooklyn and New York. His friendships were mostly with the common people—pilots, drivers, mechanics; and his favorite diversions crossing the ferries, riding on the top of omnibuses, and attending operas. He liked to get off alone by the seashore, read Homer and Ossian with the salt air on his cheeks, and shout their winged words to the winds and waves. The book he knew best was the Bible, the prophetical parts of which stirred in him a vague desire to be the bard or prophet of his own time and country.

Then, at the right moment, he read Emerson.

I was extremely interested to know how far the influence of our greatest writer had been felt in the making of a book which, without being at all imitative, was pitched in the very highest key of self-reliance. In his letter to Emerson, printed in the second edition of *Leaves of Grass*, speaking of "Individuality, that new moral American continent," Whitman had averred: "Those shores you found; I say, you led the States there—have led me there." And it seemed hardly possible that the first determined attempt to cast into literature a complete man, with all his pride and passions, should have been made by one whose feet were not already firmly planted on "those shores." Then there was the significant fact of his having mailed a copy of his first edition to Emerson.

Whitman talked frankly on the subject, that day on Prospect Hill, and told how he became acquainted with Emerson's writings. He was at work as a carpenter (his father's trade before him) in Brooklyn, building with his own hands and on his own account small and very plain houses for laboring men; as soon as one was finished and sold, beginning another—houses of two or three rooms. This was in 1854; he was then thirty-five years old. He lived at home with his mother; going off to his work in the morning

and returning at night, carrying his dinner pail like any common laborer. Along with his pail he usually carried a book, between which and his solitary meal he would divide his nooning. Once the book chanced to be a volume of Emerson; and from that time he took with him no other writer. His half-formed purpose, his vague aspirations, all that had lain smoldering so long within him, waiting to be fired, rushed into flame at the touch of those electric words—the words that burn in the prose-poem *Nature,* and in the essays on *Spiritual Laws, The Over-Soul, Self-Reliance.* The sturdy carpenter in his working-day garb, seated on his pile of boards; a poet in that rude disguise, as yet but dimly conscious of his powers; in one hand the sandwich put up for him by his good mother, his other hand holding open the volume that revealed to him his greatness and his destiny,—this is the picture which his simple narrative called up, that Sunday so long ago, and which has never faded from my memory.

He freely admitted that he could never have written his poems if he had not first "come to himself," and that Emerson helped him to "find himself." I asked him if he thought he would have come to himself without that help. He said, "Yes, but it would have taken longer." And he used this characteristic expression: "I was simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil."

It was in that summer of 1854, while he was still at work upon his houses, that he began the *Leaves of Grass,* which he wrote, rewrote, and re-rewrote (to quote again his own words), and afterward set in type with his own hand.

I make this statement thus explicit because a question of profound personal and literary interest is involved, and because it is claimed by some of the later friends of Whitman that he wrote his first *Leaves of Grass* before he had read Emerson. When they urge his own authority for their contention, I can only reply that he told me distinctly the contrary, when his memory was fresher.

The Emersonian influence is often clearly traceable in Whitman's early poems; seldom in the later. It is in the first line of the very first poem in which he struck the keynote

of his defiant chant: "I celebrate myself." And at times Emerson's identical thought reappears with slight change in the *Leaves*. Two or three instances out of many will suffice. Emerson wrote: "Suppose you should contradict yourself, what then? With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." Whitman says:

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well, then, I contradict myself,
> I am large, I contain multitudes.

Emerson: "Shall I skulk and dodge and duck, with my unreasonable apologies?" Whitman:

> I see that the elementary laws never apologize . . .
> We have had ducking and deprecating about enough.

Emerson: "The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon." Whitman:

Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I shall follow,
As the waters follow the moon, silently, with fluid steps, anywhere around the globe.

Yet the form Whitman chose for his message was as independent of Emerson's as of all other literary forms whatsoever. Outwardly, his unrhymed and unmeasured lines resemble those of Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy;* but in no other way are they akin to those colorless platitudes. To the music of the opera, for which he had a passion, more than to anything else, was due his emancipation from what he called the "ballad-style" of poetry, by which he meant poetry hampered by rhyme and meter. "But for the opera," he declared, that day on Prospect Hill, "I could never have written *Leaves of Grass.*"

Entry in Emerson's journal of February 1862:

Thoreau. Perhaps his fancy for Walt Whitman grew out of his taste for wild nature, for an otter, a woodchuck, or a loon. He loved sufficiency, hated a sum that would not prove: loved Walt and hated Alcott.

In 1863, Emerson helped Whitman to raise money for the sick and wounded soldiers of the Civil War, whom Whitman was visiting in hospitals; and the following note by Whitman (from a manuscript in the Library of Congress) was found written on the back of a pamphlet which dealt with the activities of an organization called The United States Christian Commission, with which Whitman was associated at the beginning of that year.

His quality, his meaning has the quality of the light of day, which startles nobody. You cannot put your finger upon it yet there is nothing more palpable, nothing more wonderful, nothing more vital and refreshing. There are some things in the expression of this philosoph, this poet, that are full mates of the best, the perennial masters, and will so stand in fame and the centuries. America in the future, in her long train of poets and writers, while knowing more vehement and luxuriant ones, will, I think, acknowledge nothing nearer [than] this man, the actual beginner of the whole procession—and certainly nothing purer, cleaner, sweeter, more canny, none, after all, more thoroughly her own and native. The most exquisite taste and caution are in him, always saving his feet from passing beyond the limits, for he is transcendental of limits, and you see underneath the rest a secret proclivity, American maybe, to dare and violate and make escapades.

That winter James Russell Lowell wrote as follows to the Rev. W. L. Gage:

ELMWOOD, 7th Decr 1863

MY DEAR SIR,—When I was editing the *Atlantic Monthly*, I was in the habit of sending all the new books which came to me as editor, to the College Library. I suppose *Leaves of Grass* must have been one of them. It is a book I never looked into farther than to satisfy myself that it was a solemn humbug. Still, I think the business of a library is to have *every* book in it, and I should be sorry to have it supposed that I thought well of every volume I have sent to Gore Hall—nay, that I did not think ill of many of them.

As for the evil influence of this particular book, I doubt if so much harm is done by downright *animality* as by a more refined sensuousness. There is worse in Schleiermacher. Wordsworth would have tabooed *Wilhelm Meister*. Where shall the line be drawn? Would you have a library without Byron? or a Byron with his most characteristic work left out? For my own part I should like to see a bonfire made of a good deal of ancient and modern literature—but 'tis out of the question.

I am obliged to you, however, for calling my attention to a part of this book of which I knew nothing, and I will take care to keep it out of the way of the students.

Very truly yours
J. R. Lowell

Emerson had also sent Whitman two letters of recommendation to prominent New England political figures, Charles Sumner and Salmon P. Chase.

In December 1863 Trowbridge was in Washington visiting Chase, then Secretary of the Treasury in Lincoln's cabinet. Whitman was also in Washington, and Trowbridge describes what happened as follows:

I thought no man more than Whitman merited recognition and assistance from the government, and I once asked him if he would accept a position in one of the departments. He answered frankly that he would. But he believed it improbable that he could get an appointment, although (as he mentioned casually) he had letters of recommendation from Emerson.

There were two of these, and they were especially interesting to me, as I knew something of the disturbed relations existing between the two men, on account of Whitman's indiscreet use of Emerson's famous letter to him, acknowledging the gift copy of the first *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman not only published that letter without the writer's authority, but printed an extract from it, in conspicuous gold, on the back of his second edition: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career;" thus making Emerson in some sense an

indorser not only of the first poems, but of others he had never seen, and which he would have preferred never to see in print. This was an instance of bad taste, but not of intentional bad faith, on the part of Whitman. Talking of it once, he said, in his grand way: "I supposed the letter was meant to be blazoned; I regarded it as the chart of an emperor." But Emerson had no thought of acting the imperial part toward so adventurous a voyager. I remember hearing him allude to the incident shortly after that second edition appeared. Speaking of the attention the new poet was attracting, he mentioned an Englishman who had come to this country bringing a letter to Whitman from Monckton Milnes (afterward Lord Houghton). "But," said Emerson, "hearing that Whitman had not used me well in the matter of letters, he did not deliver it." He had afterwards made a strenuous effort to induce Whitman to omit certain objectionable passages from his edition of 1860, and failed. And I knew that the later writings of Whitman interested him less and less. "No more evidence of getting into form," he once remarked,—a singular comment, it may be thought, from one whose own chief defect as a writer seemed to be an imperfect mastery of form.

With these things in mind, I read eagerly the two letters from Emerson recommending Whitman for a government appointment. One was addressed to Senator Sumner; the other, I was surprised and pleased to find, to Secretary Chase. I had but a slight acquaintance with Sumner, and the letter to him I handed back. The one written to Chase I wished to retain, in order to deliver it to the Secretary with my own hands, and with such furthering words as I could summon in so good a cause. Whitman expressed small hope in the venture, and stipulated that in case of the failure he anticipated, I should bring back the letter.

As we left the breakfast table, the next morning, I followed the Secretary into his private office, where, after some pleasant talk, I remarked that I was about to overstep a rule I had laid down for myself on entering his house. He said, "What rule?" I replied, "Never to repay your hospitality by asking of you any official favor." He said I

needn't have thought it necessary to make that rule, for he was always glad to do for his friends such things as he was constantly called upon to do for strangers. Then I laid before him the Whitman business. He was evidently impressed by Emerson's letter, and he listened with interest to what I had to say of the man and his patriotic work. But he was troubled. "I am placed," he said, "in a very embarrassing position. It would give me great pleasure to grant this request, out of my regard for Mr. Emerson"; and he was gracious enough to extend the courtesy of this "regard" to me, also. But then he went on to speak of *Leaves of Grass* as a book that had made the author notorious; and I found that he judged it, as all but a very few persons then did, not independently, on its own merits, but by conventional standards of taste and propriety. He had understood that the writer was a rowdy—"one of the roughs"—according to his descriptions of himself.

I said, "He is as quiet a gentleman in his manners and conversation as any guest who enters your door."

He replied: "I am bound to believe what you say; but his writings have given him a bad repute, and I should not know what sort of a place to give to such a man"—with more to the same purpose.

I respected his decision, much as I regretted it, and, persuaded that nothing I could urge would induce him to change it, I said I would relieve him of all embarrassment in the business by withdrawing the letter. He glanced again at the signature, hesitated, and made this surprising response:

"I have nothing of Emerson's in his handwriting, and I shall be glad to keep this."

I thought it hardly fair, but as the letter was addressed to him, and had passed into his hands, I couldn't well reclaim it against his wishes.

Whitman seemed really to have formed some hopes of the success of my mission, after I had undertaken it, as he showed when I went to give him an account of my interview with the Secretary. He took the disappointment philosophically, but indulged in some sardonic remarks about Chase and his department, regarding which some choice

scandals were then afloat. "He is right," he said, "in preserving his saints from contamination by a man like me!" But I stood up for the Secretary, as, with the Secretary, I had stood up for Whitman. Those very scandals had no doubt rendered him cautious in making appointments. And could anyone be blamed for taking the writer of *Leaves of Grass* at his word when, in his defiance of conventionality, he had described himself as "rowdyish," "disorderly," and worse? "'I cock my hat as I please, indoors and out,'" I quoted. Walt laughed, and said, "I don't blame him; it's about what I expected." He asked for the letter, and showed his amused disgust when I explained how it had been pocketed by the Secretary.

I should probably have had no difficulty in securing the appointment if I had withheld Emerson's letter, and called my friend simply Mr. Whitman, or Mr. Walter Whitman, without mentioning *Leaves of Grass*. But I felt that the Secretary, if he was to appoint him, should know just whom he was appointing; and Whitman was the last person in the world to shirk the responsibility of having written an audacious book.

Whether the same candor was used in procuring for him a clerkship in the Interior Department, to which he was appointed later, I do not know. He had been for some time performing the duties of that position, without exciting any other comment than that he performed them well, when a new Secretary (James Harlan), coming in under Johnson, and discovering that the grave and silent man at a certain desk was the author of a reprehensible book, dismissed him unceremoniously.

John Burroughs in his journal of December 21, 1871, reports the following conversation with Whitman[1]:

Walt said a friend of his, Mr. Marvin, met Emerson in Boston the other day. When Walt was mentioned, "Yes," said Mr. Emerson, "Walt sends me all his books. But tell

[1]This quotation and the next are from *Whitman and Burroughs, Comrades,* by Clara Barrus.

Walt I am not satisfied—not satisfied. I expect—him—to make—the songs of the Nation—but he seems—to be contented to—make the inventories."

Walt laughed and said it tickled him much. It was capital. But it did not disturb him at all. "I know what I am about better than Emerson does. Yet I love to hear what the gods have to say." And continuing, he said, "I see how I might easily have wandered into other and easier paths than I did—paths that would have paid better, and gained me popularity; and I wonder how my feet were guided as they were. Indeed, I am more than satisfied with myself for having the courage to do what I have."

Later in the same year John Burroughs, in a letter to Myron B. Benton, described a conversation with Emerson, whom he had met in the station at Washington:

He was alone and had ten or fifteen minutes to spare, so I got him aboard the train and sat down beside him. He has not changed much since we saw him, except perhaps his nose is a little more hooked, and his hair a little thinner. I drew him out on Walt and found out what was the matter. He thought Walt's friends ought to quarrel a little more with him, and insist on his being a little more tame and orderly—more mindful of the requirements of beauty, of art, of culture, etc.—all of which was very pitiful to me, and I wanted to tell him so. But the train started just then and I got off. However, I wrote him a letter telling what I thought, and sent him my book. I do not expect to hear from it, but I was determined to give him a shot.

In notes on conversations with Whitman in the winter of 1876–77,[1] *Herbert Gilchrist reports the following observations:*

Talking of the Bostonians, Mr. Whitman said:

W.: "They are supercilious to everybody. Emerson is the only sweet one among them, and he has been spoilt by them. Yes, it is a stifling atmosphere for him. Yes, that is just

[1]Printed in *Walt Whitman's Workshop* by Clifton Joseph Furness.

what I should say. There are certain recognized parlor laws of propriety which are remembered and allowed. But to carry their notions of suitor drawing-room proprieties into poetry . . . it's too absurd! They are a most supercilious set. Look down on everybody. It is bad enough with Vic Hugo and [the] Parisians."

Herbert Gilchrist: "Ah, there is Patriotism!"

Whitman: "Well, yes, and *they* have done something, but Bostonians have not, like Paris, got beautiful works of accomplished art, yet they consider themselves the salt of the earth."

In 1877 Edward Carpenter, an English disciple of Whitman's, visited the United States. He reports, in Days with Walt Whitman, *the following conversation with Emerson:*

On the occasion of my . . . visit to the States in 1877, I stayed a night at Emerson's house at Concord—most pleasantly and hospitably received—and enjoyed greatly his talk as we walked up and down the old-fashioned garden, or sat in his book-lined study. When I spoke of Whitman and asked what he thought of him, he laughed (a little nervously, I thought) and said, "Well, I thought he had some merit at one time: there was a good deal of promise in his first edition—but he is a wayward fanciful man." (He used a third epithet beside *wayward* and *fanciful,* something like *violent,* but I hardly think as strong as that.) "I saw him in New York and asked him to dine at my hotel. He shouted for a 'tin mug' for his beer. Then he had a noisy fire-engine society. And he took me there, and was like a boy over it, as if there had never been such a thing before." He went on, in words which I do not recall, to object to the absence of meter in *Leaves of Grass;* and ended, I remember, by taking down a volume by Tennyson from the shelf—handling it affectionately and showing me the author's autograph on the fly-leaf and dwelling on the beauty of the Tennysonian diction and meter.

Whitman in his later years, October 19, 1888, gave Horace Traubel the following account of what—since Emerson

lectured in Newark in December 1855—is perhaps the same occasion:

"Yes—he was very beautiful, very serene: there were always new revelations of it in our intercourse. Did I ever tell you the story of a visit he paid me once on the way to lecture at Newark? Emerson called—I was in Brooklyn at the time: it was early afternoon: he was free from then on to the lecture hour: he said to me at once: 'I have a lecture to deliver at Newark this evening: I therefore have three hours to spend with you.' I invited him to take a bite or two, but he answered: 'No—it is but a little after dinner: I am stopping at the Astor House: you don't want anything now? Nor do I.' I was entirely satisfied. He asked me how we should go: we lived three miles from the ferry: I answered him that I would rather walk. He was agreeable to that: so we went along in that way talking: the long stroll being very happy, memorable. We went to New York—to the Astor House. Emerson left me here: took me into the office: spoke of his engagement in the evening—of his anxiety to be on time: said that he would go out for a few minutes—see about the trains, make sure of everything: meanwhile I should go to his room. He left—I looked up one of the hotel men. I asked him if he knew Mr. Emerson's room. He said, 'Yes.' I then asked: 'Have you the pass-key?' He said again, 'Yes.' I then told him what I wanted. He was reluctant. I asked: 'Will you open the room for me so I can wait there till Mr. Emerson comes?' He still hesitated. I asked: 'You won't do it?' and he answered: 'I'd rather not.'" W. stopped here—laughed heartily—took some liberal gulps of water from the pitcher on the floor. "After about ten minutes Emerson came back—took in the situation at a glance: seemed anxious, annoyed, flustrated—even inclined to be angry. I was not a bit mad myself—I was thoroughly composed, satisfied: on the contrary, I commended the waiter: he had done the one thing the right kind of a man in his position was bound to do. We went up to Emerson's room together—Emerson still seemed exercised—made no attempt to disguise his annoyance. We sat down. Emerson said: 'We

have had quite a long walk: you must be thirsty: wouldn't you like to have something to drink?' I answered, 'Yes.' So we had some drink together. I can't now remember what. Emerson still continued in a sort of fretful mood: I saw there was danger he would break loose on, be sharp to, the waiter. I think I said to him—I am sure I said to him—about it: 'Let it pass—don't say anything about it: he did his duty—that was all.'" "Did Emerson see it?" "I should say so—like a flash." Then he added: "Why, Emerson had the cutest, justest, brain of all our world: saw everything, literally everything, in right perspective—things personal, things general. We got into some discussion at dinner: were perfectly free together: sometimes things would get hot, stormy (for us): we differed sharply in some things—never hesitated to express our differences—doing so this day rather loudly—more positively than usual. The question up was of national character: Emerson had just published *English Traits*—naturally was full of the English—English power, characteristics, and so forth. We talked and talked: Emerson inclined to favor the English—to accept them in a more favorable light than the Scotch-Irish. My own choice would have been hard to tell—I embrace, include, all. I am especially fond of the Scotch, though I can never be partial in the last analysis to one nation as above another: fond of the Scotch, who, after we admit their gloomy, despotic, reverse side, are still to be credited with some of the most marvelous qualities of which any race can boast. At one moment, the discussion running along this line, Emerson was saying: 'I like the English—I do not like the Scotch so well: and as for the Irish——': here he suddenly stopped (suddenly, as Hicks used to haul himself to in the moment of his canting spells): I didn't know what had happened. A young waiter who had been standing back of us left the room. Emerson looked at me quietly and said: 'I was going to say more—more about the Irish: but it suddenly struck me that the young man there was himself Irish and might not find what I was going to say pleasant.' It was thoroughly characteristic—just like him: like his consideration, courtesy, unfailing tact. His temperament was almost

ideal." Then he said: "Whatever may be the truth of what Clifford says about me, I hope there may never stray out of my work anywhere a note of dissatisfaction, disappointment, despair: indeed, I may say I am sure there does not—sure of it."

In 1881, the firm of James R. Osgood and Company in Boston offered to bring out a definitive edition of Leaves of Grass. *Whitman went on at the end of August to supervise the printing. He had insisted that "the sexuality odes about which the original row was started and kept up so long" must be "retained and go in the same as ever."* Leaves of Grass *was not only to appear for the first time with a regular publisher's imprint, but to be brought out by one of the leading American publishers.*

An account of a visit to Concord appears in his journal for September of that year (Specimen Days):

Concord, Mass. Out here on a visit—elastic, mellow, Indian-summery weather. Came today from Boston (a pleasant ride of 40 minutes by steam, through Somerville, Belmont, Waltham, Stony Brook, and other lively towns), convoy'd by my friend F. B. Sanborn, and to his ample house, and the kindness and hospitality of Mrs. S. and their fine family. Am writing this under the shade of some old hickories and elms, just after 4 P.M., on the porch, within a stone's throw of the Concord river. Off against me, across stream, on a meadow and side-hill, haymakers are gathering and wagoning-in probably their second or third crop. The spread of emerald-green and brown, the knolls, the score or two of little haycocks dotting the meadow, the loaded-up wagons, the patient horses, the slow-strong action of the men and pitchforks—all in the just-waning afternoon, with patches of yellow sunsheen, mottled by long shadows—a cricket shrilly chirping, herald of the dusk—a boat with two figures noiselessly gliding along the little river, passing under the stone bridge-arch—the slight settling haze of aerial moisture, the sky and the peacefulness expanding in all directions and overhead—fill and soothe me.

Same Evening. Never had I a better piece of luck befall me: a long and blessed evening with Emerson, in a way I couldn't have wish'd better or different. For nearly two hours he has been placidly sitting where I could see his face in the best light, near me. Mrs. S.'s back-parlor well fill'd with people, neighbors, many fresh and charming faces, women, mostly young, but some old. My friend A. B. Alcott and his daughter Louisa were there early. A good deal of talk, the subject Henry Thoreau—some new glints of his life and fortunes, with letters to and from him—one of the best by Margaret Fuller, others by Horace Greeley, Channing, *etc.*—one from Thoreau himself, most quaint and interesting. (No doubt I seem'd very stupid to the roomful of company, taking hardly any part in the conversation; but I had "my own pail to milk in," as the Swiss proverb puts it.) My seat and the relative arrangement were such that, without being rude, or anything of the kind, I could just look squarely at E., which I did a good part of the two hours. On entering, he had spoken very briefly and politely to several of the company, then settled himself in his chair, a trifle push'd back, and, though a listener and apparently an alert one, remain'd silent through the whole talk and discussion. A lady friend quietly took a seat next him, to give special attention. A good color in his face, eyes clear, with the well-known expression of sweetness, and the old clear-peering aspect quite the same.

Next Day.—Several hours at E.'s house, and dinner there. An old familiar house (he has been in it thirty-five years), with surroundings, furnishment, roominess, and plain elegance and fullness, signifying democratic ease, sufficient opulence, and an admirable old-fashioned simplicity—modern luxury, with its mere sumptuousness and affectation, either touch'd lightly upon or ignored altogether. Dinner the same. Of course the best of the occasion (Sunday, September 18, '81) was the sight of E. himself. As just said, a healthy color in the cheeks, and good light in the eyes, cheery expression, and just the amount of talking that best suited, namely, a word or short phrase only where needed, and almost always with a smile. Besides Emerson himself, Mrs.

E., with their daughter Ellen, the son Edward and his wife, with my friend F. S. and Mrs. S., and others, relatives and intimates. Mrs. Emerson, resuming the subject of the evening before (I sat next to her), gave me further and fuller information about Thoreau, who, years ago, during Mr. E.'s absence in Europe, had lived for some time in the family, by invitation.

Though the evening at Mr. and Mrs. Sanborn's, and the memorable family dinner at Mr. and Mrs. Emerson's, have most pleasantly and permanently fill'd my memory, I must not slight other notations of Concord. I went to the old Manse, walk'd through the ancient garden, enter'd the rooms, noted the quaintness, the unkempt grass and bushes, the little panes in the windows, the low ceilings, the spicy smell, the creepers embowering the light. Went to the Concord battle ground, which is close by, scann'd French's statue, "the Minute Man," read Emerson's poetic inscription on the base, linger'd a long while on the bridge, and stopp'd by the grave of the unnamed British soldiers buried there the day after the fight on April, '75. Then riding on (thanks to my friend Miss M. and her spirited white ponies, she driving them), a half hour at Hawthorne's and Thoreau's graves. I got out and went up of course on foot, and stood a long while and ponder'd. They lie close together in a pleasant wooded spot well up the cemetery hill, "Sleepy Hollow." The flat surface of the first was densely cover'd by myrtle, with a border of arbor-vitæ, and the other had a brown headstone, moderately elaborate, with inscriptions. By Henry's side lies his brother John, of whom much was expected, but he died young. Then to Walden pond, that beautiful embower'd sheet of water, and spent over an hour there. On the spot in the woods where Thoreau had his solitary house is now quite a cairn of stones, to mark the place; I too carried one and deposited [it] on the heap. As we drove back, saw the "School of Philosophy," but it was shut up, and I would not have it open'd for me. Near by stopp'd at the house of W. T. Harris, the Hegelian, who came out, and we had a pleasant chat while I sat in the wagon. I shall

not soon forget those Concord drives, and especially that charming Sunday forenoon one with my friend Miss M., and the white ponies.

Emerson died the following year, April 27, 1882, at the age of seventy-nine. Whitman noted the event in his journal:

May 6, '82.

We stand by Emerson's new-made grave without sadness —indeed a solemn joy and faith, almost hauteur—our soul-benison no mere

Warrior, rest, thy task is done,

for one beyond the warriors of the world lies surely symbol'd here. A just man, poised on himself, all-loving, all-inclosing, and sane and clear as the sun. Nor does it seem so much Emerson himself we are here to honor—it is conscience, simplicity, culture, humanity's attributes at their best, yet applicable if need be to average affairs, and eligible to all. So used are we to suppose a heroic death can only come from out of battle or storm, or mighty personal contest, or amid dramatic incidents or danger (have we not been taught so for ages by all the plays and poems?) that few even of those who most sympathizingly mourn Emerson's late departure will fully appreciate the ripen'd grandeur of that event, with its play of calm and fitness, like evening light on the sea.

How I shall henceforth dwell on the blessed hours when, not long since, I saw that benignant face, the clear eyes, the silently smiling mouth, the form yet upright in its great age—to the very last, with so much spring and cheeriness, and such an absence of decrepitude, that even the term *venerable* hardly seem'd fitting.

Perhaps the life now rounded and completed in its mortal development, and which nothing can change or harm more, has its most illustrious halo, not in its splendid intellectual or esthetic products, but as forming in its entirety one of the few (alas! how few!) perfect and flawless excuses for being of the entire literary class.

We can say, as Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg: It is not we who come to consecrate the dead—we reverently come to receive, if so it may be, some consecration to ourselves and daily work from him.

On May 28, Whitman sent William O'Connor the following memorandum in a letter[1]*:*

I doubt whether there is anything more affecting or emphatic in Emerson's whole career—a sort of last corruscation in the evening twilight of it—than his driving over to Frank Sanborn's in Concord Sept. 1881 to deliberately pay those 'respects' for which he had obligated himself twenty-five years before. Nor was the unusual compliment of the hospitable but formal dinner made the next day for Walt Whitman by Mr. and Mrs. Emerson, without a marked significance. It was a beautiful autumn Sunday. And if that afternoon, with its occurrences there in his own mansion, surrounded by all his family, wife, son, daughters, sons-in-law, nearest relatives and two or three very near friends—some fourteen or fifteen in all—if that does not mean how Emerson by this simple, yet almost solemn rite, wished before he departed to reiterate and finally seal his verdict of 1856 [1855], then there is no significance in human life or its emotions or actions.

In the autumn of the same year, Whitman published Specimen Days and Collect, *which included the following essay on Emerson:*

In the regions we call Nature, towering beyond all measurement, with infinite spread, infinite depth and height—in those regions, including Man, socially and historically, with his moral-emotional influences—how small a part (it came in my mind to-day) has literature really depicted—even summing up all of it, all ages. Seems at its best some little fleet of boats, hugging the shores of a boundless sea, and never venturing, exploring the unmapp'd—never, Columbus-like, sailing out for New Worlds, and to complete

[1]Quoted in Bliss Perry's *Walt Whitman.*

the orb's rondure. Emerson writes frequently in the atmosphere of this thought, and his books report one or two things from that very ocean and air, and more legibly address'd to our age and American polity than by any man yet. But I will begin by scarifying him—thus proving that I am not insensible to his deepest lessons. I will consider his books from a democratic and Western point of view. I will specify the shadows on these sunny expanses. Somebody has said of heroic character that "wherever the tallest peaks are present, must inevitably be deep chasms and valleys." Mine be the ungracious task (for reasons) of leaving unmention'd both sunny expanses and sky-reaching heights, to dwell on the bare spots and darkness. I have a theory that no artist or work of the very first class may be or can be without them.

First, then, these pages are perhaps too perfect, too concentrated. (How good, for instance, is good butter, good sugar. But to be eating nothing but sugar and butter all the time! even if ever so good.) And though the author has much to say of freedom and wildness and simplicity and spontaneity, no performance was ever more based on artificial scholarships and decorums at third or fourth removes (he calls it culture), and built up from them. It is always a *make,* never an unconscious *growth.* It is the porcelain figure or statuette of lion, or stag, or Indian hunter—and a very choice statuette, too—appropriate for the rosewood or marble bracket of parlor or library; never the animal itself, or the hunter himself. Indeed, who wants the real animal or hunter? What would that do amid astral and bric-a-brac and tapestry, and ladies and gentlemen talking in subdued tones of Browning and Longfellow and art? The least suspicion of such actual bull, or Indian, or of Nature carrying out itself, would put all those good people to instant terror and flight.

Emerson, in my opinion, is not most eminent as poet or artist or teacher, though valuable in all those. He is best as critic, or diagnoser. Not passion or imagination or warp or weakness, or any pronounced cause or specialty, dominates him. Cold and bloodless intellectuality dominates him. (I

know the fires, emotions, love, egotisms, glow deep, perennial, as in all New Englanders—but the façade, hides them well—they give no sign.) He does not see or take one side, one presentation only or mainly (as all the poets, or most of the fine writers anyhow)—he sees all sides. His final influence is to make his students cease to worship anything—almost cease to believe in anything, outside of themselves. These books will fill, and well fill, certain stretches of life, certain stages of development—are, (like the tenets or theology the author of them preach'd when a young man,) unspeakably serviceable and precious as a stage. But in old or nervous or solemnest or dying hours, when one needs the impalpably soothing and vitalizing influences of abysmic Nature, or its affinities in literature or human society, and the soul resents the keenest mere intellection, they will not be sought for.

For a philosopher, Emerson possesses a singularly dandified theory of manners. He seems to have no notion at all that manners are simply the signs by which the chemist or metallurgist knows his metals. To the profound scientist, all metals are profound, as they really are. The little one, like the conventional world, will make much of gold and silver only. Then to the real artist in humanity, what are called bad manners are often the most picturesque and significant of all. Suppose these books becoming absorb'd, the permanent chyle of American general and particular character—what a well-wash'd and grammatical, but bloodless and helpless, race we should turn out! No, no, dear friend; though the States want scholars, undoubtedly, and perhaps want ladies and gentlemen who use the bath frequently, and never laugh loud, or talk wrong, they don't want scholars, or ladies and gentlemen, at the expense of all the rest. They want good farmers, sailors, mechanics, clerks, citizens—perfect business and social relations—perfect fathers and mothers. If we could only have these, or their approximations, plenty of them, fine and large and sane and generous and patriotic, they might make their verbs disagree from their nominatives, and laugh like volleys of musketeers, if they should please. Of course these are not

all America wants, but they are first of all to be provided on a large scale. And, with tremendous errors and escapades, this, substantially, is what the States seem to have an intuition of, and to be mainly aiming at. The plan of a select class, superfined (demarcated from the rest), the plan of Old World lands and literatures, is not so objectionable in itself, but because it chokes the true plan for us, and indeed is death to it. As to such special class, the United States can never produce any equal to the splendid show (far, far beyond comparison or competition here) of the principal European nations, both in the past and at the present day. But an immense and distinctive commonalty over our vast and varied area, West and East, South and North—in fact, for the first time in history, a great, aggregated, real PEOPLE, worthy the name, and made of develop'd heroic individuals, both sexes—is America's principal, perhaps only, reason for being. If ever accomplish'd, it will be at least as much (I lately think, doubly as much) the result of fitting and democratic sociologies, literatures and arts—if we ever get them—as of our democratic politics.

At times it has been doubtful to me if Emerson really knows or feels what Poetry is at its highest, as in the Bible, for instance, or Homer or Shakspere. I see he covertly or plainly likes best superb verbal polish, or something old or odd—Waller's *Go, Lovely Rose*, or Lovelace's lines *To Lucasta*—the quaint conceits of the old French bards, and the like. Of *power* he seems to have a gentleman's admiration—but in his inmost heart the grandest attribute of God and Poets is always subordinate to the octaves, conceits, polite kinks, and verbs.

The reminiscence that years ago I began like most youngsters to have a touch (though it came late, and was only on the surface) of Emerson-on-the-brain—that I read his writings reverently, and address'd him in print as "Master," and for a month or so thought of him as such—I retain not only with composure, but positive satisfaction. I have noticed that most young people of eager minds pass through this stage of exercise.

The best part of Emersonianism is, it breeds the giant

that destroys itself. Who wants to be any man's mere follower? lurks behind every page. No teacher ever taught, that has so provided for his pupil's setting up independently —no truer evolutionist.

In 1887 Whitman wrote the following letter to W. S. Kennedy, who prints it in his Reminiscences of Walt Whitman. *It will be noted that Whitman here contradicts the statement he made to Trowbridge: that he had been influenced by Emerson in a decisive way before he wrote* Leaves of Grass.

CAMDEN, *Feb. 25, '87—Noon*

DEAR W. S. K.—It is of no importance whether I had read Emerson before starting *L. of G.* or not. The fact happens to be positively that I had *not.* The basis and body and genesis of the *L[eaves]* differing I suppose from Em[erson] and many grandest poets and artists [—] was and is that I found and find everything in the *common concrete,* the broadcast materials, the flesh, the common passions, the tangible and visible, etc., and in *the average,* and that I radiate, work from, these outward—or rather hardly wish to leave here but to remain and celebrate it all. Whatever the amount of this may be or not be, it is certainly *not Emersonian,* not Shakspeare, not Tennyson—indeed, the antipodes of E. and the others in essential respects. But I have not suggested or exprest myself well in my book unless I have in a sort included them and their sides and expressions too—as this orb the world means and includes all climes, all sorts, *L. of G.'s* word is *the body, including all,* including the intellect and soul; E.'s word is mind (or intellect or soul).

If I were to unbosom to you in the matter I should say that I never cared so very much for E.'s writings, prose or poems, but from his first personal visit and two hours with me (in Brooklyn in 1866 or '65?)[1] I had a strange attachment and love for *him* and his contact, talk, company, magnetism. I welcomed *him* deepest and always—yet it began and con-

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tinued *on his part,* quite entirely; HE always sought ME. We probably had a dozen (possibly twenty) of these meetings, talks, walks, etc.—some five or six times (sometimes New York, sometimes Boston) had good long dinners together. I was very happy—I don't think I was at my best with him—he always did most of the talking—I am sure he was happy too. That visit to me at Sanborn's, by E. and family, and the splendid formal-informal family dinner *to me,* next day, Sunday, Sept. 18, '81, by E., Mrs. E. and all, I consider not only a victor-event in my life, but it is an after-explanation of so much and offered as an apology, peace-offering, justification of much that the world knows not of. My dear friend, I think I know R. W. E. better than anybody else knows him—and loved him in proportion, but quietly. Much was revealed to me.

WALT WHITMAN.

Whitman also told John Burroughs that he had never read Emerson at all before he wrote Leaves of Grass. *He gave Burroughs the same account that he had given Trowbridge of reading Emerson on the beach at Coney Island, but he put this in the summer of 1885, just* after *his book had been published, instead of in the summer before. It is probable that Whitman was telling the truth in his original story to Trowbridge. Mr. Clifton Joseph Furness, who is distinguished both for his exhaustive knowledge of Whitman and for his common sense in dealing with the subject, has shown that Whitman, as he grew older, desired to pass for and to believe himself a completely original poet with no sources and no kin; and he attributes to this desire the tendency to repudiate Emerson which appears in Whitman's later years. He was always, Mr. Furness points out, extremely vague about facts, told quite different stories at different times about important events in his life, and probably did not, especially as he got older, always know the truth himself.*

Yet his respect and affection for Emerson remained, as is touchingly shown in certain passages of Horace Traubel's

With Walt Whitman in Camden. *Whitman was now just turning seventy. He was to die in March 1892.*

April 23, 1888

W. got talking of Emerson again: "The world does not know what our relations really were—they think of our friendship always as a literary friendship: it was a bit that but it was mostly something else—it was certainly more than that—for I loved Emerson for his personality and I always felt that he loved me for something I brought him from the rush of the big cities and the mass of men. We used to walk together, dine together, argue, even, in a sort of a way, though neither one of us was much of an arguer. We were not much for repartee or sallies or what people ordinarily call humor, but we got along together beautifully—the atmosphere was always sweet, I don't mind saying it, both on Emerson's side and mine: we had no friction—there was no kind of fight in us for each other—we were like two Quakers together. Dear Emerson! I doubt if the literary classes which have taken to coddling him have any right to their god. He belonged to us—yes, to us—rather than to them." Then after a pause: "I suppose to all as well as to us—perhaps to no clique whatever."

July 12, 1888

Asked me: "You remember our talk about Lowell yesterday? Yes? Well—I have thought a lot of it since. The New England crowd has always seemed to be divided about me, with Emerson, Alcott, Longfellow on the one side—Lowell, Whittier, and Holmes on the other. Sometimes I seem to be divided about myself—don't quite get myself of one mind about myself. I understand that Lowell is in the habit of saying sore things about me—yes, very severe things—Holmes passes me off in a joke: but Whittier? Well—Whittier took me in dead earnest at the very start—my book was an evil book—he would shake his head—a sort of ah me!" The Whittier picture of horror amused W.

July 14, 1888

"I often say of Emerson that the personality of the man—the wonderful heart and soul of the man, present in all he writes, thinks, does, hopes—goes far towards justifying the whole literary business—the whole raft good and bad, the entire system. You see, I find nothing in literature that is valuable simply for its professional quality: literature is only valuable in the measure of the passion—the blood and muscle—with which it is invested—which lies concealed and active in it."

July 31, 1888

"I seem to have various feelings about Emerson, but I am always loyal at last. Emerson gratified me as a young man by what he did—he sometimes tantalized me as an old man by what he failed to do. You see, I both blaspheme and worship." I reminded him: "You once addressed Emerson as Master." He nodded his assent. "So I did—and master he was, for me, then. But I got my roots stronger in the earth—master would not do any more: no, not then: would no longer do." "And when you say your last word about Emerson—just before you shut up shop for good—what will it be?" He laughed mildly. "It will be loyal," he said "—after all the impatiences, loyal, loyal."

August 12, 1888

W. spoke of Emerson: "I shall never forget the first visit he paid me—the call, the first call: it was in Brooklyn: no, I can never forget it. I can hear his gentle knock still—the soft knock—so"—indicating it on the chair-arm—"and the slow sweet voice, as my mother stood there by the door: and the words, 'I came to see Mr. Whitman': and the response, 'He is here'—the simple unaffected greeting on both sides—'How are you, Mr. Whitman,' 'How are you, Waldo'—the hour's talk or so—the taste of lovableness he left behind when he was gone. I can easily see how Carlyle should have likened Emerson's appearance in their household to the apparition of an angel."

December 21, 1888

W. liked what Burroughs said of Emerson: "To me Emerson filled nearly the whole horizon in that direction." W. said: "I guess I enjoy that: I guess I do." He had had me read the line over again. "John was right: Emerson *was* the whole horizon: Ralph Waldo: Emerson: the gentle, noble, perfect, radiant, consolatory, Emerson. I think of something Emerson said in one of our talks: he said: 'I agree with you, Mr. Whitman, that a man who does not live according to his lights—who trims his sails to the current breeze—is already dead—is as many times dead as he is untrue.' Emerson lived according to his lights—not according to libraries, books, literature, the traditions: he was unostentatiously loyal: no collegian, overdone with culture: so gifted, so peculiarly tremendous, that, if I may say so, knowing too much did not as it so often does with the scholar hurt him." "Didn't you tell me that he expressed regrets to your face one day—saying some sort of apologetic thing about his book learning?" W. nodded. "Yes—more than once: said he felt like athletes—some athletes: overtrained: that a scholar, like an athlete, overtrained, is apt to go stale. He said he felt that culture had done all it could do for him—then it had done something for him which had better been left undone." "Did he seem very serious in that self-analysis or did he say it all quizzically?" W. answered: "Oh! he was serious enough in it: he said to me (speaking of Thoreau) that, 'as strange as it may seem, Henry being an outdoor man (he called him Henry)—he shrinks from some formidable things in you—in your book, in your personality—over which I rejoice!' And he said this too: 'I don't say it by way of flattery at all—I would as readily say it to any man like you who had not written a book—but I say that meeting you is a peculiar refreshment to me—puts something needed into my tissue which I do not seem to get in my own established environment.' Yes, Horace: he was in dead earnest about it all: not plaintive at all: no, nothing of that sort: but soberly free." I asked: "Did some of this happen in that Boston Common walk?" "Yes—some

of it: but I recall that some of it occurred that Astor House day in New York."

December 23, 1888

W. gave me one of what he calls his "soger boy letters": his draft of such a letter: he even had me read it to him. I don't like to read these letters aloud. They move me too much. I notice that he too is stirred strangely over them hearing them again. But I read. I could not get out of it. It was spread out over ten different slips of paper which were folded in a Sanitary Commission envelope on which he had written: "to Hugo Aug. 7 '63." He said: "Yes it was from the midst of things—to the midst of things: when I went to New York I would write to the hospitals: when I was in the hospitals I would write to New York: I could not forget the boys—they were too precious." . . .

The text of the letter follows.

I said to W.: "That's not so serious as you led me to believe." He smiled: "The undertone is serious: they were grave times: I was not feeling gay and festive in those years: never could get away from the terrible experiences. Emerson asked me: 'Mr. Whitman, how can you stand it? I do not think I could endure it. It would take too much out of me: too much—too much——.'" I asked W.: "Did Emerson always address you as Mister?" "Generally—I may say always. Once or twice he addressed me as Whitman: but he looked a bit uncertain after he had done so as if possibly he might have taken too much liberty."

W. lay on the bed as I left. The tangerines and a book beside him: he played with them. I was happy. He seemed so well.

December 24, 1888

Harned asked W.: "Do you always feel as if it was quite certain that Emerson will size up in history ultimately bigger than Thoreau?" W. replied: "Tom, you've a hell of a habit of putting the most difficult questions to me when

I'm least prepared for them." T. got back: "But that's not answering the question. Do you?" W. took his glasses off his nose and said: "Tom, I'm not dead sure on that point either way: my prejudices, if I may call them that, are all with Emerson: but Thoreau was a surprising fellow—he is not easily grasped—is elusive: yet he is one of the native forces—stands for a fact, a movement, an upheaval: Thoreau belongs to America, to the transcendental, to the protesters: then he is an outdoor man: all outdoor men, everything else being equal, appeal to me. Thoreau was not so precious, tender, a personality as Emerson: but he was a force—he looms up bigger and bigger: his dying does not seem to have hurt him a bit: every year has added to his fame. One thing about Thoreau keeps him very near to me: I refer to his lawlessness—his dissent—his going down his own absolute road, let hell blaze all it chooses."

December 25, 1888

Traubel had just read Whitman a draft of a letter he had written in 1863 to the soldier mentioned above.

I looked up as I finished reading. Walt's eyes were full of tears. He wiped the tears away with the sleeve of his coat. Put on a make-believe chuckle. "It's very beautiful, Walt: right on the ground: where the people are." "I hope so: that's where I belong: right on the ground." W. added: "Emerson said when we were out together in New York and Boston—said it more than once: 'I envy you your capacity for being at home with anybody in any crowd.' Then he asked me on another occasion: 'Don't you fear now and then that your freedom, your ease, your nonchalance, with men may be misunderstood?' I asked him: 'Do you misunderstand it?' He put his hand on my arm and said: 'No: I see it for what it is: it is beautiful.' Then I said to him: 'Misunderstood? Yes: it will be misunderstood. But what is there I do that is not misunderstood?' He smiled in his sweet gentle way and murmured: 'true! true!'"

BAYARD TAYLOR (1825–78), who had a considerable reputation in his own time, is hardly known to ours save as the author of a translation of *Faust*. He wrote some novels, a great deal of poetry, and many volumes of travels. Part English Quaker and part Pennsylvania Dutch, he passed through a variety of literatures as he visited a variety of countries without adding much that was interesting to the adventures of the human spirit. Yet Taylor was a man of the world in the experience both of books and of men as were few American writers of his time. He read poetry aloud, says R. H. Stoddard, with a "boyish exultation," and his head was always humming with the verse of his extraordinary repertory of tongues. His own poems, though not especially inspired, are literate and competent in a sense that much of our poetry of that period is not. It was as if the sound tradition of English verse were steadily being washed away by the demands of the magazines—as if the poets were getting to feel that it was necessary to put into a poem only enough of art to last a month; and Taylor, under these conditions, maintains what seems by comparison a certain solidity and style. If his verse, as has been said, is all rhetoric, it is at least not a messy rhetoric.

In the latter part of his life, Bayard Taylor wrote a set of imitations of his contemporaries which he embodied in a series of dialogues. These were first published anonymously in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1872 as *Diversions of the Echo Club,* and afterwards, in 1876, in a volume under the author's name. The book had had its origin in the fifties in the games of parody-writing which Taylor, Stoddard, Fitz-James O'Brien, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich had been in the habit of playing on Saturday nights in New York, when Taylor had lived on Washington Square; and they present an idealized picture of the literary life of Pfaff's Restaurant, the beer-cellar on Broadway above Bleecker Street which the New York writers had frequented in the decade before the Civil War. The *Echo Club* is perhaps the most attractive relic of the Bohemian New York of that period. But it has also a real critical value. Taylor said that he tried "under the guise of fun" to put into it "a good deal of serious matter," and "to give a few earnest hints in regard to certain aspects of our popular literature." The dialogues in their day fell completely flat. It was not, one supposes, a kind of thing particularly well understood in a literary world dominated by Boston. Taylor found when he went to Rome that the American painters there had been much delighted by them, and they won him a compliment from Browning; but at home they remained unread.

We can appreciate them better today. The little book opens an unexpected window—the window of a non-provincial and cultivated mind—on the whole poetic landscape of the middle nineteenth century. Taylor gives us a view from the seventies just as Poe gave us a view from the forties. His parodies, like Poe's derisive extracts, paint in for us the background of inferior verse with which the first-rate figures partly blend and from which they partly emerge; and Taylor in every case provides a very clear little picture of the artistic personality of the poet. When we go among even the pages of selections in Bryant's or Stedman's anthology, we find that it is hard to enjoy or to judge because we breathe again the air of the period, we are back in an old, closed-in atmosphere of half-remembered houses and people. But Taylor has some-

how got free of this murkiness of the family poets and the family magazines: he has somehow risen above it into the light, lively New York air, where one can hear the whistles of steamboats departing for all the ports of the world; and one can look at the whole thing with the eyes of a returned traveller, who has just come in through the Narrows and landed at Christopher Street.

It may serve to emphasize the difference between the literary atmospheres of New England and New York to add here Walt Whitman's tribute to Pfaff's in his journal of August 16, 1881:

"Chalk a big mark for today," was one of the sayings of an old sportsman-friend of mine, when he had had unusually good luck—come home thoroughly tired, but with satisfactory results of fish or birds. Well, today might warrant such a mark for me. Everything propitious from the start. An hour's fresh stimulation, coming down ten miles of Manhattan Island by railroad and 8 o'clock stage. Then an excellent breakfast at Pfaff's restaurant, 24th street. Our host himself, an old friend of mine, quickly appear'd on the scene to welcome me and bring up the news, and, first opening a big fat bottle of the best wine in the cellar, talk about ante-bellum times, '59 and '60, and the jovial suppers at his then Broadway place, near Bleecker street. Ah, the friends and names and frequenters, those times, that place. Most are dead—Ada Clare, Wilkins, Daisy Sheppard, O'Brien, Henry Clapp, Stanley, Mullen, Wood, Brougham, Arnold—all gone. And there Pfaff and I, sitting opposite each other at the little table, gave a remembrance to them in a style they would have themselves fully confirm'd, namely, big, brimming, fill'd-up champagne-glasses, drain'd in abstracted silence, very leisurely, to the last drop. (Pfaff is a generous German *restaurateur,* silent, stout, jolly, and I should say the best selecter of champagne in America.)

BAYARD TAYLOR

DIVERSIONS OF THE ECHO CLUB

Introduction

THE PAPERS which make up this volume are sufficiently described by its title. They are literary "Diversions,"—the product of a good many random hours of thoughtless (or, at least, only half-thoughtful) recreation and amusement,—nothing else. More than as many burlesque imitations of authors, living or dead, as are here contained had been written before any thought of publication was suggested. The fact that there was no such original design requires that the form in which the diversions are now presented should be explained to the reader.

The habit originated, very much as it is described in the *First Evening*, at least twenty years ago, in a small private circle. Three or four young authors found not only amusement, but an agreeable relaxation from their graver tasks, in drawing names and also subjects as from a lottery wheel, and improvising imitations of older and more renowned poets. Nothing was further from their minds than ridicule, or even incidental disparagement, of the latter, many of whom were not only recognized, but genuinely revered, by all. One form of intellectual diversion gradually led to another: the parodies alternated with the filling up of end-

rhymes (usually of the most difficult and incongruous character), with the writing of double or concealed acrostics, spurious quotations from various languages, and whatever else could be devised by the ingenuity of the company. I may mention that some years before Mr. Lewis Carroll delighted all lovers of nonsense with his ballad of *The Jabberwock* we tried precisely the same experiment of introducing invented words. The following four lines may serve as a specimen of one attempt:

> Smitten by harsh, transcetic thuds of shame,
> My squelgence fades: I mogrify my blame:
> The lupkin world, that leaves me yole and blant,
> Denies my affligance with looks askant!

Of course nothing further than amusing nonsense was ever contemplated. A few of the imitations found their way into print, but they were comparatively unnoticed in the flood of burlesque with which the public was then supplied from many other quarters. As a participant, for several years, in a variety of fun which was certainly harmless so long as it remained private, I was of the opinion that very little could be made public without some accompanying explanation. The idea of setting the imitations in a framework of dialogue which should represent various forms of literary taste and opinion seemed, first, to make the publication possible. But when I came to examine the scattered leaves with a view to this end, I was at once struck with their inadequacy to the purpose of comical illustration. Removed from the genial atmosphere in which they had spontaneously grown, many of them seemed withered and insipid. Many others were simply parodies of particular poems, instead of being burlesque reproductions of an author's manner and diction. The plan demanded that they should be rewritten, in consonance with the governing conception of the work as a whole. This was accordingly done; and not more than three or four of the following poems belong to the original private "diversions."

There is scarcely a more hazardous experiment which an author can make than to attempt to draw amusement from

the intellectual characteristics of his contemporaries. If I had not been firmly convinced that the absence of any conscious unfriendliness on my part *must* make itself evident to many who were old and honored friends, I never should have dared it. In addition to this, I ventured on a number of private tests, and was further assured by finding that the subject of each travesty accepted his share with the greatest good nature. I have yet to learn that the publication has given other than a very slight momentary annoyance, and that only in one or two cases. It is doubtful whether the same experiment could be made in any of the other arts, with a similar result. I am satisfied that opera singers, actors, composers, sculptors, painters, theologians even, have a better right to be called the *genus irritabile* than the literary guild. The more devotedly an author aspires towards his ideal of achievement, the less he is concerned with all transitory estimates of his work. Looking back now, four years since the papers appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly,* I see more clearly how much was ventured, and I am profoundly grateful to find that no serious wound was given.

Some of my friends have suggested that the characters introduced in the Echo Club, and the course of their dialogues, might have been made more interesting to the reader. This is probably true; but, on the other hand, all work of the kind has but an ephemeral interest, and the leisure of mind which produced it seems now so remote, so beyond recall, that I have not undertaken to make any change. The four principal characters were designed to represent classes, not individuals. In "The Ancient" I endeavored to express something of the calmer judicial temper, in literary matters, which comes from age and liberal study. The name of "Zoïlus" (the *Homeromastix,* or "Scourge of Homer") explains his place: he is the carping, cynical, unconsciously arrogant critic,—though these qualities could not be given with entire dramatic truth. "Galahad" is the young, sensational, impressive element in the reading public; admiration, in him, is almost equivalent to adoration. "The Gannet"—a name suggested by a poem written by a member of the class long ago—represents brilliancy without literary principle, the love of

technical effect, regardless of the intellectual conception of a work. This is a class which is always large, and always more or less successful—for a time. It was not necessary that each character should keep rigidly within the limits of his part, and thus each of them may be occasionally inconsistent. I need hardly explain that the author's own views, though scattered here and there through the dialogues, together with their exact opposites, are not specially expressed by any one of the four persons.

The papers were meant to be anonymous, but the secret was soon betrayed—not, however, before some amusing illustrations of the personal character of much so-called criticism were furnished. The comments of certain writers for the press, before and after the authorship was known, formed a curious and instructive contrast. In London, the papers were collected and published as a volume more than two years ago; and there may be possibly enough diversion still lingering about them to satisfy the indolent mood of a summer afternoon. More than this is not intended by their appearance in the present form.

I have added some other specimens of the same kind of fooling, partly in order to put everything of the sort in its place and leave it behind me, and partly because a good many personal friends have been amused, and hence some unknown friends may also be. This prelude is no doubt longer than necessary; but on completing and offering to others a diversion which will never be repeated, one may be pardoned for an overscrupulousness in explaining circumstances and justifying motives.

B. T.

New York, June 1876.

Night The First

If it were not that the public cherishes rather singular and fluctuating notions with regard to the private and familiar intercourse of authors, the reports which follow would need no prologue. But between the two classes of readers, one of which innocently supposes T. Percy Jones to be the

strange and terrible being whom they find represented in his *Firmilian,* while the other, having discovered, by a few startling disillusions, that the race of authors is Janus-faced, is sure that T. Percy Jones is the exact opposite of his poetical self, there has arisen a confusion which it may be well to correct.

The authors themselves, I am aware, are chiefly responsible for these opposite impressions. When Joaquin Miller at Niagara, standing on the brink of the American precipice, kisses his hands grandly to Canada, exclaiming, "England, I thank you!" or when Martin Farquhar Tupper, in a speech at New York, cries out with noble magnanimity, "America, be not afraid, *I* will protect you!" the public might reasonably expect to find all poets visibly trailing their mantles in our streets. But when an eager listener, stealing behind Irving and Halleck at an evening party, found them talking of—shoe leather! and a breathless devotee of Thackeray, sitting opposite to him at the dinner table, saw those Delphian lips unclose only to utter the words, "Another potato, if you please!"—they had revelations which might cast a dreadful suspicion over the nature of the whole tribe of authors.

I would not have the reader imagine that the members of the Echo Club are represented by either of these extremes. They are authors, of different ages and very unequal places in public estimation. It would never occur to them to seat themselves on self-constructed pyramids, and speak as if The Ages were listening; yet, like their brethren of all lands and all times, the staple of their talk is literature. What Englishmen call "the shop" is an inevitable feature of their conversation. They can never come together without discussing the literary news of the day, the qualities of prominent authors, living or dead, and sometimes their own. However the enlightened listener might smile at the positiveness of their opinions, and the contradictions into which they are sometimes led in the lawless play and keen clash of the lighter intellect, he could not fail to recognize the sovereign importance they attach to their art. Without lifting from their intercourse that last veil of mystery, behind which only equals are permitted to pass, I may safely try to report the

mixture of sport and earnest, of satire and enthusiasm, of irreverent audacity and pure aspiration, which met and mingled at their meetings. If the reader cannot immediately separate these elements, it is no fault of mine. He is most desirous, I know, to be present at the private diversions of a small society of authors, and to hear them talk as they are wont to talk when the wise heads of the world are out of earshot.

The character which the society assumed for a short time was entirely accidental. As one of the Chorus, I was present at the first meeting, and of course I never failed afterwards. The four authors who furnished our entertainment were not aware that I had written down, from memory, the substance of the conversation, until our evenings came to an end; and I have had some difficulty in obtaining their permission to publish my reports. The Ancient and Galahad feared that certain poets whom they delight to honor might be annoyed, not so much at the sportive imitation of their manner, as at the possible misconception of its purpose by the public. But Zoïlus and the Gannet agreed with me that where no harm is meant none can be inflicted, that the literature of our day is in a sad state of bewilderment and confusion, and that a few effervescing powders would perhaps soothe a public stomach which has been overdosed with startling effects.

At last the Ancient said: "So be it, then! Take the poems, but don't bring your manuscript to us for correction! I am quite sure you have often reported us falsely, and if our masks of names are pulled off, we will have that defense."

I have only to add that the three or four gentlemen comprising the Chorus are not authors by profession. The Ancient is in the habit of dividing the race of artists into active and passive—the latter possessing the artistic temperament, the tastes, the delights, the instincts of the race—everything, except that creative gadfly which stings to expression. In every quality except production they are the equals of the producers, he says; and they are quite as necessary to the world as the active artists, since they are the first to recognize the good points of the latter, to strengthen them with warm

and intelligent sympathy, and to commend them to the slower perceptions and more uncertain tastes of the mass of readers. I am sure, at least, that our presence and participation in the amusements was a gentle stimulus to the principal actors. We were their enthusiastic audience, and kept them fresh and warm to their work. I do not record our share in the conversation, for there is sufficient diversity of opinion without it; and I made no notes of it at the time. —THE NAMELESS REPORTER.

In the rear of Karl Schäfer's lager-beer cellar and restaurant—which everyone knows is but a block from the central part of Broadway—there is a small room, with a vaulted ceiling, which Karl calls his *Löwengrube,* or Lions' Den. Here, in their Bohemian days, Zoïlus and the Gannet had been accustomed to meet to discuss literary projects and read fragments of manuscript to each other. The Chorus, the Ancient, and young Galahad gradually fell into the same habit, and thus a little circle of six, seven, or eight members came to be formed. The room could comfortably contain no more; it was quiet, with a dim, smoky, confidential atmosphere, and suggested Auerbach's Cellar to the Ancient, who had been in Leipzig.

Here, authors, books, magazines, and newspapers were talked about; sometimes a manuscript poem was read by its writer; while mild potations of beer and the dreamy breath of cigars delayed the nervous, fidgety, clattering-footed American Hours. One night they chanced upon a discussion of Morris' *Earthly Paradise,* which Galahad rapturously admired, while the Ancient continued to draw him out, at first by guarded praise, then by critical objections to the passages which Galahad quoted. The conversation finally took this turn:

GALAHAD. Indeed, you are not just! Tell me, have you read the whole work?

THE ANCIENT. Yes; I had it with me on my last trip to Havana, and read all three volumes under the most favorable auspices,—lying on deck in the shadow of a sail, with the palms and mangroves of the Bahamas floating past in the

distance. Just so I floated through the narrative poems, one after the other, admiring the storyteller's art, heartily enjoying many passages, accepting even the unnecessary quaintness of the speech, and at first disposed to say, "Here is a genuine poet!" But I was conscious of a lack of something, which, in my lazy mood, I did not attempt to analyze. When the lines and scenes and characters began to fade in my mind (which they did almost immediately), I found that the final impression which the work left behind was very much like the Hades of the Greeks,—a gray, misty, cheerless land, full of wandering shadows,—a place, where there is no sun, no clear, conscious, joyous life, where even fortunate love is sad, where hope is unknown to the heart, and there is nothing in the distance but death, and nothing after death. There had been a languid and rather agreeable sense of enjoyment; but it was followed by a chill.

GALAHAD. Oh!

THE GANNET. How often have I told you, Galahad, that you're too easily taken off your feet! He's very clever, I admit; but there's a deal of trick in it, for all that. His revival of obsolete words, his imitation of Chaucer——

GALAHAD *(impatiently)*. Imitation!

THE GANNET. Well,—only half, and half similarity of talent. But no writer can naturally assume a manner of speech which has long fallen into disuse, even in literature: so far as he does so, he is artificial. And this artifice Morris carries into his pictures of sentiment and passion. You cease to feel with and for his characters long before he has done with them.

GALAHAD. As human beings, perhaps; but as conceptions of beauty, they have another existence.

THE GANNET. When I want a Greek frieze, let me have it in marble! Yes, he's a skillful workman, and a successful one, as his popularity proves. And he's lucky in producing his canned fruit after Swinburne's curry and pepper sauce; but it is *canned*. I don't say I could equal him in his own line, for that requires natural inclination as well as knack, yet I think I could give you something exactly in his style in ten minutes.

THE ANCIENT. Challenge him, Galahad!

THE GANNET. Get me paper and pencil! I will at least try. Now, Galahad, put up your watch; I only stipulate that you don't time me too exactly. Stay!—take another sheet and try the same thing yourself.

(They write; meanwhile the others talk.)

THE GANNET *(after twenty minutes)*. I have failed in time, because I began wrong. I tried to write a serious passage in Morris' manner, and my own habit of expression immediately came in as a disturbing influence. Then I gave up the plan of producing something really earnest and coherent—that is, I kept in mind the manner, alone, and let the matter come of itself. Very little effort was required, I found: the lines arranged themselves easily enough. Now, lend me your ears: it is a passage from *The Taming of Themistocles,* in the ninth volume of the *Earthly Paradise. (Reads.)*

"He must be holpen; yet how help shall I,
Steeped to the lips in ancient misery,
And by the newer grief appareléd?
If that I throw these ashes on mine head,
Do this thing for thee,—while about my way
A shadow gathers, and the piteous day,
So wan and bleak for very loneliness,
Turneth from sight of such unruthfulness?"
Therewith he caught an arrow from the sheaf,
And brake the shaft in witlessness of grief;
But Chiton's vest, such dismal fear she had,
Shook from the heart that sorely was a-drad,
And she began, withouten any pause,
To say: "Why break the old Ætolian laws,
Send this man forth, that never harm hath done,
Between the risen and the setten sun?"
And next, they wandered to a steepy hill,
Whence all the land was lying gray and still,
And not a living creature there might be,
From the cold mountains to the salt, cold sea;
Only, within a little cove, one sail
Shook, as it whimpered at the cruel gale,
And the mast moaned from chafing of the rope;
So all was pain: they saw not any hope.

ZOÏLUS. But that is no imitation! You have copied a passage out of—out of—pshaw! I know the poem, and I remember the lines.

THE GANNET *(indignantly)*. Out of Milton, why not say? —where you'll be just as likely to find them. Now, let me hear yours, Galahad; you were writing.

GALAHAD *(crushing the paper in his hand)*. Mine is neither one thing nor the other,—not the author's poetic dialect throughout, nor hinting of his choice of subjects. I began something, which was really my own, and then gradually ran into an echo. I think *you* have hit upon the true method; and we must try again, since we know it.

THE GANNET. Why not try others—a dozen of them? By Jove, I should like some mere gymnastics, after the heavy prose I've been writing! And you, too, Galahad, and the Ancient (if his ponderous dignity doesn't prevent it); and here's Zoïlus, the very fellow for such a diversion! We can come together, here, and be a private, secret club of Parodists, —of Echoes,—of Iconoclasts, of——

THE ANCIENT. Of irreverent satirists, I fear. That would be a new kind of a *Hainbund,* indeed; but, after all, it need not be ill-natured. At least, to insure yourselves against relapsing into mere burlesque and incidental depreciation—which is a tempting, but nearly always a fatal course for young writers—I must be present. My indifferentism, as you call it, which sometimes provokes you when I cannot share all your raptures, may do good service in keeping you from rushing into the opposite extreme. As for taking part in the work, I won't promise to do much. You know I am a man of uncertain impulses, and can get nothing out of myself by force of resolution.

OMNES. Oh, you must take part! It will be capital sport.

THE ANCIENT *(deliberately, between the whiffs of his cigar)*. First of all, let us clearly understand what is to be done. To undertake *parodies,* as the word is generally comprehended—that is, to make a close imitation of some particular poem, though it should be characteristic of the author —would be rather a flat business. Even the Brothers Smith and Bon Gaultier, admirable as they are, stuck too closely

to selected models; and Phoebe Cary, who has written the best American parodies, did the same thing. I think the Gannet has discovered something altogether more original and satisfactory—a simple echo of the author's tone and manner. The choice of a subject gives another chance of fun.

(He takes up THE GANNET'S *imitation and looks over it.)*

Here the dialect and movement and atmosphere are suggested; the exaggeration is neither coarse nor extreme, and the comical effect seems to lie mainly in the circumstance that it *is* a wilful imitation. If we were to find the passage in one of Morris' poems, we might think it carelessly written, somewhat obscure, but still in the same key with what precedes and follows it. Possibly, nay, almost certainly, it would not amuse us at all; but just now I noticed that even Galahad could not help laughing. A diversion of this sort is less a labor and more a higher and finer recreation of the mind, than the mechanical setting of some given poem, line by line, to a ludicrous subject, like those endless and generally stupid parodies of Longfellow's *Excelsior* and Emerson's *Brahma*. For heaven's—no, Homer's—sake, let us not fall into that vein!

THE GANNET. Thou speakest well.

GALAHAD. But how shall we select the authors? And shall I be required to make my own demigods ridiculous?

ZOÏLUS. Let me prove to you, by one of your own demigods, that nothing can be either sublime or ridiculous. Poetry is the Brahma of literature—above all, pervading all, self-existent, though so few find her (and men of business reckon ill who leave her out), and therefore quite unmoved by anything we may do. Don't you remember the lines?—

> Far or forgot to me is near,
> Shadow and sunlight are the same;
> The vanished gods to me appear,
> And one to me are shame and fame.

THE ANCIENT. You are right, Zoïlus, in spite of your sarcasm. Besides, it is an evidence of a poet's distinct individuality, when he can be amusingly imitated. We can only make those the objects of our fun whose manner or dialect

stamps itself so deeply into our minds that a new cast can be taken. We are sporting around great, and sometimes little names, like birds or cats or lizards around the feet, and over the shoulders, and on the heads of statues. Now, there's an idea for a poem, Galahad. But, seriously, how would you imitate Pollok's *Course of Time,* or Young's *Night Thoughts,* or Blair's *Grave,* or any other of those masses of words, which are too ponderous for poetry and too respectable for absurdity! Either extreme will do for us, excellence or imbecility; but it must have a distinct, pronounced character.

THE GANNET. Come, now. I'm eager for another trial.

THE ANCIENT. Let us each write the names of three or four poets on separate slips of paper, and throw them into my hat; then let each draw out one slip as his model for tonight. Thus there will be no clashing of tastes or inclinations, and our powers of imitation will be more fairly tested.

(They write three names apiece, THE CHORUS *taking part. Then all are thrown into* THE ANCIENT'S *hat and shaken up together.)*

GALAHAD *(drawing).* Robert Browning.

THE GANNET. So is mine.

ZOÏLUS. Edgar A. Poe.

THE ANCIENT. Some of us have written the same names. Well, let it be so tonight. If we find the experiment diverting, we can easily avoid any such repetition next time. Moreover, Browning alone will challenge echoes from all of us; and I am curious to see whether the several imitations will reflect the same characteristics of his style. It will, at least, show whether the stamp upon each mind has any common likeness to the original.

THE GANNET. A good idea! But Zoïlus is already possessed by the spirit of Poe: not, I hope, in the manner of Dr. Garth Wilkinson of London, whose volume of poems dictated by the spirits of the dead authors is the most astonishing collection I ever saw. He makes Poe's "wet locks" rhyme to his "fetlocks"! It is even worse than Harris' *Epic of the Starry Heavens,* dictated to him in forty-eight hours by Dante. By the by, we have a good chance to test this matter of possession; the suggestion nimbly and sweetly recommends itself

to my fancy. But since I was your pioneer tonight, I'll even rest until Zoïlus has finished; then, let us all start fairly.

Zoïlus *(a few minutes later)*. If this is at all good, it is not because of labor. I had an easier task than the Gannet. *(Reads.)*

THE PROMISSORY NOTE

In the lonesome latter years,
(Fatal years!)
To the dropping of my tears
Danced the mad and mystic spheres
In a rounded, reeling rune,
'Neath the moon,
To the dripping and the dropping of my tears.

Ah, my soul is swathed in gloom,
(Ulalume!)
In a dim Titanic tomb,
For my gaunt and gloomy soul
Ponders o'er the penal scroll,
O'er the parchment (not a rhyme),
Out of place—out of time—
I am shredded, shorn, unshifty,
(Oh, the fifty!)
And the days have passed, the three,
Over me!
And the debit and the credit are as one to him and me!

'Twas the random runes I wrote
At the bottom of the note
(Wrote and freely
Gave to Greeley),
In the middle of the night,
In the mellow, moonless night,
When the stars were out of sight,
When my pulses, like a knell,
(Israfel!)
Danced with dim and dying fays
O'er the ruins of my days,
O'er the dimeless, timeless days,
When the fifty, drawn at thirty,
Seeming thrifty, yet the dirty
Lucre of the market, was the most that I could raise!

Fiends controlled it,
(Let him hold it!)
Devils held for me the inkstand and the pen;
Now the days of grace are o'er,
(Ah, Lenore!)
I am but as other men:
What is time, time, time,
To my rare and runic rhyme,
To my random, reeling rhyme,
By the sands along the shore,
Where the tempest whispers, "Pay him!" and I answer,
"Nevermore!"

GALAHAD. What do you mean by the reference to Greeley?

ZOÏLUS. I thought everybody had heard that Greeley's only autograph of Poe was a signature to a promissory note for fifty dollars. He offers to sell it for half the money. Now, I don't mean to be wicked, and to do nothing with the dead except bone 'em, but when such a cue pops into one's mind, what is one to do?

THE ANCIENT. Oh, I think you're still within decent limits! There was a congenital twist about poor Poe. We can't entirely condone his faults, yet we stretch our charity so as to cover as much as possible. His poetry has a hectic flush, a strange, fascinating, narcotic quality, which belongs to him alone. Baudelaire and Swinburne after him have been trying to surpass him by increasing the dose; but his Muse is the natural Pythia, inheriting her convulsions, while they eat all sorts of insane roots to produce theirs.

GALAHAD (*eagerly*). Did you ever know him?

THE ANCIENT. I met him two or three times, heard him lecture once (his enunciation was exquisite), and saw him now and then in Broadway,—enough to satisfy me that there were two men in him: one, a refined gentleman, an aspiring soul, an artist among those who had little sense of literary art; the other——

ZOÏLUS. Go on!

THE ANCIENT. "Built his nest with the birds of Night." No more of that! Now let us all invoke the demigod, Browning.

GALAHAD. It will be a task.

ZOÏLUS. I don't think so; it's even simpler than what we've done. Why, Browning's manner is as distinctly his own as Carlyle's, and sometimes as wilfully artificial. In fact, he is so peculiarly himself that no younger poet has dared to imitate his fashion of speech, although many a one tries to follow him in the choice and treatment of subjects. Browning is the most dramatic of poets since Shakespeare; don't you think so, Ancient?

THE ANCIENT. In manner and language, perhaps. I should prefer to call him a psychologist. His subtile studies of all varieties of character are wonderful, if you look at the substance only; but every one of them, from first to last, speaks with the voice of Browning. Take *The Ring and the Book* for instance,—and I consider it one of the most original and excellent poems in the English language,—and in each of the twelve divisions you will find exactly the same interruptions, parentheses, ellipses, the same coinage of illustration and play of recondite hints under what is expressed. I should guess that he writes very rapidly, and concerns himself little with any objective theories of art. You ought to copy his manner easily enough.

ZOÏLUS. I can. I have caught the idea already.

(He takes a pencil and writes rapidly. GALAHAD *and* THE GANNET *also begin to write, but slowly.)*

THE CHORUS *(to* THE ANCIENT). Why don't you begin?

THE ANCIENT. I was deliberating; what a range of forms there is! He is as inexhaustible as Raphael, and he always expresses the same sense of satisfaction in his work. Well, anything will do for a subject. *(Writes.)*

ZOÏLUS *(after a few minutes).* Hearken! I must read at once, or I shall go on writing forever; it bewilders me. *(Reads.)*

> Who *wills,* may hear Sordello's story told
> By Robert Browning: warm? (you ask) or cold?
> But just so much as seemeth to enhance—
> The start being granted, onward goes the dance
> To its own music—the poet's inward sense;
> So, by its verity . . . nay, no pretense

Avails your self-created bards, and thus
By just the chance of half a hair to us,
If understood . . . but what the odds to you,
Who, with no obligations to pursue
Scant tracks of thought, if such, indeed, there be
In this one poem,—stay, my friend, and see
Whether you note that creamy tint of flesh,
Softer than bivalve pink, impearled and fresh,
Just where the small o' the back goes curving down
To orbic muscles . . . ha! that sidelong frown
Pursing the eye, and folded, deeply cleft
I' the nostril's edge, as though contempt were left
Just o'er the line that bounds indifference. . . .
But here's the test of any closer sense
(You follow me?) such as I started with;
And there be minds that seek the very pith,
Crowd close, bore deep, push far, and reach the light
Through league-long tunnels——

GALAHAD (*interrupting*). But that *is Sordello* you're reading!

ZOÏLUS. Yes, mine. I am one of the few who have bored their way through that amazing work. Browning's *Sordello* (if you ever read it, you will remember) begins with something about "Pentapolin o' the Naked Arm." It is not any particular passage, but the manner of the whole poem which I've tried to reproduce; a little exaggerated, to be sure, but not much. Now, I call this perplexity, not profundity. Wasn't it the Swedish poet, Tegner, who said, "The obscurely uttered is the obscurely thought"?

THE ANCIENT. Yes; and it is true in regard to poetry, however the case may be with metaphysics. But we have a right to be vexed with Browning, when, in the dedicatory letter to the new edition of *Sordello,* he says that he had taken pains to make the work something "which the many *might,* instead of what the few *must,* like," but, after all, did not choose to publish the revised copy. There is a touch of arrogance in this expression which I should rather not have encountered. The "*must*" which he flings at the few is far more offensive than utter indifference to all readers would have been; and not even those few can make us accept

Sordello. However, *multum creavit* is as good a plea as *multum dilexit.* Browning has a royal brain, and we owe him too much to bear malice against him. Only we must not encourage our masters in absolute rule, or they will become tyrants.

ZOÏLUS. I don't acknowledge any masters!

THE ANCIENT. We all know that. Now, Galahad, what have you done?

GALAHAD *(reads):*

BY THE SEA

(*Mutatis mutandis*)

I

Is it life or is it death?
A whiff of the cool salt scum,
As the whole sea puffed its breath
Against you,—blind and dumb,
This way it answereth.

II

Nearer the sands it shows
Spotted and leprous tints;
But stay! yon fisher knows
Rock-tokens, which evince
How high the tide arose.

III

How high? In you and me
'Twas falling then, I think;
Open your heart's eyes, see,
From just so slight a chink
The chasm that now must be.

IV

You sighed and shivered then,
Blue ecstasies of June
Around you, shouts of fishermen,
Sharp wings of sea-gulls, soon
To dip—the clock struck ten!

V

Was it the cup too full
  To carry it you grew
Too faint, the wine's hue dull,
  (Dulness, misjudged untrue!)
Love's flower unfit to cull?

VI

You should have held me fast
  One moment, stopped my pace,
Crushed down the feeble, vast
  Suggestions of embrace,
And so be crowned at last.

VII

But now! . . . Bare-legged and brown
  Bait-diggers delve the sand,
Tramp i' the sunshine down
  Burnt-ochre vestured land,
And yonder stares the town.

VIII

A heron screams! I shut
  This book of scurf and scum,
Its final page uncut;
  The sea-beast, blind, and dumb,
Done with his bellowing? All but!

THE GANNET. It seems we have all hit upon the obvious characteristics, especially those which are most confusing. There is something very like that in the *Dramatis Personæ*, or there seems to be. Now, I wonder how my attempt will strike you? *(Reads.)*

ANGELO ORDERS HIS DINNER

I Angelo, obese, black-garmented,
Respectable, much in demand, well fed
With mine own larder's dainties,—where, indeed,
Such cakes of myrrh or fine alyssum seed,
Thin as a mallow-leaf, embrowned o' the top,
Which, cracking, lets the ropy, trickling drop

Of sweetness touch your tongue, or potted nests
Which my recondite recipe invests
With cold, conglomerate tidbits—ah, the bill!
(You say) but given it were mine to fill
My chests, the case so put were yours, we'll say
(This counter, here, your post, as mine, today),
And you've an eye to luxuries, what harm
In smoothing down your palate with the charm
Yourself concocted? There we issue take;
And see! as thus across the rim I break
This puffy paunch of glazed embroidered cake,
So breaks, through use, the lust of watering chaps
And craveth plainness: do I so? Perhaps;
But that's my secret. Find me such a man
As Lippo yonder, built upon the plan
Of heavy storage, double-naveled, fat
From his own giblets' oils, an Ararat
Uplift o'er water, sucking rosy draughts
From Noah's vineyard . . . crisp, enticing wafts
Yon kitchen now emits, which to your sense
Somewhat abate the fear of old events,
Qualms to the stomach——I, you see, am slow
Unnecessary duties to forego——
You understand? A venison haunch, *haut goût,*
Ducks that in Cimbrian olives mildly stew,
And sprigs of anise, might one's teeth provoke
To taste, and so we wear the complex yoke
Just as it suits——my liking, I confess,
More to receive, and to partake no less,
Still more obese, while through thick adipose
Sensation shoots, from testing tongue to toes
Far-off, dim-conscious, at the body's verge
Where the froth-whispers of its waves emerge
On the untasting sand. Stay, now! a seat
Is bare: I, Angelo, will sit and eat.

THE CHORUS. There's no mistaking any of them!

THE ANCIENT. And yet what a wealth of forms and moods there is left! You have only touched the poet on two or three of his shifting sides. Whoever should hear these imitations first, and then take up the original works, would recognize certain fashions here and there, but he would be

wholly unprepared for the special best qualities of Browning.

THE CHORUS. How, then, have *you* fared?

THE ANCIENT. I'm afraid I've violated the very law I laid down at the beginning. But I took the first notion that came into my head, and I could not possibly make it either all imitation or all burlesque. However, hear, and then punish me as you like! *(Reads.)*

ON THE TRACK

Where the crags are close, and the railway-curve
Begins to swerve
From its straight-shot course i' the level plain
To the hills again,
At the end of the twilight, when you mark
The denser dark

Blown by the wind from the heights, that make
A cold, coiled snake
Round the shuddering world, as a Midgards-orm-
like, sinuous form,—
With scant-cut hosen, jacket in hands,
The small boy stands.

Clipt by the iron ways, shiny and straight,
You see him wait,
'Twixt the coming thunder and the rock,
To fend the shock,
As a mite should stay, with its wiggling force,
A planet's course.

Even as he dances, leaps, and stoops,
The black train swoops
Up from the level: wave jacket, cry!
Must all then die?
Sweating, the small boy smiles again;
He has stopped the train!

GALAHAD. Well, that somehow suggests to me two poems: his *Love among the Ruins,* and the *Incident of the French Camp,* yet it is not an imitation of either. I should only apply to it the same criticism as to my own,—that it gives no hint of Browning's subtile and ingenious way of dealing

with the simplest subjects. He seems always to seek some other than the ordinary and natural point of view. I believe he could change *Mother Hubbard* and *Kits, Cats, Sacks, and Wives* into profound psychological poems.

THE ANCIENT. Now, why didn't you say that before we began? I might have made, at least, a more grotesque failure. But, O Gambrinus! our glasses have been empty this hour. Ring for the waiter, Galahad; let us refresh our wearied virtue, and depart!

OMNES *(touching glasses)*. To be continued!

[*Exeunt.*

Night The Second

THE friends came together again in the Lions' Den a little earlier than their wont; but they did not immediately take up the chief diversion of the evening. In intellectual, as in physical acrobatics, the joints must be gradually made flexible, and the muscles warm and elastic, by lighter feats; so the conversation began as mere skylarking and mutual chaffing, as empty and evanescent, when you attempt to catch it, as the foam-ripples on a swift stream. But Galahad had something on his mind; he had again read portions of the *Earthly Paradise,* and insisted that the atmosphere of the poems was not gray and overcast, but charged with a golden, luminous mist, like that of the Indian summer. Finally, he asked the Ancient:

"Granting the force of your impression, might not much of it come from some want of harmony between your mood or temper of mind and the author's? In that case, it would not be abstractly just."

THE ANCIENT. I don't think that we often can be "abstractly just" towards contemporary poets; we either exalt or abase them too much. For we and they breathe either the same or opposite currents in the intellectual atmosphere of the time, and there can be no impartial estimate until those winds have blown over. This is precisely the reason why you sometimes think me indifferent, when I am only trying to shove myself as far off as the next generation; at least, to get a

little outside of the fashions and whims and prejudices of this day. American authors, and also their publishers, are often charged with an overconcern for the opinion of the English literary journals. I think their interest quite natural——

ZOÏLUS *(with energy)*. Now, you surely are not going to justify that sycophantic respect for the judgment of men who know so much less than we do of our own literature?

THE ANCIENT. I condemn *all* sycophancy, even to the great, triumphant, overwhelming American spirit! But, until we have literary criticism of a more purely objective character in this country,—until our critics learn to separate their personal tastes and theories from their estimate of the executive and artistic quality of the author; or, which amounts to the same thing, to set this quality, this creative principle, higher than the range of themes and opinions,—the author will look to the judgment of critics, whose distance and whose very want of acquaintance with our prejudices and passions assure him of a certain amount of impartiality. The feeling is reciprocal; I venture to say that an intelligent American criticism has more weight with an English author than that of one of his own Reviews.

ZOÏLUS. Do you mean to say that we have *no* genuine criticism?

THE ANCIENT. By no means; we have some that is admirable. But it is only recognized at its true value by a very small class; the great reading public is blissfully ignorant of its existence. It adds to the confusion that many of our writers have no definite ideas of literary excellence apart from the effect which immediately follows their work; and readers are thus actually misled by those who should guide them. Why, a year ago, the most popular book in the whole country was one which does not even belong to literature; and the most popular poem of late years was written, not from a poetic, but from a high moral, inspiration! Somebody must set up a true aesthetic standard; it is high time this were done, and a better criticism must be the first step.

THE GANNET. Why don't you undertake it yourself?

THE ANCIENT. I'm too fond of comfort. Think what a hor-

net's nest I should thrust my hand into! Moreover, I doubt whether one could force such interests beyond their natural growth; we are still suffering from the intellectual demoralization which the war left behind it. But where's the hat? We are spoiling ourselves by all this serious prose. Let us throw in a few more names, and try our luck again.

(They draw the lots as before.)

THE GANNET. John Keats! How shall I wear his mantle?

ZOÏLUS. I'm crushed, buried under an avalanche of—well, not much, after all. Don't ask me who it is, until I try my hand. You would confuse me with your laughter.

THE ANCIENT. I shall keep mine specially for you, Zoïlus.

GALAHAD. I have drawn one of the names I wrote myself; but you have already so demoralized me, that I will try to parody him as heartily as if I didn't like his poetry.

THE ANCIENT. You are getting on. But I think the Gannet ought to draw another name; it is best not to go back of our own day and generation. I propose that we limit ourselves to the poets who stand nearer to our own minds, under whom, or beside whom, or above whom (as each chooses to estimate himself), we have grown and are now growing. The farther we withdraw from this atmosphere, the more artificial must our imitations be.

THE GANNET. Let it pass this once, I pray thee, for I have caught my idea! But, even taking your limitation, who is nearer us than Keats? Not alone in his own person, though there he stands among us; he is in Tennyson, in Morris, in Swinburne, and, more remotely, in the earlier poems of Browning and Lowell, besides a host of small rhymers. He still approaches us, while Shelley and Byron withdraw. I think it's a fair exception; and if you won't admit it, I'll take the sense of the company.

OMNES. Go on!

(All write busily for fifteen minutes, except THE ANCIENT, *who talks in a lower tone to* THE CHORUS.)

THE GANNET *(looking up)*. Zoïlus, you were ready first.

ZOÏLUS. Could you guess whom I represent?

THE GANNET. Tupper?

ZOÏLUS. He? He is his own best parody. No; it is a lyrical

inanity, which once was tolerably famous. The Ancient's rule as to what is properly parodiable doesn't apply here; for it is neither excellent nor imbecile. I think I had the right to reject the name, but I have tried to see whether a respectable jingle of words, expressing ordinary and highly proper feelings, can be so imitated as to be recognized. Here it is. *(Reads.)*

OBITUARY

ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. ELIJAH W. BATEY

Ay, bear him to his sainted rest,
  Ye mourners, but be calm!
Instead of dirge and sable crest,
  Raise ye thanksgiving psalm!
For he was old and full of years,
  The grandsire of your souls;
Then check ye now your heaving tears,
  And quench the sigh that rolls!

Ye heard him from yon pulpit preach,
  For sixty years and more,
Still battering with unwearied speech
  The ceiling, pews, and floor;
As, hour by hour, his periods fell,
  Your pious hopes arose,
And each one murmured, "All is well,"
  Long ere the sermon's close.

Think ye the voice that spake so long
  Can anywhere be dumb?
Before him went a goodly throng,
  And wait for him to come.
He preaches still, in other spheres,
  To saved and patient souls;
Then, mourners, check your heaving tears,
  And quench the sigh that rolls!

OMNES *(shouting)*. Mrs. Sigourney!

ZOÏLUS. I *have* succeeded, then! But, oh! my friends, is the success a thing over which I should rejoice? Do not, I beg of you, do not congratulate me!

GALAHAD. Come, now, don't abuse good old Mother Sigourney! For a long time she was almost our only woman-poet; and I insist that she was not a mere echo of Felicia Hemans.

ZOÏLUS *(ironically)*. Of course not! None but herself could ever have written that exquisite original poem, *On Finding a Shred of Linen*. One passage I can never forget:

> Methinks I scan
> Some idiosyncrasy, which marks thee out
> A defunct pillow-case.

GALAHAD. You are incorrigible; but we wait for the Gannet and the idea he has caught.

THE GANNET. It was better in anticipation than it seems after execution. However, Keats is too dainty a spirit to be possessed in a few minutes. *(Reads.)*

ODE ON A JAR OF PICKLES

I

A sweet, acidulous, down-reaching thrill
  Pervades my sense; I seem to see or hear
The lushy garden-grounds of Greenwich Hill
  In autumn, when the crispy leaves are sere;
And odors haunt me of remotest spice
  From the Levant or musky-aired Cathay,
Or from the saffron-fields of Jericho,
    Where everything is nice;
  The more I sniff, the more I swoon away,
And what else mortal palate craves, forego.

II

Odors unsmelled are keen, but those I smell
  Are keener; wherefore let me sniff again!
Enticing walnuts, I have known ye well
  In youth, when pickles were a passing pain;
Unwitting youth, that craves the candy stem,
  And sugar-plums to olives doth prefer,
And even licks the pots of marmalade
    When sweetness clings to them;
  But now I dream of ambergris and myrrh,
Tasting these walnuts in the poplar shade.

III

Lo! hoarded coolness in the heart of noon,
  Plucked with its dew, the cucumber is here,
As to the Dryad's parching lips a boon,
  And crescent bean-pods, unto Bacchus dear;
And, last of all, the pepper's pungent globe,
  The scarlet dwelling of the sylph of fire,
Provoking purple draughts; and, surfeited,
    I cast my trailing robe
  O'er my pale feet, touch up my tuneless lyre,
And twist the Delphic wreath to suit my head.

IV

Here shall my tongue in other wise be soured
  Than fretful men's in parched and palsied days;
And, by the mid-May's dusky leaves embowered,
  Forget the fruitful blame, the scanty praise.
No sweets to them who sweet themselves were born,
  Whose natures ooze with lucent saccharine;
Who, with sad repetition soothly cloyed,
    The lemon-tinted morn
  Enjoy, and for acetic darkness pine:
Wake I, or sleep? The pickle-jar is void.

ZOÏLUS. Not to be mistaken; but you have almost stepped over the bounds of our plan. Those two odes of Keats are too immediately suggested, though I find that only two lines are actually parodied. I agree with the Ancient; let us stick to the authors of our own day! Galahad, you look mysterious; are we to guess your singer from the echo?

GALAHAD. Are you all ready to hear me chant, in rare and rhythmic redundancy, the viciousness of virtue?

THE CHORUS. O Swinburne! chant away!

GALAHAD *(reads)*:

THE LAY OF MACARONI

As a wave that steals when the winds are stormy
  From creek to cove of the curving shore,
Buffeted, blown, and broken before me,
  Scattered and spread to its sunlit core;

As a dove that dips in the dark of maples
To sip the sweetness of shelter and shade,
I kneel in thy nimbus, O noon of Naples,
I bathe in thine beauty, by thee embayed!

What is it ails me that I should sing of her?
The queen of the flashes and flames that were!
Yea, I have felt the shuddering sting of her,
The flower-sweet throat and the hands of her!
I have swayed and sung to the sound of her psalters,
I have danced her dances of dizzy delight,
I have hallowed mine hair to the horns of her altars,
Between the nightingale's song and the night!

What is it, Queen, that now I should do for thee?
What is it now I should ask at thine hands?
Blow of the trumpets thine children once blew for thee?
Break from thine feet and thine bosom the bands?
Nay, as sweet as the songs of Leone Leoni,
And gay as her garments of gem-sprinkled gold,
She gives me mellifluous, mild macaroni,
The choice of her children when cheeses are old!

And over me hover, as if by the wings of it,
Frayed in the furnace by flame that is fleet,
The curious coils and the strenuous strings of it,
Dropping, diminishing down, as I eat;
Lo! and the beautiful Queen, as she brings of it,
Lifts me the links of the limitless chain,
Bidding mine mouth chant the splendidest things of it,
Out of the wealth of my wonderful brain!

Behold! I have done it: my stomach is smitten
With sweets of the surfeit her hands have unrolled.
Italia, mine cheeks with thine kisses are bitten:
I am broken with beauty, stabbed, slaughtered, and sold!
No man of thine millions is more macaronied,
Save mighty Mazzini, than musical Me:
The souls of the Ages shall stand as astonished,
And faint in the flame I am fanning for thee!

THE ANCIENT *(laughing)*. O Galahad, I can fancy your later remorse. It is not a year since you were absolutely Swinburne-mad, and I hardly dared, in your presence, to

object even to *Anactoria* and *Dolores*. I *would not* encourage you, then, for I saw you were carried away by the wild rush of the rhythm, and the sparkle of epithets which were partly new and seemed wholly splendid; but now I will confess to you that as a purely rhythmical genius I look on Swinburne as a phenomenon in literature.

GALAHAD *(eagerly)*. Then you admit that he is great?

THE ANCIENT. Not as you mean. I have been waiting for his ferment to settle, as in the case of Keats and Shelley; but there are no signs of it in his last volume. How splendidly the mind of Keats precipitated its crudity and redundancy, and clarified into the pure wine of *Hyperion!* In Shelley's case the process was slower, but it was steadily going on; you will find the same thing in Schiller, in Dryden, and many other poets, therefore I mean to reserve my judgment in Swinburne's case, and wait, at least until his next work is published. Meanwhile, I grant that he has enriched our English lyric poetry with some new and admirable forms.

THE GANNET. He has certainly made a "sensation" in the literary world; does that indicate nothing?

THE ANCIENT. That depends. I declare it seems to me as if the general taste were not quite healthy. To a very large class reading has become a form of lazy luxury, and such readers are not satisfied without a new great poet every four or five years. Then, too, there has been an amazing deal of trash written about the *coming* authors,—what they should be, how they must write, and the like; and so those luxurious readers are all the time believing they have discovered one of the tribe. Why, let a man take a thought as old as Confucius, and put it into some strange, jerky, convulsed form, and you will immediately hear the cry, "How wonderful! how original!" You all remember the case of Alexander Smith; it seems incredible, now, that the simulated passion and forced sentiment of his *Life-Drama* should have been accepted as real, yet, because of this book, he was hailed as a second Shakespeare. This hunger of the luxurious reader for new flavors is a dangerous thing for young poets.

ZOÏLUS. I almost think I hear my own voice. We don't often agree so thoroughly.

THE ANCIENT. So much the better. I wonder if you'll be as well satisfied with the task I have in store for you; here is the name. *(Giving him the slip of paper.)*

ZOÏLUS. Emerson! I think I can guess why.

THE ANCIENT. Yes, I remember what you wrote when *Brahma* was first published, and what you said to Galahad the other evening. I confess I was amazed, at the time, that the newspapers should so innocently betray their ignorance. There was a universal cry of "incomprehensible!" when the meaning of the poem was perfectly plain. In fact, there are few authors so transparently clear, barring a few idiosyncrasies of expression, which one soon learns, as just Emerson.

ZOÏLUS. Then explain to me those lines from *Alphonso of Castile*:

> I fear you then, celestial fellows!
> Fits not to be overzealous;
> Steads not to work on the clean jump,
> And wine and brains perpetual pump!

THE ANCIENT. That is simply baldness of language (which Emerson sometimes mistakes for humor), not obscurity. I will not explain it! Read the whole poem over again, and I'm sure you will not need to ask me. But now, to your work! Who will draw again?

THE GANNET *(drawing)*. Ha! A friend, this time; and I wish he were here with us. Nobody would take more kindly to our fun than he.

GALAHAD. I shall try no more tonight. My imitation of Swinburne has exhausted me. I felt, while writing, as Zoïlus did when he was imitating Browning,—as if I could have gone on and on forever! Really there is some sort of possession or demoniac influence in these experiments. They fascinate me, and yet I feel as if a spirit foreign to my own had seized me.

THE ANCIENT. Take another cigar! I wish we had the Meleager, or the Farnese torso, here; five minutes of either would surround you with a different atmosphere. I know precisely how it affects you. Thirty years ago—O Tempus Edax, must I say *thirty*?—when I dreamed hot dreams of fame, and walked the streets in a mild delirium, pondering

over the great and godlike powers pent within me, I had the same chills and fevers. I'm not laughing at you, my dear Galahad; God forbid! I only pray that there may be more vitality in the seeds which your dreams cover than in mine. Waiter! Our glasses are empty.

(ZOÏLUS *and* THE GANNET *continue to write; meantime, fresh glasses of beer are brought, and there is a brief silence.)*

ZOÏLUS. I suspect the Ancient will want to knock me on the head for this. *(Reads.)*

ALL OR NOTHING

Whoso answers my questions
  Knoweth more than me;
I hunger is but knowledge
  In a less degree:
Prophet, priest, and poet
  Oft prevaricate,
And the surest sentence
  Hath the greatest weight.

When upon my gaiters
  Drops the morning dew,
Somewhat of Life's riddle
  Soaks my spirit through.
I am buskined by the goddess
  Of Monadnock's crest,
And my wings extended
  Touch the East and West.

Or ever coal was hardened
  In the cells of earth,
Or flowed the founts of Bourbon,
  Lo! I had my birth.
I am crowned coeval
  With the Saurian eggs,
And my fancy firmly
  Stands on its own legs.

Wouldst thou know the secret
  Of the barberry-bush,
Catch the slippery whistle
  Of the moulting thrush.

Dance upon the mushrooms,
Dive beneath the sea,
Or anything else remarkable,
Thou must follow me!

THE ANCIENT. Well, you have read somewhat more than I imagined, Zoïlus. This is a fair imitation of the manner of some of Emerson's earlier poems; but you may take heart, Galahad, if you fear the power of association, for not one of the inimitable, imperishable passages has been suggested.

ZOÏLUS. Now, seriously, do you mean to say that there are such?

THE ANCIENT.

Still on the seeds of all he made
The rose of beauty burns;
Through times that wear, the forms that fade,
Immortal youth returns.

GALAHAD (*drawing a long breath*). How beautiful!

THE ANCIENT.

Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of Beauty there,
And the ripples in rhyme the oar forsake.

ZOÏLUS. *Peccavi!*

THE ANCIENT. Then I will lock up my half-unbolted thunders. The Master does not need my vindication; and I should do him a poor service by trying to drive anyone towards the recognition of his deserts, when all who think for themselves must come, sooner or later, to know him.

THE GANNET. But I never saw those stanzas!

THE ANCIENT. Yet they are printed for all the world. The secret is simply this: Emerson cut from his limbs, long ago, the old theological fetters, as every independent thinker *must*. Those who run along in the ruts made by their grandfathers, unable to appreciate the exquisite fiber of his intellect, the broad and grand eclecticism of his taste, suspect a heresy in every sentence which they are too coarsely textured to understand. No man of our day habitually lives in a purer region of thought.

ZOÏLUS *(looking at his watch)*. Now, we must know what the Gannet has been doing.

THE GANNET. My name is Edmund Clarence Stedman.

THE ANCIENT. One of the younger tribes, with some of whom I'm not so familiar. I have caught many of his "fugitives" in their flight, finding them of a kind sure to stay where they touch, instead of being blown quietly on until they pass forever out of the world. There's a fine masculine vibration in his lines: he sings in the major key, which young poets generally do not. I'd be willing to bet that your imitation has a sportive, not a solemn, character.

THE GANNET. Why, in spite of your disclaimer, you're not so ignorant. Your guess is right: therefore, listen! *(Reads.)*

THE GOLD-ROOM

AN IDYL

They come from mansions far up-town,
  And from their country villas,
And some Charybdis' gulf whirls down,
  And some fall into Scylla's.
Lo! here young Paris climbs the stairs
  As if their slope were Ida's,
And here his golden touch declares
  The ass's ears of Midas.

It seems a Bacchic, brawling rout
  To every business-scorner,
But such, methinks, must be an "out,"
  Or has not made a "corner."
In me the rhythmic gush revives;
  I feel a classic passion:
We, also, lead Arcadian lives,
  Though in a Broad-Street fashion.

Old Battos, here, 's a leading bull,
  And Diomed a bear is,
And near them, shearing bankers' wool,
  Strides the Tiltonian Charis;
And Atys, there, has gone to smash,
  His every bill protested,
While Cleon's eyes with comfort flash,—
  I have his funds invested!

Mehercle! 'tis the same thing yet
As in the days of Pindar:
The Isthmian race, the dust and sweat,
The prize—why, what's to hinder?
And if I twang my lyre at times,
They did so then, I reckon;
That man's the best at modern rhymes
Whom you can draw a cheek on!

OMNES (*clapping their hands*). Bravo!

THE ANCIENT. To think of Stedman's being the only voice in our literature which comes out of the business crowds of the whole country! The man who can spend his days in a purely material atmosphere, and sing at night, has genuine pluck in him. It's enough to make any green poet, who wails about the cruel world, and the harsh realities of life, and the beautiful realm of the ideal, ashamed of himself!

GALAHAD (*annoyed*). You don't mean as much as you say! Every poet, green or not, must have faith in an ideal.

THE ANCIENT (*gently*). Ay, but if it make him

Pamper the coward heart
With feelings all too delicate for use,

as Coleridge translates Schiller, it is a deceit and a snare to him. Your Shakespeare, Dante, Cervantes, Goethe were made of different clay.

ZOÏLUS. Here's to their sublime Shades, wherever they may be wandering! Out, to the last drop! We are in the small hours; the *Donnerwetters!* are all silent in the saloon, and Karl Schäfer is probably snoring over his counter, waiting for us. Come!

[*Exeunt.*

Night The Third

WHEN the sportive tilting with light lances, the reciprocal, good-natured chaffing, in which the members of the Club were wont to indulge on coming together, had subsided, the conversation took the following turn:

ZOÏLUS (*to* THE ANCIENT). I've been considering what you said the last time, about the prevalent literary taste not

being entirely healthy. How far would you apply that verdict to the authors? Their relative popularity is your only gauge for the character of the readers.

THE ANCIENT. I don't think I had any individual authors in my mind, at the time. But a great deal of all modern literature is ephemeral, created from day to day, to supply a certain definite demand, and sinking out of sight, sooner or later. Nine readers out of ten make no distinction between this ephemeral material and the few works which really belong to our literary history; that is, they confound the transitory with the permanent authors.

ZOÏLUS. So far, I agree with you. Now the inference would be that those nine readers, who lack the finer judgment, and who, of course, represent the prevalent taste, are responsible for the success of the transitory authors. But they do not make the latter; they do not even dictate the character of their works: hence the school, no matter how temporary it may be, must be founded by the authors,—which obliges us to admit a certain degree of originality and power.

THE ANCIENT. I see where you are going; let us have no reasoning in a ring, I pray you! If you admit the two classes of authors, it is enough. I have already seen one generation forgotten, and I fancy I now see the second slipping the cables of their craft, and making ready to drop downstream with the ebb tide. I remember, for instance, that in 1840 there were many well-known and tolerably popular names, which are never heard now. Byron and Mrs. Hemans then gave the tone to poetry, and Scott, Bulwer, and Cooper to fiction. Willis was, by all odds, the most popular American author; Longfellow was not known by the multitude, Emerson was only "that Transcendentalist," and Whittier "that Abolitionist." We young men used to talk of Rufus Dawes, and Charles Fenno Hoffman, and Grenville Mellen, and Brainard, and Sands. Why, we even had a hope that something wonderful would come out of Chivers!

OMNES. Chivers?

THE ANCIENT. Have you never heard of Chivers? He is a phenomenon!

THE GANNET. Doesn't Poe speak of him somewhere?

THE ANCIENT. To be sure. Poe finished the ruin of him which Shelley began. Dr. Thomas Holley Chivers, of Georgia, author of *Virginalia, The Lost Pleiad, Facets of Diamond,* and *Eonchs of Ruby!*

ZOILUS. What! Come, now, this is only a *ben trovato.*

THE ANCIENT. Also of *Nacoochee, the Beautiful Star;* and there was still another volume,—six in all! The British Museum has the only complete set of his works. I speak the sober truth, Zoïlus; a friend of mine has three of the volumes, and I can show them to you. One of the finest things in modern poetry is in his *Apollo:*

Like cataracts of adamant, uplifted into mountains,
Making oceans metropolitan, for the splendor of the dawn!

ZOÏLUS. Incredible!

THE ANCIENT. I remember also a stanza of his *Rosalie Lee:*

Many mellow Cydonian suckets,
Sweet apples, anthosmial, divine,
From the ruby-rimmed beryline buckets,
Star-gemmed, lily-shaped, hyaline;
Like the sweet golden goblet found growing
On the wild emerald cucumber tree,
Rich, brilliant, like chrysoprase glowing,
Was my beautiful Rosalie Lee!

ZOÏLUS. Hold, hold! I can endure no more.

THE ANCIENT. You see what comes of a fashion in literature. There was many a youth in those days who made attempts just as idiotic, in the columns of country papers; and perhaps the most singular circumstance was that very few readers laughed at them. Why, they are expressions, epithets, images, which run all over the land, and sometimes last for a generation. I once discovered that with both the English and German poets of a hundred years ago, evening is always called *brown,* and morning either *rosy* or *purple.* Just now the fashion runs to jewelry; we have ruby lips, and topaz light, and sapphire seas, and diamond air. Mrs. Browning even says:

Her *cheek's pale opal* burnt with a red and restless spark!

What sort of a cheek must that be? Then we have such a wealth of gorgeous color as never was seen before,—no quiet half-tints, but pure pigments, laid on with a pallet knife. Really, I sometimes feel a distinct sense of fatigue at the base of the optic nerve, after reading a magazine story. The besetting sin of the popular—not the best—authors is the intense.

ZOÏLUS. Why do you call intensity of expression a sin?

THE ANCIENT. I mean intensity of *epithet:* the strongest expression is generally the briefest and barest. Take the old ballads of any people, and you will find few adjectives. The singer says: "He laughed; she wept." Perhaps the poet of a more civilized age might say: "He laughed in scorn; she turned away and shed tears of disappointment." But nowadays the ambitious young writer must produce something like this: "A hard, fiendish laugh, scornful and pitiless, forced its passage from his throat through the lips that curled in mockery of her appeal; she covered her despairing face, and a gust and whirlwind of sorrowing agony burst forth in her irresistible tears!"

OMNES *(clapping their hands).* Go on! Go on!

THE ANCIENT. It is enough of the Bowery for tonight.

GALAHAD. Oh, you forget the intenser life of our day! I see the exaggeration of which you speak, but I believe something of it comes from the struggle to express more. All our senses have grown keener, our natures respond more delicately, and to a greater range of influences, than those of the generations before us. There is a finer moral development; our aims in life have become spiritualized; we may have less power, less energy of genius, but we move towards higher and purer goals.

ZOÏLUS. The writers of Queen Anne's time might have compared themselves in the same way with their predecessors in Charles II's. What if your own poems should be considered coarse and immoral a hundred years hence?

GALAHAD *(bewildered).* What has that to do with the question?

THE ANCIENT. Only this; that there are eternal laws of

Art, to which the moral and spiritual aspirations of the author, which are generally relative to his own or the preceding age, must conform, if they would also become eternal.

THE GANNET. Very fine, indeed; but you are all forgetting our business.

ZOÏLUS. Let us first add a fresh supply of names.

THE GANNET. Write them yourself; we shall otherwise repeat.

(ZOÏLUS *writes a dozen or more slips, whereupon they draw.)*

GALAHAD. Dante Rossetti!

ZOÏLUS. I have Barry Cornwall.

THE GANNET. And I—Whittier.

OMNES. Whittier must not be parodied.

GALAHAD *(earnestly)*. Draw another name!

THE ANCIENT. Why?

GALAHAD. There is at once an evidence of what I said! Where are your jewelry and colors? On the other side, where will you find an intenser faith, a more ardent aspiration for truth and good? The moral and spiritual element is so predominant in him,—so wedded for time and eternity to his genius as a poet,—that you cannot imitate him without seeming to slight, or in some way offend, what should be as holy to us as to him!

THE ANCIENT *(laying his hand on* GALAHAD'S *shoulder)*. My dear boy, Whittier deserves all the love and reverence you are capable of giving him. He is just as fine an illustration of my side of the question: his poetic art has refined and harmonized that moral quality in his nature, which, many years ago, made his poetry seem partisan, and, therefore, not unmixed poetry. But the alloy (in a poetic sense only) has been melted out in the pure and steady flame of his intellect, and the preacher in him has now his rightful authority because he no longer governs the poet. As for those poems which exhale devotion and aspiration as naturally as a violet exhales odor, there is no danger of the Gannet imitating them; he has not the power even if he had the will. But Whittier has also written——

THE GANNET. Don't you see I'm hard at work? What do you mean by dictating what I may or may not do? I am already launched, and (*declaiming*) "I see no change; and, least of all, such change as you would give me!"

THE ANCIENT. I can't help you, Galahad; go on with your own work now. I have drawn one of the youngsters, this time, and mean to turn him over to you when you have slaughtered Rossetti.

GALAHAD. Who is he?

THE ANCIENT. A brother near your throne.

ZOÏLUS (*to* THE ANCIENT). I have done Barry Cornwall; it's an easy task. He is nearly always very brief. His are not even short swallow flights of song, but little hops from one twig to another. While Galahad and the Gannet are finishing theirs, repeat to me something more of Chivers!

THE ANCIENT. I can only recall fragments here and there. The refrain to a poem called *The Poet's Vocation,* in the *Eonchs of Ruby,* is:

> In the music of the morns,
> Blown through the Conchimarian horns,
> Down the dark vistas of the reboantic Norns,
> To the Genius of Eternity,
> Crying: "Come to me! Come to me!"

ZOÏLUS. Ye gods! It is amazing. Why can't you write a stanza in his manner?

THE ANCIENT (*smiling*). I think I can even equal him.

(*He takes a pencil and writes rapidly. Just as he finishes,* GALAHAD *and* THE GANNET *lay down their pencils and lean back in their seats.*)

THE CHORUS (*eagerly*). We must first hear the Ancient! He is a medium for the great Chivers.

THE ANCIENT. I have been merciful towards you. One stanza will suffice. (*Reads.*)

> Beloved of the wanderer's father
> That walks mid the agates of June,
> The wreaths of remorse that I gather
> Were torn from the turrets of Rune;

When the star-patterns broidered so brilliant
Shone forth from the diapered blue,
And the moon dropped her balsam scintilliant,
Soul-nectar for me and for you!

THE GANNET. Send for a physician; tie a wet towel around his head! A thousand years hence, when the human race comes back to polytheism, Chivers will be the god of all crack-brained authors.

THE ANCIENT. I recognize a fantastic infection. Come, Zoïlus, give me a tonic!

ZOÏLUS. Wine has become a very fashionable tonic, and that is just what I have put into Barry Cornwall's mouth. *(Reads.)*

SONG

Talk of dew on eglantine,—
Stuff! the poet's drink is wine.
Black as quaffed by old King Death.
That which biteth, maddeneth;
For my readers fain would see
What effect it has on me.

Nose may redden, head may swim,
Joints be loose in every limb,
And the golden rhymes I chant
Sheer away on wings aslant,
Whale may whistle, porpoise roll,
Yet I'll drain the gentle bowl!

Pleasure's dolphin gambols near;
Virtue's mackerel looks austere;
Duty's hippopotamus
Waddles forward, leaving us;
Joy, the sturgeon, leaps and soars,
While we coast the Teian shores!

THE ANCIENT. What a fearful Bacchanalian you have made of good and gentle Barry Cornwall! You must have been possessed by Poe's "Imp of the Perverse," to yoke his manner to such a subject. I was expecting to hear some-

thing of spring and clover and cowslips. Faith! I believe I could improvise an imitation. Wait a second! Now:

When spring returneth,
  And cowslips blow,
The milkmaid churneth
  Her creamy snow,
The mill-wheel spurneth
  The stream below;
The cherry-tree skippeth in earth and air,
The small bird calleth: beware, prepare!
And all is fair!

OMNES. Another stanza!

THE ANCIENT. Oh, you have but to turn things upside down, and there it is:

The cold wind bloweth
  O'er brake and burn,
The cream o'erfloweth
  The tilted churn,
The mill-wheel sloweth,
  And fails to turn;
The cherry-tree sheddeth her leaves in the fall,
The crow and the clamoring raven call,
And that is all!

But, seriously, Galahad, after what Zoïlus has done, I am a little afraid of the Gannet's work. Suppose he should make our beloved Whittier

Troll a careless tavern catch
Of Moll and Meg, and strange experiences
Unmeet for ladies?

GALAHAD (*earnestly*). Then I should withdraw from the Club.

THE GANNET. Prythee, peace, young hotspur! I'll agree to start with you for Massachusetts by tomorrow morning's express train, and lay before the poet what I've written. If he doesn't laugh heartily on reading it, I'll engage to come all the way back afoot.

THE ANCIENT. We can decide for him: read!

THE GANNET. It is a ballad of New England life which you shall hear. *(Reads.)*

THE BALLAD OF HIRAM HOVER

Where the Moosatockmaguntic
Pours its waters in the Skuntic,
Met, along the forest-side,
Hiram Hover, Huldah Hyde.

She, a maiden fair and dapper,
He, a red-haired, stalwart trapper,
Hunting beaver, mink, and skunk,
In the Woodlands of Squeedunk.

She, Pentucket's pensive daughter,
Walked beside the Skuntic water,
Gathering, in her apron wet,
Snakeroot, mint, and bouncing-bet.

"Why," he murmured, loath to leave her,
"Gather yarbs for chills and fever,
When a lovyer, bold and true,
Only waits to gather you?"

"Go," she answered, "I'm not hasty;
I prefer a man more tasty:
Leastways, one to please me well
Should not have a beasty smell."

"Haughty Huldah!" Hiram answered;
"Mind and heart alike are cancered:
Jest look here! these peltries give
Cash, wherefrom a pair may live.

"I, you think, am but a vagrant,
Trapping beasts by no means fragrant,
Yet—I'm sure it's worth a thank—
I've a handsome sum in bank."

Turned and vanished Hiram Hover;
And, before the year was over,
Huldah, with the yarbs she sold,
Bought a cape, against the cold.

Black and thick the furry cape was;
Of a stylish cut the shape was;
And the girls, in all the town,
Envied Huldah up and down.

Then at last one winter morning,
Hiram came without a warning:
"Either," said he, "you are blind,
Huldah, or you've changed your mind.

"Me you snub for trapping varmints,
Yet you take the skins for garments:
Since you wear the skunk and mink,
There's no harm in me, I think."

"Well," said she, "we will not quarrel,
Hiram: I accept the moral.
Now the fashion's so, I guess
I can't hardly do no less."

Thus the trouble all was over
Of the love of Hiram Hover;
Thus he made sweet Huldah Hyde
Huldah Hover, as his bride.

Love employs, with equal favor,
Things of good and evil savor;
That, which first appeared to part,
Warmed, at last, the maiden's heart.

Under one impartial banner,
Life, the hunter, Love, the tanner,
Draw, from every beast they snare,
Comfort for a wedded pair!

ZOÏLUS. The Gannet distances us all tonight. Even Galahad is laughing yet, and I saw, when the reading began, that he was resolved not to smile, if he could help it. What does our Ancient think?

THE ANCIENT. It does, certainly, suggest the style of some of Whittier's delightful ballads, only substituting a comical

for an earnest motive. Change that motive and a few expressions, and it would become a serious poem. The Gannet was lucky in striking the proper key at the start. And here, perhaps, is one result of our diversions, upon which we had not calculated, over and above the fun. I don't see why poets should not drill themselves in all that is technical, as well as painters, sculptors, opera singers, or even orators. All the faculties called into play to produce rhythm, harmony of words, richness of the poetical dialect, choice of keys and cadences, may be made nimbler, more active, and more obedient to command, by even mechanical practice. I never rightly believed in the peculiar solemnity of the poet's gift; every singer should have a gay, sportive side to his nature. I am sure the young Shakespeare would have heartily joined in what we are here doing; the young Goethe, we know, did many a similar thing. He was a capital *improvvisatore;* and who knows how much of his mastery over all forms of poetry may not have come from just such gymnastics?

GALAHAD. Might not an aptness in representing the manner of others—like that of an actor who assumes a different character every night—indicate some lack of original force?

THE ANCIENT. The comparison is deceptive. An actor's sole business is to assume other individualities. What we do is no more than every novelist does, in talking as a young girl, an old man, a saint, or a sinner. If anything of yourself is lost in the process, and you can't get it back again, why—let it go!

ZOÏLUS. You have it now, Galahad!

GALAHAD. Well, I'll cover my confusion by transferring myself into Dante Gabriel Rossetti. *(Reads.)*

CIMABUELLA

I

Fair-tinted cheeks, clear eyelids drawn
  In crescent curves above the light
Of eyes, whose dim, uncertain dawn
  Becomes not day: a forehead white
Beneath long yellow heaps of hair:
She is so strange she must be fair.

II

Had she sharp, slant-wise wings outspread,
She were an angel; but she stands
With flat dead gold behind her head,
And lilies in her long thin hands:
Her folded mantle, gathered in,
Falls to her feet as it were tin.

III

Her nose is keen as pointed flame;
Her crimson lips no thing express;
And never dread of saintly blame
Held down her heavy eyelashes:
To guess what she were thinking of
Precluded any meaner love.

IV

An azure carpet, fringed with gold,
Sprinkled with scarlet spots, I laid
Before her straight, cool feet unrolled:
But she nor sound nor movement made
(Albeit I heard a soft, shy smile,
Printing her neck a moment's while);

V

And I was shamed through all my mind
For that she spake not, neither kissed,
But stared right past me. Lo! behind
Me stood, in pink and amethyst,
Sword-girt and velvet-doubleted,
A tall, gaunt youth, with frowzy head,

VI

Wide nostrils in the air, dull eyes,
Thick lips that simpered, but, ah me!
I saw, with most forlorn surprise,
He was the Thirteenth Century,
I but the Nineteenth; then despair
Curdled beneath my curling hair.

VII

O, Love and Fate! How could she choose
My rounded outlines, broader brain,

And my resuscitated Muse?
  Some tears she shed, but whether pain
Or joy in him unlocked their source,
I could not fathom which, of course.

VIII

But I from missals, quaintly bound,
  With cither and with clavichord
Will sing her songs of sovran sound:
  Belike her pity will afford
Such faint return as suits a saint
So sweetly done in verse and paint.

THE GANNET. O Galahad! Who could have expected this of you?

GALAHAD. You know I like Rossetti's poems, but, really, I couldn't help it, after I once got under way.

THE GANNET. Rossetti is picturesque, whatever else he may not be. His poetry has a delicate flavor of its own, and that is much to me, in these days, when so many dishes seem to be cooked with the same sauce. A poet is welcome to go back to the thirteenth century, if he only fetches us pictures. Poetry belongs to luxurious living, as much as painting and music; hence we must value color, rhythmical effect, quaint and unexpected play of fancy, and every other quality that makes verse bright and sparkling. The theme is of less importance. Take, for instance, Victor Hugo's *Orientales*.

ZOÏLUS. Pray, let us not open that discussion again! You know, already, how far I go with you, and just where Galahad and the Ancient stand. We should rather confine ourselves directly to the authors we imitate. Now, I think Rossetti's book on the Early Italian Poets better than his own poems. Perhaps it was the attempt to reproduce those poets in English which has given the mediaeval coloring to his verse. We cannot undertake to say how much of the manner is natural, and how much assumed; for a thirteenth or even a second century nature may be born nowadays. But it is none the less out of harmony with our thought and feeling, and the encouragement of such a fashion in literature strikes me as being related to the Pre-Raphaelite hal-

lucination in art. I should like to have the Ancient's opinion on this point.

THE ANCIENT. Here is your other name, Galahad. *(Gives him a slip of paper.)* If there were not so much confusion of taste, Zoïlus,—such an uncertainty in regard to the unchanging standards of excellence, in literature and art,—I could answer you in a few words. We must judge these anachronistic developments (as they seem) by those which provoked them. A movement may be false in itself, yet made necessary by some antecedent illusion or inanity. If you want to leave port, almost any craft will answer. I might carry out the image, and add that we never can foresee what side-winds may come to force the vessel to some other shore than that for which she seems bound. I have carefully read Rossetti's book, as one of the many phenomena of the day. It seems to me that there is a genuine thread of native poetry in him, but so encumbered with the burden of color, sensuous expression, and mediaeval imagery and drapery, that it often is nearly lost. What I have heard of the author explains to me the existence of the volume; but its immediate popularity is something which I should not have anticipated.

GALAHAD. I have written.

THE GANNET. Already? Who was it, then?

GALAHAD. A personal friend, whose poems I know by heart,—Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Therefore, I couldn't well avoid violating our rule, for a special little rhyme popped into my head, and imitated myself. If Aldrich were not living in Boston, we should have him here with us tonight, and he would be quite ready to burlesque himself. *(Reads.)*

PALABRAS GRANDIOSAS

I lay i' the bosom of the sun,
Under the roses dappled and dun.
I thought of the Sultan Gingerbeer,
In his palace beside the Bendemeer,
With his Afghan guards and his eunuchs blind,
And the harem that stretched for a league behind.
The tulips bent i' the summer breeze,

Under the broad chrysanthemum-trees,
And the minstrel, playing his culverin,
Made for mine ears a merry din.
If I were the Sultan, and he were I,
Here i' the grass he should loafing lie,
And I should bestride my zebra steed,
And ride to the hunt of the centipede:
While the pet of the harem, Dandeline,
Should fill me a crystal bucket of wine,
And the kislar aga, Up-to-Snuff,
Should wipe my mouth when I sighed, "Enough!"
And the gay court-poet, Fearfulbore,
Should sit in the hall when the hunt was o'er,
And chant me songs of silvery tone,
Not from Hafiz, but—mine own!

Ah, wee sweet love, beside me here,
I am not the Sultan Gingerbeer,
Nor you the odalisque Dandeline,
Yet I am yourn, and you are mine!

THE ANCIENT. There's a delicate, elusive quality about Aldrich's short lyrics, which I should think very difficult to catch. I have an indistinct recollection of poor George Arnold writing something.

ZOÏLUS. It was all about a mistake Aldrich made, years ago, in the color of a crocus. He called it *red,* and there may be red crocuses for aught I know; but yellow or orange is the conventional color. Of course we didn't let the occasion slip; we were all unmerciful towards each other. I remember I wrote something like this:

I walked into the garden, ruffled with rain,
Through the blossoms of every hue;
And I saw the pink, with its yellow stain,
And the rose with its bud of blue.

George Arnold's lines were:

And all about the porphyry plates were strewn
The blue arbutus of the early June,
The crimson lemon and the purple yam,
And dainties brought from Seringapatam!

THE GANNET. They are better than yours. Well, I'm glad that Galahad has not confused our color, at least. I especially like Aldrich; for he is faithful to his talent, and gives us nothing that is not daintily polished and rounded. Some of his fragments remind me of Genoese filigree-work—there seems to be so much elaboration in a small compass; yet only sport, not labor, is suggested. He, also, has ceased to sing in the minor key; but I don't think he ever affected it much.

THE ANCIENT *(earnestly)*. I'm glad to hear it! O ye cheerful gods of all great poets, shall we never have an end of weeping and wailing and lamentation! Is the world nothing but a cavern of sorrow, and the individual life a couch of thorns? Must we have always bats, and never skylarks, in the air of poetry?

ZOÏLUS. Hear, hear! I have not seen the Ancient so roused this many a day.

THE ANCIENT. The truth always excites.

GALAHAD. Before you put on your hats, let us have one more "lager." *(The glasses are filled.)* Now, to the health of all our young authors!

THE GANNET. Here's to them heartily,—for that includes ourselves.

THE ANCIENT. As the youngest, I return thanks.

[*Exeunt.*

Night The Fourth

ALL the members of the club were assembled, but the Ancient had not yet made his appearance. He was dining that evening, as it happened, with a wealthy banker, and there was no possibility of omitting one of the seventeen courses, or escaping before the coffee and *liqueurs*. As the oldest of the members, the duties of chairman were always conferred on him whenever a decision became necessary, and all assumed, as a matter of course, that the Diversions should be suspended until his arrival. But the conversation, meanwhile, settled upon him as its subject. Zoïlus and one of the Chorus were not as old acquaintances as the Gannet and

Galahad, which circumstance led, after his nature had been genially discussed, to the following digression:

ZOÏLUS (*to* THE GANNET). I had not often met him familiarly, in this way, before. He is a good, mellow-natured companion, and not at all dogmatic, that is, in a direct way; but I can see the influence of his Boston associations. There is a great deal of external tact and propriety in that city. Now *our* impetuous, keen, incisive atmosphere——

THE GANNET (*interrupting*). Spare me the "incisive"! It has been overdone, as an effect, and will be the ruin of you yet. If I had as much faith as Galahad there, I should believe as the Ancient does. But, since you will have the "incisive," where can you find sentences more clearly cut—the very intaglio of style—than in Holmes?

ZOÏLUS (*angrily*). And do you remember what he wrote of our New York authors:

> Whose fame, beyond their own abode,
> Extends—for miles along the Harlem road?

THE GANNET. Yes, and don't you know who they were? Why, their fame doesn't reach up to Twenty-third Street now! It was a deliberate attempt, by a small clique, to manufacture the Great American Literature. The materials were selected in advance, the style and manner settled, and then the great authors went to work. Like the Chinese mechanics who copied a steamboat, the external imitation was perfect; but there were no inside works and it wouldn't move a paddle! When you speak of our legitimate authors, here in New York, what name first comes to your lips? Bryant, of course; and have you forgotten how Holmes celebrated him? and how his was the only garland of verse thrown upon Halleck's grave?

ZOÏLUS. Nevertheless, they systematically depreciate what we do; they are only kind and considerate towards one another. You remember Poe's experience?

THE ANCIENT (*entering the room*). Which one, pray?

ZOÏLUS. Of Boston. But they did not and have not put *him* down!

THE ANCIENT. Why, no; he put himself down that time:

I happened to be there, and I saw the performance. I guess that you and the Gannet have been repeating your usual tilt; why not say, as Goethe did of the comparisons made between himself and Schiller, "Instead of quarreling about which of us is the greater, people ought simply to be thankful for having us both"? Thirty or forty years ago, when Lowell and Whipple were boys, Longfellow and Holmes young authors, Emerson considered little better than daft, and Whittier almost outlawed on account of his anti-slavery opinions, the literary society here included Irving, Cooper, Bryant, Willis, and Halleck, then the foremost American authors. The chief literary periodicals were here and in Philadelphia; and Boston, although the average of intellectual culture was always higher there than elsewhere, occupied quite a secondary place. But I don't remember that there was ever any jealousy or rivalry; and I confess I can't understand the spirit which fosters such a feeling now.

Zoïlus. You have passed the age when you care for recognition.

The Ancient. Have I, indeed? Pray, when does that age cease? If I had a more general recognition at present—by which I mean the ascription to me of exactly the literary qualities which I think I possess—I should be stimulated to do more and possibly better work. I began authorship at a time when there was not much discrimination between varieties of literary talent, when such fearful stuff as *Agathé, a Necromant: in Three Chimæras,* by a man named Tasistro, was published in *Graham's Magazine,* and when a dentist in Rhode Island wrote a poem in heroic verse, called *The Dentiad.*

The Gannet. What was his name?

The Ancient. Solyman Brown. I must quote to you an exquisite passage:

> Whene'er along the ivory disks are seen
> The rapid traces of the dark gangrene,
> When caries come, with stealthy pace, to throw
> Corrosive ink-spots on those banks of snow,
> Brook no delay, ye trembling, suffering Fair,
> But fly for refuge to the dentist's care.

His practised hand, obedient to his will,
Employs the slender file with nicest skill;
Just sweeps the germin of disease away,
And stops the fearful progress of decay.

ZOÏLUS. The latest nursling of Darwin's *Botanic Garden!* It is not antithetical enough for Pope. Surely, that was not a popular poem?

THE ANCIENT. I was too young to know. I only mention it as one of the chaotic elements out of which has grown what little permanent literature we now have. Probably three-fourths of the writers then commencing their career might have developed some sound practical ability, with a little intelligent guidance; they were not strong enough to beat their own way out of the wilderness. When I look back upon the time, I can see the bones of immortal works bleaching on all sides.

THE GANNET. As ours will bleach for the young fellows who sit here in 1900! While you were speaking, the thought occurred to me that no young poet in England can possibly be as green at his entrance into literature as the most of us must inevitably be. I begin to see that a conventional standard is better than none; for if it does not guide, it provokes resistance; either way, therefore, the neophyte acquires a definite form and style.

THE ANCIENT. To that extent, I agree with you. But we also have a standard, only those who accept it are fewer, and so scattered over the whole country that their authority is not immediately felt. They distinguish between what is temporary and what is permanent, in spite of the general public. And this ought to be our great comfort, if we are in earnest, that no power on earth can keep alive a sensational reputation.

ZOÏLUS. How do you account for the popularity of such single poems as *The River of Time* (is that the title of it?), and *Beautiful Snow,* and *Rock Me to Sleep, Mother?* Why, hardly a week passes but I see a newspaper dispute about the authorship of one or the other of them! To me they are languishing sentiment, not poetry.

THE ANCIENT. "Sentiment" sufficiently accounts for their

popularity. Put some tender, thoroughly obvious sentiment into rhyme which sounds like the melody of a popular song, and it will go through hides which are impervious to the keenest arrows of the imagination. But how much more unfortunate for us if it were not so! This gives us just the fulcrum we need if our literature is ever to be an Archimedean lever. I find myself a great deal happier since I have set about discovering the reason of these manifestations of immature taste, instead of lamenting over them, or cursing them, as I once did.

ZOÏLUS *(ironically)*. Then I have not attained your higher standpoint?

THE GANNET *(offering him the hat)*. Here, pick out one of the caged birds, and make him sing! The prelude of chords and discords has lasted long enough; let the orchestra now fall into a lively melody.

ZOÏLUS. Ha! How shall I manage Bryant?

GALAHAD. Or I, Oliver Wendell Holmes?

THE GANNET. Or I, N. P. Willis?

GALAHAD. Let us either exchange or deal again!

THE ANCIENT. No! As chairman, I declare such a proposition out of order. You must not pick out those authors with whose manner you are most familiar, or whom you could most easily imitate. That would be no fair and equal test; and there must be a little emulation, to keep your faculties in nimble playing condition. I am as oddly tasked as either of you,—see, I have drawn Tennyson!—yet, for the sake of good example, I'll work with you this time. Let us surrender ourselves, like spiritual mediums, to the control of the first stray idea that enters our brains; anything whatever will do for a point to start from. I am curious to know what will come of it.

ZOÏLUS. So am I. Here goes. *(Writes.)*

THE GANNET. We must first have our glasses filled; Galahad, ring for the waiter!

(A silence of fifteen or twenty minutes follows. As the first one who has completed his task lifts his head with a sigh of relief, the others write with a nervous haste; but all wait for the last one.)

THE GANNET. You were ready first, Zoïlus.

ZOÏLUS. Then it was not because I had the least difficult task. Perhaps our Ancient can tell me why it is so difficult to make an echo for Bryant's verse. To parody any particular poem, such as *The Death of the Flowers*, would be easy enough, I should think; but I was obliged to write something independent in Bryant's manner. Now, when I asked myself, "What is his manner?" I could only answer, "Gravity of subject and treatment, pure rhythm, choice diction, and a mixture more or less strong of the moral element."

THE ANCIENT. You have fairly stated his prominent characteristics, and your difficulty came from the fact that they are all so evenly and exquisitely blended in his verse that no single one seems salient enough to take hold of. Bryant's range of subjects is not wide, but within that range he is a most admirable artist. He is of the same blood with Wordsworth—a brother, not a follower—and oftentimes seems cold, because his intellectual pitch is high. I confess *I* find the powers of control, temperance, self-repression, abnegation of sentiment for a purpose which aims beyond it, in his poems, rather than a negative coldness. His literary position, it is true, is very isolated. He has both kept aloof from the temporary excitements in our poetic atmosphere, and he has rarely given any direct expression of an aspiration for the general literary development of our people, or of sympathy with those who felt and fostered it. Nevertheless, we cannot fairly go beyond an author's works in our judgments; and I suspect we shall all agree, as Americans, in estimating the amount of our debt to Bryant.

GALAHAD. You have so put down my natural reverence that I don't dare to protest. But when I see Bryant in Broadway, with his magnificent Homeric beard, I wonder the people don't take off their hats as he passes. Why, seventy years ago the stolid Berliners almost carried Schiller on their shoulders as he came out of the theater; the raging mob of '48 did homage to Humboldt; and every other people, it seems to me, in every other civilized land, has rendered some sort of honor to its minstrels. But I cannot recollect that we have ever done anything.

THE GANNET. Yes, we have done a little, but not much,—after death. A few men have given Halleck a monument, and two men have put up busts of Irving and Bryant in our parks. There was a public commemoration of Cooper, at which Webster (who knew nothing and cared nothing about our literature) officiated; but that was the end of it. The Bryant Festival was almost a private matter; the public was not represented, and one author belonging to the same club refused to take any part in it, on account of the political views of the poet!

THE ANCIENT. We are forgetting our business.

ZOÏLUS. I told you I had a hard task; therefore I shall not be vexed if you tell me I have failed. *(Reads.)*

THE DESERTED BARN

Against the gray November sky,
  Beside the weedy lane, it stands;
To newer fields they all pass by,
  The farmers and their harvest hands.

There is no hay within the mow;
  The racks and mangers fall to dust;
The roof is crumbling in, but thou,
  My soul, inspect it and be just.

Once from the green and winding vale
  The sheaves were borne to deck its floor;
The blue-eyed milkmaid filled her pail,
  Then gently closed the stable-door.

Once on the frosty winter air
  The sound of flails afar was borne,
And from his natural pulpit there
  The preacher cock called up the morn.

But all are gone: the harvest men
  Work elsewhere now for higher pay;
The blue-eyed milkmaid married Ben,
  The hand, and went to Ioway.

The flails are banished by machines,
  Which thrash the grain with equine power;
The senile cock no longer weans
  The folk from sleep at dawning hour.

They slumber late beyond the hill,
In that new house which spurns the old;
In gorgeous stalls the kine are still,
The horse is blanketed from cold.

But I from ostentatious pride
And hollow pomp of riches turn,
To muse that ancient barn beside:
Pause, pilgrim, and its lesson learn;

So live, that thou shalt never make
A mill-pond of the mountain-tarn,
Nor for a gaudy stable take
The timbers of thy ruined barn!

GALAHAD. I vow I don't know whether that is serious or a burlesque imitation!

THE ANCIENT. Then Zoïlus has fairly succeeded. The grave autumnal tone was indispensable, for it stamps itself on the minds of nine out of ten who read Bryant; just as we always associate Wordsworth with mountain walks and solitary musings. Did you ever see Kuntze's statuette of Bryant? He is sitting, and beside him on the ground there is only a buffalo skull. Of course, you at once imagine a prairie mound, with nothing in sight,—which is carrying the impression altogether too far; for his poems on the apple-tree and the bobolink are entirely human.

GALAHAD *(earnestly)*. There is much more than that in his poetry! There is the evidence of a high imaginative quality, which, for some reason or other, he seems to hold in check! Read *The Land of Dreams* and his poem on *Earth,* where there is something about the

Hollows of the great invisible hills
Where darkness dwells all day—

I can't remember all the passage, but it is exceedingly fine! Generally, he reins himself up so tightly that you cannot feel the fretting of the bit; but rarely, when he lets himself go for a few lines, you get a glimpse of another nature.

THE ANCIENT. Just therein, I think, lies his greatest service to American literature. There have always been, and

always will be, enough of wild mustangs, unbridled foals, who dash off at a gallop and can't stop themselves at the proper goal, but pant and stagger a mile beyond it. With Bryant's genius, he might have undertaken much more; but he has hoarded his power, and how freshly it serves him still!

> No waning of fire, no quenching of ray,
> But rising, still rising, then passing away.

Who wrote those lines?

THE GANNET. He who speaks through me tonight,—Willis. But Galahad comes next in order.

GALAHAD. I have really a better right to complain of the severity of my task than Zoïlus. One can't imitate humor without possessing it,—which I'm not sure that I do. Between *Old Ironsides* and the *One-Horse Shay*, Holmes has played in a great many keys, and I was forced to echo that one which seemed easiest to follow. (*Reads.*)

THE PSYCHO-PHYSICAL MUSE

O Muse, descend, or, stay!—evolve thy presence from within,
For all conditions now combine, and so I must begin:
The wind is fresh from west-nor' west, the sky is deepest blue,
Thermometer at seventy, and pulse at seventy-two.

At breakfast fish-balls I consumed; the phosphates are supplied!
The peccant acid in my blood by Selters alkalied;
As far as I can see the works, my old machine of thought
Runs with its cogs and pivots oiled, as if in Waltham bought.

The main-spring is elastic yet, the balance-wheel is trim,
And if "full-jeweled" one should think, let no man scoff at him!
Odi profanum vulgus,—well! the truth is t'other way;
But one eupeptic as myself can always have his say.

Suppose I let the wheels run on, till fancy's index-hand
Points to a verse-inspiring theme and there inclines to stand?
Between the thought and rhythmic speech there often yawns
a chasm;
To bridge it o'er we only need a vigorous protoplasm.

With an unconscious sinciput, a cerebellum free,
I don't see why the loftiest lays should not be sung by me:
The fitful flushes of the Muse my diagnosis own:
I test her symptoms in the air as surely as ozone.

There's just one thing that fails me yet; the fancies dart around
Like skittish swallows on the wing, but none will touch the ground.
With such conditions 'twere a sin to lay the pen aside,
But, with the mind close-girt to run, direction is denied.

I've waited, now, an hour or more: I'd take a glass of wine,
Save that I fear 'twould send the pulse to seventy-eight or nine;
'Tis that capricious jade, the Muse!—I know her tricks of old:
Just when my house is warm for her, she *will* prefer the cold!

THE GANNET. Ah, you've only caught some general characteristics, not the glitter and flash of Holmes's lines! His humor is like a Toledo blade; it may be sheathed in a circular scabbard, but it always springs out straight and keen, and fit for a direct lunge. He is the only poet in the country who can write good "occasionals" without losing faith in the finer inspiration, or ceasing to obey it.

GALAHAD. You very well know we have no time for selection. I have been reading lately his *Mechanism in Thought and Morals,* so that my imitation was really suggested by his prose.

THE ANCIENT. That is permitted. For my part, though I like Holmes's songs in all keys, I have always wished that he had written more such poems as *La Grisette,* wherein we have, first of all, ease and grace, then just enough of sentiment, of humor, and of a light, sportive fancy to make a mixture wholly delightful,—a beverage that cheers, but not inebriates, in which there is neither headache nor morbid tears. Hood had the same quality, though he doesn't often reveal it; so had Praed; so, I feel sure, had Willis, but in his case it was a neglected talent. When I say that we most sorely need this naïve, playful element in our literature, you may not agree with me; but oh, how tired I am of hearing that every poem should "convey a lesson," should "inculcate a truth," should "appeal to the moral sense." Why,

half our self-elected critics seem to be blind to the purely aesthetic character of our art! No man—not even the greatest—can breathe a particular atmosphere all his life without taking some of its ingredients into his blood; and just those which seem best may be most fatal to the imaginative faculty. I suspect there has been more of battle in the intellectual life of Holmes than any of us knows.

Zoïlus. Now let us hear the Gannet.

The Gannet. If it had been a leader for the *Home Journal*, I should have found the task light enough; but Willis' poetic style is—as he would have said—rather un-come-at-able. *(Reads.)*

KEREN-HAPPUCH

The comforters of Job had come and gone.
They were anhungered; for the eventide
Sank over Babylon, and smokes arose
From pottage cooked in palace and in tent.
Then Keren-happuch, from her lordly bower
Of gem-like jasper, and the porphyry floors
Swept by the satins of her trailing robe,
Came forth, and sat beside her father Job,
And gave him comfort, mid his painful boils,
And scraped him with a potsherd; and her soul
Rebelled at his unlovely misery,
And from her lips, that parted like a cleft
Of ripe pomegranates o'er their ruby teeth,
Broke forth a wail:

"Alas for thee, my sire!
And for the men and maidens of thy train,
And for thy countless camels on the plain,
More than thou didst require;
Thou mightst have sold them at the morning dawn
For heavy gold: at even they were gone!

"And they who dressed thy hair
With agate braids and pearls from Samarcand
Have died; there is no handmaid in the land,
To make my visage fair:
Unpainted and unpowdered, lo! I come,
Gray with the ashes of my gorgeous home!

"Yea, thou and I are lone:
The prince who wooed me fled in haste away
From thine infection: hungered here I stray,
And find not any bone;
For famished cats have ravaged shelf and plate:
The larder, like my heart, is desolate!

"And it is very drear,
My sire, whose wealth and beauty were my pride,
To see thee so disfigured at my side,
Nor leech nor poultice near,
To save thy regal skin from later scars:
Yea, thou art loathsome by the light of stars!

"Go, hie thee to thy room,
And I will gather marjoram and nard,
And mix their fragrance with the cooling lard,
And thus avert thy doom.
A daughter's sacrifice no tongue can tell:
The prince will not return till thou art well!"

GALAHAD. Now I must say, although I have enjoyed the travesty with you, that this gives me a pang. I can't forget Willis' sunny, kindly, and sympathetic nature, and the dreary clouding of his mind at the last. There was something very tragic in the way in which he clung to the fragments that remained, as one faculty after another failed him, and strove to be still the cheerful, sparkling author of old. I was hardly more than a boy when I first went to him, a few years ago, and no brother could have been kinder to me.

THE ANCIENT. There never was a poet more free from jealousy or petty rivalry, none more ready to help or encourage. As an author, he was damaged by too early popularity, and he made the mistake of trying to retain it through exaggerating the features of his style which made him popular; but neither homage nor defamation—and he received both in full measure—ever affected the man's heart in his breast. There was often an affectation of aristocratic elegance in his writings; yet, in his life, he was as natural a democrat as Walt Whitman, gentle, considerate, and familiar with the lowest whom he met, and only haughty

towards ignorant or vulgar pretension. Poe said that he narrowly missed placing himself at the head of American literature, which was true of his career from 1830 to about 1845. By the by, I wish someone would undertake to write our literary history, beginning, say, about 1800.

ZOÏLUS. Set about it yourself! But, come, we are not to be cheated out of your contribution tonight; where is your Tennyson?

THE ANCIENT. I have added another to his brief modern idyls. *(Reads.)*

EUSTACE GREEN;

OR, THE MEDICINE-BOTTLE

Here's the right place for lunch; and if, ah me!
The hollies prick, and burr-weed grows too near,
We'll air our eyesight o'er the swelling downs,
And so not mind them. While the Medoc chills
In ice, and yon champagne-flask in the sun
Takes mellower warmth, I'll tell you what I did
To Eustace Green—last Cambridge-term it was,
Just when the snowball by the farmer's gate
Made jokes of winter at the garden rose.

No marvel of much wisdom Eustace was,—
You know him, Hal,—no high-browed intellect,
Such as with easy grab the wrangler's place
Plucks from the clutching hands of college youth,
But home-bred, as it were; and all the stock,
His stalwart dad, and mother Marigold
(We called her), Kate, Cornelia, Joseph, Jane,
A country posy of great boys and girls.
But she, the mother, when the brown ash took
A livelier green beside the meadow-stile,
And celandines, the milky kine of flowers,
Were yellow in the lanes, hung o'er the fire
A caldron huge—Oh me, it was a sight
To see her stir the many herbs therein!
Of yarrow, tansy, thyme, and camomile—
What know I all?—she boiled and slowly brewed
The strange concoction: 'twas an heirloom old,
The recipe, a sovran cure, and famed

From Hants to Yorkshire: this must Eustace take.
Not that the lubber lad was ill—Oh, no!
You did but need to punch him in the ribs,
To feel how muscle overlaid the bone;
And as for trencher-practice,—trust me, Hal,
A donkey-load of lunch were none too much,
Were he here with us. Where was I?—Ah, yes,
The medicine! She gave it me with words
Many, and thrice repeated; he should take,
Eustace, the dose at morn, and noon, and night,
For these were feverous times: she did not know,
Not she, what airs blew o'er the meads of Cam:
Preventive ounces weighed a pound of cure.
At last, I thrust the bottle in my sack,
And left her.

Now, returning Cambridge-wards,
Some devil tickled me to turn the thing
To joke, or was it humors in the blood,
Stirring, perchance, when, oysters out of date
And game prohibited, the stomach pines?
Think as you will; but to myself my mind
Thus reasoned: need to him of medicine
Is none, the green cicala in the grass
Chirps not more wholesome: wherefore swiftly I
Will cast this useless brewage to the winds,
Yea, to the thistled downs; and substitute—
Haply some ancient hostel glimmering near—
Laborious Boreal brandy, equal bulk.
And this, the thing accomplished, then did I
Proffer to Eustace Green, all eager he
For news of home and mother Marigold,
His dad and Kate, Cornelia, Joseph, Jane,
And Bloss, the ox, and Bounce, the plough-horse old,
One-eyed, and spavined. But the medicine
He took with: "Pshaw! that beastly stuff again?
Am I a rat that she should send the dose?"
Then I: "Dear Eustace, times are feverous:
Malarial breezes blow across the Cam:
Preventive ounces weigh a pound of cure."
"Oh, damn your ounces!" he profanely cried;
"But if I must, I must; so summon Giles,
The undertaker, when I take this dose,
And gently coffin me when now I die."

So drank; and then, with great eyes all astare,
Cried: "Taste it, you! Fourth-proof, O. P. and S. T. X.!—
We'll have a punch!" And that teetotal dame,
His mother, did we pledge in steaming punch,
She knowing not; and tears of laughter ran
Down both our cheeks, and trickled in the bowl,
Weakening the punch.
But now the Medoc's chill,
And warm the sweet champagne; so, while the copse
Clangs round us like the clang of many shields,
Down the long hollows to the dusky sea,
Let us, with sandwich and the hard-boiled egg,
Enjoy both nature's beauty and our own!

OMNES. Well done!

ZOÏLUS. Why, you have caught the very trick of Tennyson's blank verse! If you had only warmed the Medoc and chilled the champagne, I should hardly know the difference. But how did you ever happen to invent a motive, or plot, all complete, on the spur of the moment?

THE ANCIENT. Ah, you force me to confess: I didn't invent it. It was a trick I played myself, on a friend, in our young days; and, by good luck, it came to my memory just at the right time. Therefore, having the subject, the imitation of Tennyson's manner was easy enough. I'm glad, however, that you think it successful; for it justifies me in holding fast to the principle we accepted, and which I was obliged to enforce tonight. You know that my own scattering poems are quite unlike—however long the interval between—anything of Tennyson's; but I have made it a point, for years past, to study the individual characteristics of the poets, and this proves how easily those which are superficial and obvious may be copied.

ZOÏLUS. May I ask what your private estimate of Tennyson, as a poet, is?

THE ANCIENT. Of course! While I might, possibly, agree with his keenest critics in regard to many details of style or expression, especially in his earlier poems, I yield to no one in the profoundest respect for his noble loyalty to his art. Tennyson is a poet, who, recognizing the exact quality of

his gift, has given all the forces of his mind, all the energies of his life, to perfect it. I can see that he has allowed no form of knowledge which this age has developed to arise without assimilating, at least, its substance; but all is employed in the sole service of his poetic art. He began with something of the rank, "lush" luxuriance of style which Keats was just leaving behind him when he died: he now rises, often to a majestic simplicity and dignity which nearly remind me of Milton. Not that the two are similar, in any particular; but Tennyson, like scarcely any other except Schiller, has achieved high success as a poet by comprehending clearly both his powers and their limitations. How easily, by mistaking his true work, he might have scattered his rays, instead of gathering them into a clear focus of light! All honor to him, I say, in this age, when so many writers degrade their gift by making it subservient to worldly ends!

GALAHAD (*with enthusiasm*). You make me happy!

THE GANNET. I should say, nevertheless, that he was well paid in ringing guineas. For instance——

ZOÏLUS. "The continuation in next week's *New York Ledger!*" Do you know that it is one o'clock?

OMNES (*starting up*). We go—but we return!

[*Exeunt.*

Night The Fifth

ALL WERE ON HAND at the usual hour, fresh and eager for a continuation of the performances. The Gannet, addressing Zoïlus, opened the conversation:

"I can guess one thing you have been thinking of since we met,—of Tennyson's place in literature?"

ZOÏLUS. You have just hit it! I didn't fully agree with the Ancient, but there was no time left for discussion. There must be some good reason for Tennyson's influence on the poetry of our day; yet, if his is a genuine flower, it couldn't be made a weed by being sown everywhere. There is no doubt of the individuality of his manner, but I am not yet ready to say that it is pure, as Collins', or Gray's, for instance,

or even Wordsworth's. He is sometimes like a perfume which cloys the sense from overrichness. Now, a very slight change in the odor of the tuberose might make it unpleasant; and it seems to me that some of Tennyson's younger followers have made just such a change.

GALAHAD. Almost the same thought occurred to me the other day. I was trying to recall some lines of the Ancient's imitation, and then went over in my mind the numbers of blank-verse idyls more or less in Tennyson's manner which have been written by others. He drew from a very far source, as I think Stedman has clearly shown in his paper on *Theocritus and Tennyson;* but they, drawing from him, cannot conceal theirs. I never before felt so keenly the difference between the poetry which rises out of a man's own nature and that which is impressed upon it, or communicated, like an infection, by another mind. I even went so far as to try my hand alone on an imitation of this idyllic school, which I now see is itself an echo.

THE ANCIENT. Read it to us, then! Who was your immediate model?

GALAHAD (*taking a paper from his pocket*). Why, no one in particular. Now that I look over the lines, I see that I must have been thinking of the echoes of the *Princess,* rather than of those of the short idyls of modern life. It is the craziest burlesque of the mediaeval themes, revived in that form: it is absurd, and nothing else.

ZOÏLUS. That will do very well, for variety.

GALAHAD. Then, as Eustace Green says, if I must, I must. (*Reads.*)

SIR EGGNOGG

Forth from the purple battlements he fared,
Sir Eggnogg of the Rampant Lily, named
From that embrasure of his argent shield
Given by a thousand leagues of heraldry
On snuffy parchments drawn,—so forth he fared,
By bosky boles and autumn leaves he fared,
Where grew the juniper with berries black,
The sphery mansions of the future gin.

But naught of this decoyed his mind, so bent
On fair Miasma, Saxon-blooded girl,
Who laughed his loving lullabies to scorn,
And would have snatched his hero-sword to deck
Her haughty brow, or warm her hands withal,
So scornful she: and thence Sir Eggnogg cursed
Between his teeth, and chewed his iron boots
In spleen of love. But ere the morn was high
In the robustious heaven, the postern-tower
Clang to the harsh, discordant, silvering scream
Of the tire-woman, at the window bent
To dress her crispéd hair. She saw, ah woe!
The fair Miasma, overbalanced, hurled
O'er the flamboyant parapet which ridged
The muffled coping of the castle's peak,
Prone on the ivory pavement of the court,
Which caught and cleft her fairest skull, and sent
Her rosy brains to fleck the Orient floor.
This saw Sir Eggnogg, in his stirrups poised,
Saw he and cursed, with many a deep-mouthed oath,
And, finding nothing more could reunite
The splintered form of fair Miasma, rode
On his careering palfrey to the wars,
And there found death, another death than hers.

ZOÏLUS. After this, write another such idyl yourself, if you dare!

GALAHAD. I never shall; but when you have done the thing ignorantly, and a magazine wants it on account of the temporary popularity of the theme and manner, is an author much to blame for publishing?

THE GANNET. Let your conscience rest, Galahad! "Hunger and request of friends" were always valid pleas. If a poet invariably asked himself, "Is this original? Is it something that *must* be written? Is it likely to be immortal?" I suspect our stock of verse would soon be very short. At least, only the Chiverses and Tuppers and —— would still be fruitful.

THE ANCIENT. Did you ever guess at the probable permanence of the things which seem best when they appear? It is a wholesome experiment. Macaulay first suggested it to me, in speaking of the 3 per cent of Southey which might

survive: since then, I have found that the Middle Ages are an immense graveyard of poems, but nothing to what this century will be. I doubt whether many authors would write, in the mere hope of posthumous fame.

THE GANNET. *I* wouldn't! My idea of literature is the possession of a power which you can wield to some purpose while you live. It may also be wealth, another power; it may be yoked with politics, which is better still; it may——

GALAHAD (*interrupting*). Stop! don't make me feel that your gift, which I have believed in, is so entirely selfish!

ZOÏLUS (*shaking the hat*). Here would soon be a precious row between you two; draw your names and go to work!

THE GANNET. What? Henry T. Tuckerman?

ZOÏLUS. To be sure! I have—Longfellow!

GALAHAD. Mine is William D. Howells.

THE ANCIENT. I have drawn Richard Henry Stoddard. Now, no changing, remember! We are better suited than the last time, unless it be Zoïlus, of whom I have my doubts. All imitations cannot be equally fortunate, and I'm not sure that any of us would succeed better if he should take his own time and pains for the task, instead of trusting to the first random suggestion.

ZOÏLUS. Then why are you doubtful about me? I have my random suggestion already.

THE ANCIENT. Work it out! I think you understand my doubt, nevertheless. The Gannet is chuckling to himself, as if he were on the track of something wicked: I foresee that I must use my authority tonight, if I have any left. (*Writes.*)

THE CHORUS (*whispering together*). They are very evenly matched. Could any inference be drawn from the manner of each as he writes? The Gannet has the most sarcastic air, Zoïlus is evidently satisfied with his performance, Galahad seems earnest and a little perplexed, and the Ancient is cool and businesslike. They have all learned something by practice; they work much more rapidly than at first.

THE GANNET (*after all have finished*). When you try to grasp anything smooth, your hand slips. In Tuckerman there is only proper smoothness which can be travestied, and you know how difficult that is. (*Reads.*)

Ode to Propriety

Thou calm, complacent goddess of the mind,
  Look on me from thine undisturbed domain;
Thy well-adjusted leaflets let me bind,
  As once on youthful, now on manly brain.

Upon thy head there is no hair awry;
  Thy careful drapery falleth as it should:
Thy face is grave; thy scrutinizing eye
  Sees only that which hath been stamped as good.

Thou art no patron of the strenuous thought
  That speaks at will, regardless of old rule;
To thee no neologic lays are brought,
  But models of the strictly classic school.

Thou teachest me the proper way and sure;
  To no imaginative heights misled,
My verse moves onward with a step secure,
  Nor hastes with rapture, nor delays with dread.

I do not need to woo the fickle Muse,
  But am her master, justified by thee:
All measures must obey me as I choose,
  So long as they are thine, Propriety!

For genius is a fever of the blood,
  And lyric rage a strange, disturbing spell;
Let fools attempt the torrent and the flood,
  Beside the pensive, placid pond I dwell!

Zoïlus. You have too much alliteration in the last line: that is not at all proper.

The Gannet. Then it shows the impossibility of reproducing the tone of Pope and Gray in our day. I do not know that Tuckerman attempts this in his verse; but I suspect that his prose model is still Addison.

Zoïlus. That is really getting to be a sign of originality! Mix Addison and Imagination together, and sublimate in a French retort, and where could you have a finer modern style? Tuckerman has all tradition on his side; he represents

a conservative element in literature, which—though I don't admire it much—I think necessary, to keep the wild modern schools in order.

GALAHAD. It is something new, to hear you take this side.

ZOÏLUS. You must not always credit me with being wholly in earnest. I think I am a natural iconoclast; but one might as well assail respectability in society as the "classic" spirit in literature. It is impervious to all our shots; every blow slides off its cold polish. But, candidly, there are times when it seems to refresh me, or, at least, to give me a new relish for something warmer and more pungent.

THE ANCIENT. I believe you fully. We should all fare badly, were it not for the colder works which we hear so often depreciated. They make a fireproof temple in which we may build fires at will. Now, let us hear how you have treated an author who is already a classic, though without the *cold* polish of which you speak. Very few poets have been complimented by so many ordinary parodies.

ZOÏLUS. I am aware of that, and I have tried to get as far away as possible from the risk of resembling them. (*Reads.*)

NAUVOO

This is the place: be still for a while, my high-pressure steamboat!
Let me survey the spot where the Mormons builded their temple.
Much have I mused on the wreck and ruin of ancient religions,
Scandinavian, Greek, Assyrian, Zend, and the Sanskrit,
Yea, and explored the mysteries hidden in Talmudic targums,
Caught the gleam of Chrysaor's sword and occulted Orion,
Backward spelled the lines of the Hebrew graveyard at Newport,
Studied Ojibwa symbols and those of the Quarry of Pipestone,
Also the myths of the Zulus whose questions converted Colenso,
So, methinks, it were well I should muse a little at Nauvoo.
Fair was he not, the primitive Prophet, nor he who succeeded,
Hardly for poetry fit, though using the Urim and Thummim.
Had he but borrowed Levitical trappings, the girdle and ephod,
Fine-twined linen, and ouches of gold, and bells and pomegranates,

That, indeed, might have kindled the weird necromancy of fancy.
Had he but set up mystical forms, like Astarte or Peor,
Balder, or Freya, Quetzalcoatl, Perun, Manabozho,
Verily though to the sense theologic it might be offensive,
Great were the gain to the pictured, flashing speech of the poet.
Yet the Muse that delights in Mesopotamian numbers,
Vague and vast as the roar of the wind in a forest of pine-trees,
Now must tune her strings to the names of Joseph and Brigham.
Hebrew, the first; and a Smith before the Deluge was Tubal,
Thor of the East, who first made iron ring to the hammer;
So on the iron heads of the people about him, the latter,
Striking the sparks of belief and forging their faith in the Good Time
Coming, the Latter Day, as he called it,—the Kingdom of Zion.
Then, in the words of Philip the Eunuch unto Belshazzar,
Came to him multitudes wan, diseased and decrepit of spirit,
Came and heard and believed, and builded the temple at Nauvoo.

All is past; for Joseph was smitten with lead from a pistol,
Brigham went with the others over the prairies to Salt Lake.
Answers now to the long, disconsolate wail of the steamer,
Hoarse, inarticulate, shrill, the rolling and bounding of ten-pins,
Answers the voice of the bartender, mixing the smash and the julep,
Answers, precocious, the boy, and bites a chew of tobacco.
Lone as the towers of Afrasiab now is the seat of the Prophet,
Mournful, inspiring to verse, though seeming utterly vulgar:
Also—for each thing now is expected to furnish a moral—
Teaching innumerable lessons for whoso believes and is patient.
Thou, that readest, be resolute, learn to be strong and to suffer!
Let the dead Past bury its dead and act in the Present!
Bear a banner of strange devices, "Forever" and "Never!"
Build in the walls of time the fane of a permanent Nauvoo,
So that thy brethren may see it and say, "Go thou and do likewise!"

GALAHAD. Zoïlus, you are incorrigible.

ZOÏLUS (*laughing*). Just what I expected you to say. But it's no easy thing to be funny in hexameters: the Sapphic verse is much more practicable. I heaped together everything I could remember, to increase my chances. In some of Long-

fellow's earlier poems the theme and moral are like two sides of a medal; but I couldn't well copy that peculiarity.

THE GANNET. You will only find it in *The Beleaguered City* and *Seaweed.* Longfellow is too genuine an artist to fall into that or any other "peculiarity." Just his best, his most purely imaginative poems are those which have not been popular, because the reader must be half a poet to appreciate them. What do you consider his best work?

ZOÏLUS. *Evangeline,* of course.

THE GANNET. No, it is the *Golden Legend!* That is the spirit of the Middle Ages, and the feeling of all ages, set to modern melodies. I think I could write an imitation of Longfellow's higher strains—not of those which are so well known and so much quoted—which would be fairer than yours.

ZOÏLUS. Do it, and good luck to you. (THE GANNET *writes.*)

THE ANCIENT. Not one of our poets has deserved better of his countrymen than Longfellow: he has advanced the front rank of our culture. His popularity has naturally brought envy and disparagement upon him; but it has carried far and wide among the people the influence of his purity, his refinement, and his constant reference to an ideal of life which so many might otherwise forget. As a nation, we are still full of crudity and confusion, and his influence, so sweet and clear and steady, has been, and is, more than a merely poetic leaven.

GALAHAD. I have felt that, without ever thinking of putting it into words. The sweetness of Longfellow's verse is its most *necessary* quality, when we consider his literary career in this light; but I never could see how exquisite finish implies any lack of power. What was that line of Goethe which you quoted to me once, Ancient?

THE ANCIENT. *Nur aus vollendeter Kraft blicket die Annuth hervor*—only perfect Strength discloses Grace. There are singular ideas in regard to "power" afloat in literary circles. Why, the sunbeam is more powerful than a thousand earthquakes! I judge the power of an author by the influence of his works.

ZOÏLUS. Well, for my part, I don't appreciate "power,"

unless it strikes me square between the eyes. What I understand by "power" is something regardless of elegance, of the conventional ideas of refinement, of what you call "laws of art,"—something primitive, lawless, forcing you, with a strong hand, to recognize its existence.

THE ANCIENT. Give me a few instances!

ZOÏLUS (*after a pause*). Carlyle,—Poe,—Swinburne,—Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights!*

GALAHAD. Why not Artemus Ward and Joaquin Miller?

THE GANNET. There! I never quite succeed when I assume a certain ability. I had in my mind *Prometheus and Epimetheus*, the *Palingenesis*, and other poems in the same key; but it was so difficult to imitate them that I came down one grade and struck into a style more easy to be recognized. It may not be better than yours, but it is not so horribly coarse. (*Reads.*)

THE SEWING-MACHINE

A strange vibration from the cottage window
My vagrant steps delayed,
And half abstracted, like an ancient Hindoo,
I paused beneath the shade.

What is, I said, this unremitted humming,
Louder than bees in spring?
As unto prayer the murmurous answer coming,
Shed from Sandalphon's wing.

Is this the sound of unimpeded labor,
That now usurpeth play?
Our harsher substitute for pipe and tabor,
Ghittern and virelay?

Or, is it yearning for a higher vision,
By spiritual hearing heard?
Nearer I drew, to listen with precision,
Deciphering not a word.

Then, peering through the pane, as men of sin do,
Myself the while unseen,
I marked a maiden seated by the window,
Sewing with a machine.

Her gentle foot propelled the tireless treadle,
Her gentle hand the seam:
My fancy said, it were a bliss to peddle
Those shirts, as in a dream!

Her lovely fingers lent to yoke and collar
Some imperceptible taste;
The rural swain, who buys it for a dollar,
By beauty is embraced.

O fairer aspect of the common mission!
Only the Poet sees
The true significance, the high position
Of such small things as these.

Not now doth Toil, a brutal Boanerges,
Deform the maiden's hand;
Her implement its soft sonata merges
In songs of sea and land.

And thus the hum of the unspooling cotton,
Blent with her rhythmic tread,
Shall still be heard, when virelays are forgotten,
And troubadours are dead.

Zoïlus. Ah, you couldn't avoid the moral application!

The Ancient. Neither can you, in imitating Bryant and Whittier. In Longfellow—excepting some half-dozen of his earlier poems—the moral element is so skillfully interfused with the imaginative that one hardly suspects its presence. I should say, rather, that it is an inherent quality of his genius, and, therefore, can never offend like an assumed purpose. I abominate as much as you, Zoïlus, possibly can, the deliberate intention to preach moral doctrines in poetry. *That* is turning the glorious guild of authors into a higher kind of Tract Society! But the purer the poetic art, the nearer it approaches the loftiest morality; this is a truth which Longfellow illustrates. I have always defended the New England spirit against your prejudices, but this I must admit, that there is a large class of second-rate writers there who insist that every wayward little brook, whose murmur and sparkle are reason enough for its existence, must be made to turn some

utilitarian mill. Over and over again I have seen how their literary estimate of our poets is gauged by the assumed relation of the latter to some variety of "Reform." The Abolition of Slavery, first, then Temperance, and now Woman Suffrage, or Spiritualism, or the Labor Question, are dragged by the head and heels into the temple, and sometimes laid upon the very altar, of Letters. The wonder is that this practice doesn't retrospectively affect their judgment and send Dante and Shakespeare and Milton to their chaotic limbo!

ZOÏLUS. Thanks for that much support; but let us hear Galahad!

GALAHAD. Howells, at least, has escaped some of the troubles through which the older authors have been obliged to pass. His four years in Venice made a fortunate separation between his youthful period and his true sphere of activity. He did not change front, as the rest of us must do, in the press of battle. I was very much puzzled what to select, as specially distinctive, and allowed myself, at last, to be guided by two or three short poems. (*Reads.*)

PREVARICATION

. . . . . .

THE ANCIENT. I think I know what you had in your mind. But I was expecting to hear something in hexameters: you know his . . .[1]

ZOÏLUS. Yes, but . . .

GALAHAD. It is true to some extent. Still, on the other hand, he . . .

ZOÏLUS. Well, after all, we seem to agree tolerably well. All our younger poets are tending towards greater finish and elegance. It is about time to expect the appearance of a third generation, with all the beauties and faults of their new

[1]Mr. Howells, as Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly,* insisted that he could not properly allow his name to appear among the poets. I did not agree with him; but I finally compromised our difference by omitting the travesty and the opinions, and adding footnotes apparently written by himself. The latter were accepted as genuine and commented upon, to our mutual amusement. The imitation has been lost, or I should restore it now.—B. T.

youth about them. Why, we have hardly any known writer much less than thirty-five years old! Our lights scarcely begin to burn until the age when Keats's, Shelley's, Byron's, and Burns's went out. Is there something in our atmosphere that hinders development? I always supposed it possessed a greater stimulus.

THE ANCIENT. If you look back a little, you will find that Bryant, Willis, Longfellow, and Lowell were known and popular authors at twenty-five. But I have noticed the lack of a younger generation of poets. It is equally true of England, France, and Germany; none of those who have made a strong impression, whether good or bad, can be called young, with the single exception of Swinburne. Rossetti, though he has appeared so recently, must be forty-five years old; and in Germany the most popular poets—Geibel, Bodenstedt, Hamerling, and Redwitz—are all in middle age. I think a careful study of the literary history of the last hundred years would show that we have had both the heroes and the *epigonoi;* and now nature requires a little rest. Of course, all theories on the subject must be merely fanciful; half-a-dozen young fellows of the highest promise may turn up in a month; but I rather expect to see a good many fallow years.

GALAHAD. Then I, at least, have fallen on evil times. If I live after our stars have set, and no new ones have arisen, it will be——

ZOÏLUS. Your great luck! *Parmi les aveugles,* you know; but we are forgetting the Ancient's imitation.

THE ANCIENT. Stoddard's last volume shows both variety and inequality, but the most of it has the true ring. I was delighted with his gift of poetic narration, in *The Wine Cup* and *The King's Sentinel;* yet, even in them, there is an undertone of sadness. One can only make a recognizable echo of his verse in the minor key. (*Reads.*)

THE CANTELOPE

Side by side in the crowded street,
  Amid its ebb and flow,
We walked together one autumn morn;
  ('Twas many years ago!)

The markets blushed with fruits and flowers;
(Both Memory and Hope!)
You stopped and bought me at the stall
A spicy cantelope.

We drained together its honeyed wine,
We cast the seeds away;
I slipped and fell on the moony rinds,
And you took me home on a dray!

The honeyed wine of your love is drained;
I limp from the fall I had;
The snow-flakes muffle the empty stall,
And everything is sad.

The sky is an inkstand, upside down,
It splashes the world with gloom:
The earth is full of skeleton bones,
And the sea is a wobbling tomb!

ZOÏLUS. I might have written that; what do you say, Galahad?

GALAHAD. It is fully as rollicking as yours, but not quite so coarse. I always find in Stoddard a most true and delicate ear for the melody of verse, and I thoroughly enjoy his brief snatches, or "catches," of song. When I disagree with him, it is usually on account of the theme rather than the execution. His collection of *Melodies and Madrigals* gave me the key to his own taste and talent; he seems to have wandered down to us from the time of Charles I. What has the Gannet been writing all this while?

THE GANNET. Something not on our program. After trying my hand on Tuckerman and then on Longfellow, I felt fresh for one task more; and we have had so few ladies introduced into our diversions that I turned to Mrs. Stoddard for a new inspiration. You know how I like her poems, as the efforts of a not purely rhythmic mind to express itself rhythmically. They interest me greatly, as every embodiment of struggle does. A commonplace, conventional intellect would never dare to do the things she does, both in prose and verse; she defies the usual ways to popularity with a most indomitable perseverance.

GALAHAD. Is not that the way to reach it in the end?

THE GANNET. No man knoweth; because no one can foresee how the tastes or whims of the mercurial public may turn. Some authors predict their own popularity; some secretly expect it, and never get it; and some, again, leave works which may seem dead and buried, but are dug up as if by accident, after two or three centuries, and become new and delightful to a different race of men. Shall I read you my imitation?

THE ANCIENT. We wait.

THE GANNET. (*Reads.*)

THE NETTLE

If days were nights, I could their weight endure.
This darkness cannot hide from me the plant
I seek: I know it by the rasping touch.
The moon is wrapped in bombazine of cloud;
The capes project like crooked lobster-shears
Into the bobbery of the waves; the marsh,
At ebb, has now a miserable smell.
I will not be delayed nor hustled back,
Though every wind should muss my outspread hair.
I snatch the plant that seems my coming fate:
I pass the crinkled satin of the rose,
The violets, frightened out of all their wits,
And other flowers, to me so commonplace,
And cursed with showy mediocrity,
To cull the foliage which repels and stings.
Weak hands may bleed; but mine are tough with pride,
And I but smile where others sob and screech.
The draggled flounces of the willows lash
My neck; I tread upon the bouncing rake,
Which bangs me sorely, but I hasten on,
With teeth firm-set as biting on a wire,
And feet and fingers clinched in bitter pain.
This, few would comprehend; but if they did,
I should despise myself and merit scorn.
We all are riddles which we cannot guess;
Each has his gimcracks and his thingumbobs,
And mine are night and nettles, mud and mist,
Since others hate them, cowardly avoid.

Things are mysterious when you make them so,
And the slow-pacing days are mighty queer;
But Fate is at the bottom of it all,
And something somehow turns up in the end.

ZOÏLUS. That is an echo with a vengeance! But the exaggeration of peculiarities is the best part of our fun; there you had the advantage. And this proves what I have said, that the "classic" style is nearly impregnable. How *could* you exaggerate it? You might as well undertake an architectural burlesque of the Parthenon. It is the Gothic, Byzantine, Moresque styles in literature which give the true material for travesty, just as they allow the greatest intellectual freedom.

THE ANCIENT. We shall have to dub you "the Pugin of Poetry." You've been taking a hint from Clough's *Bothie*.

THE GANNET. Which Zoïlus doesn't like because of the hexameters, although there never were lighter and less encumbered lines. With all Clough's classicism, his is a thoroughly Saxon-Gothic mind. Where will you find a more remarkable combination of richness and subtlety, of scholarly finish and the frankest realism? He is the only man who has ever made English phrase flow naturally in elegiac cadence. You, certainly, must remember, Ancient?

Where, upon Apennine slope, with the chestnut the oak trees immingle,
Where amid odorous copse bridle-paths wander and wind
Where under mulberry branches the diligent rivulet sparkles,
Or amid cotton and maize peasants their water-works ply,
Where, over fig-tree and orange in tier upon tier still repeated,
Garden on garden upreared, balconies step to the sky,—
Ah, that I were far away from the crowd and the streets of the city,
Under the vine-trellis laid, O my beloved, with thee!

ZOÏLUS. Oh, if you once begin to quote, I surrender.

THE ANCIENT. Let us all part on good terms; that is, each holding to his own opinion.

[*Exeunt.*

Night The Sixth

(*Enter* ZOÏLUS, *last, the others being already assembled: he throws down a newspaper on the table.*)

ZOÏLUS. There! Read the notice of my last article in ——, and tell me whether such criticism is apt to encourage the development of an American literature!

THE GANNET (*taking the paper*). I see where it is, by the dint of your thumbnail; there are only half-a-dozen lines, in what I should call the sneering-oracular style; but, Zoïlus, you have yourself done a great deal of this thing. Now the poisoned chalice is commended to your own lips. It is singular how little sympathy we have for others in such cases. When I am abused, somebody always sends the paper to me with lines drawn around the article, so that I shall not miss it; and all my friends are sure to ask, "Have you seen what So-and-so says?" When I am praised, nobody sends the paper, and my friends take it for granted that I have read the article. I don't complain of them: they are naturally silent when they agree, and aroused when they disagree, with the criticism.

THE ANCIENT. This notice is not fair, of course; but it is only a part of the prevalent fashion of criticism. One never can be sure, in such cases, whether the writer is really sincere in his judgment, or whether he has seized an opportunity to make a little literary capital for himself at the expense of the author. But I firmly believe in the ultimate triumph of *good work* over all these airs of superior knowledge and patronage and contemptuous depreciation. A friend of mine once devoted a great deal of time to a very careful and thorough article upon a poet who wrote in a dialect with which not ten men in this country are familiar. He afterwards showed me the critical notices it drew forth, and those which treated the subject with the coolest possible air of knowledge were written by men who knew nothing whatever about it.

GALAHAD. Then how is the ordinary reader ever to be enlightened?

THE ANCIENT. Most readers, I imagine, simply like, or

dislike, what they read. Authors greatly exaggerate the effect of inadequate criticism. Why, do you know that critical genius is much rarer than poetical? You are not afraid of the crude poets, who publish in newspaper corners, pushing you from your stools of song: why should you be annoyed by the critics who stand upon the same intellectual plane? Let me repeat to you what the greatest of critics, Lessing, said: "What is tolerable in my labors is owing solely to the critical faculty. I am, therefore, always ashamed or grieved whenever I hear anything said to the disadvantage of that faculty. It is said to crush genius, and I flattered myself that I had received in it something akin to genius." After Lessing, we can only accept Jeffrey with certain reservations, until we come to Sainte-Beuve. In this country, I call Lowell the first critic, though Whipple and Ripley have high and honorable places. A true critic must not only be a universal scholar, but as clear-conscienced as a saint and as tenderly impressible as a woman. After that he may be rigid as Minos.

ZOÏLUS. But you will certainly agree with me that a critical literature of the kind you describe—intelligent, appreciative, sympathetic, and rigidly just—is much needed?

THE ANCIENT. Never more than just now.

ZOÏLUS. What then, frankly, do you think of the tone of this paper, and the —— and the ——?

THE ANCIENT (*smiling*). They remind me so much of a little satirical poem of Uhland, *The Spring-Song of the Critic,* that I am comforted and amused, when I might otherwise be most annoyed. There never was a more admirable picture of that fine, insidious egotism of the spurious critic, which makes him fear to praise, lest admiration should imply inferiority. I can't remember the original lines, or I would translate it for you; but I might try an American paraphrase.

OMNES. By all means! (THE ANCIENT *writes.*)

ZOÏLUS. I feel as if I had had whisky poured into an open wound. You made me smart savagely for a few minutes; but I am already getting comfortable.

THE GANNET. There is no real comfort until you grow pachydermatous; I don't envy Galahad the seasoning that awaits him.

GALAHAD. I have part of my experience vicariously, in Zoïlus.

ZOÏLUS. The devil you have! Wait, my boy, until you publish your next poem! I'll return it to you, with interest!

THE ANCIENT. Uhland makes the critic walk out in the springtime and patronize Nature in his usual tone, the very tone of which Zoïlus complains. This is a rough imitation:

H'm! Spring? 'Tis popular, we've heard
  And must be noticed, therefore;
Not that a flower, a brook, or bird
  Is what we greatly care for.

The trees are budding: immature!
  Yet them, no doubt, admire some:
One leaf comes like another, sure,
  And on the whole it's tiresome.

What kind of bird is this we hear?
  The song is vague and mystic;
Some notes, we grant, are smooth and clear,
  But not at all artistic.

We're not quite sure we wholly like
  Those ferns that wave and spread so:
'Tis safe to doubt the things that strike
  The eye at once; we've said so.

An odor? H'm! it might be worse;
  There must be violets nigh us:
Quite passable! (For Shakespeare's verse,
  This time, will justify us.)

A native plant! We don't know what:
  Some, now, would call it pleasant,
But, really, we would rather not
  Commit ourselves at present.

But further time we will not waste,
  Neglecting our position:
To scourge the stupid public taste
  Is our peculiar mission.

And if men saw us, and should deem
(Those ignorant human brothers!)
That we the Spring *enjoyed*, we'd seem
No better than the others!

OMNES. Good! It reads like an original.

THE ANCIENT. It is one, properly: I have not translated any of Uhland's phrases. However, let us change the theme, for this is a dangerous hobby of mine, and we have other work before us. How many names are there still undrawn?

THE GANNET (*looking in the hat*). A dozen yet!

THE ANCIENT (*drawing*). James Russell Lowell—I must gird up my loins.

THE GANNET. Bayard Taylor.

ZOÏLUS. Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

GALAHAD. George H. Boker.

THE GANNET. The supply will be exhausted in two or three nights more, and then all our fun must come to an end. There will be nothing left for us but to travesty each other.

THE CHORUS. An excellent idea! Four times four, each doing each other and himself also, will give us sixteen imitations.

ZOÏLUS. No doubt you would enjoy it hugely. Turn to Lucretius for a picture of the delight of sitting on the safe shore and looking at the waves in a storm!

THE CHORUS. "The swelling and falling of the waves is the life of the sea."

ZOÏLUS. Go to, with your quotations! How easy it is to apply a high moral stimulus to somebody else's mind! Every poet, in his secret soul, admits his exquisite, quivering sensitiveness for the children of his brain. He may hide it from the sight of everyone; but it is there, or he would not be a poet; and he is always most artlessly surprised at the betrayal of the same feeling in another. *I*, of course, should coolly bear any amount of travesty; but how would it be with the Ancient, the Gannet, and Galahad?

THE GANNET. Zoïlus, you're a humbug! Take your pencil and begin your work: see how the Ancient is reeling off his lines!

(*They write steadily for fifteen or twenty minutes; then all have finished except* THE ANCIENT.)

THE ANCIENT. Mine is no easy task, and I'm afraid I have laid it out on too extensive a plan.

OMNES. Go on: we will wait.

THE ANCIENT (*ten minutes later*). You will sympathize with me, Galahad, for you know how much I like Lowell's poetry. I have followed him from the start, when he seemed like a vigorous young oak, and like an oak he has grown slowly, strongly, and with ever-broadening branches. But one can sport, as well as pray, under your large trees. (*Reads.*)

THE SAGA OF AHAB DOOLITTLE

Who hath not thought himself a poet? Who,
Feeling the stubbed pin-feathers pricking through
His greenish gosling-down, but straight misdeems
Himself anointed? They must run their course,
These later measles of the fledgling mind,
Pitting the adolescent rose with brown,
And after, leaving scars; and we must bear,
Who come of other stirp, no end of roil,
Slacken our strings, disorient ourselves,
And turn our ears to huge conchyliar valves
To hear the shell-hum that would fain be sea.

O guarding thorn of Life's dehiscent bud,
Exasperation! Did we clip thee close,
Disarm ourselves with non-resistant shears,
And leave our minds demassachusetted,
What fence 'gainst inroad of the spouting throng?
For Fame's a bird that in her wayward sweep
Gossips to all; then, ravenlike, comes home
Hoarse-voiced as autumn, and, as autumn leaves
Behind her, blown by all the postal winds,
Letters and manuscripts from unknown hands.
Thus came not Ahab's: his he brought himself,
One morn, so clear with impecunious gold,
I said: "Chaucer yet lives, and Calderon!"
And, letting down the gangways of the mind
For shipment from the piers of common life,
O'er Learning's ballast meant some lighter freight

To stow, for export to Macarian Isles.
But it was not to be; a tauroid knock
Shook the ash-panels of my door with pain,
And to my vexed "Come in!" Ahab appeared.
Homespun, at least,—thereat I swiftly felt
Somewhat of comfort,—tall, knock-kneed, and gaunt:
Face windy-red, hands horny, large, and loose,
That groped for mine, and finding, dropped at once
As half ashamed; and thereupon he grinned.

I waited, silent, till the silence grew
Oppressive; but he bore it like a man;
Then, as my face still queried, opened wide
The stiff portcullis of his rustic speech,
Whence issued words: "You'd hardly kalkelate
That I'm a poet, but I kind o' guess
I *be* one; so the people say, to hum."
Then from his cavernous armpit drew and gave
The singing leaves, not such as erst I knew,
But strange, disjointed, where the unmeasured feet
Staggered allwhither in pursuit of rhyme,
And could not find it; assonance instead,
Cases and verbs misplaced—remediable those—
Broad-shouldered coarseness, fondly meant for wit.
I turned the leaves; his small, gray, hungry eye
Stuck like a burr; agape with hope his mouth.
What could I say? the worn conventional phrase
We use on such occasions,—better wait,
Verse must have time; its seed, like timothy-grass,
Sown in the fall to sprout the following spring,
Is often winter-killed; none can decide;
A single rain-drop prints the eocene,
While crow-bars fail on lias: so with song:
The Doom is born in each thing's primitive stuff.

Perchance he understood not; yet I thrust
Some hypodermic hope within his flesh,
Unconsciously; erelong he came again.
Would I but see his latest? I *did* see;
Shuddered, and answered him in sterner wise.
I love to put the bars up, shutting out
My pasture from the thistle-cropping beasts
Or squealing hybrids, who have range enough

On our New England commons,—whom the Fiend,
Encouragement-of-Native-Talent, feeds
With windy provender, in *Waverley,*
And *Flag,* and *Ledger,* weakly manger racks.

Months passed; the catbird on the elm-tree sang
What "Free from Ahab!" seemed, and I believed.
But, issuing forth one autumn morn, that shone
As Earth were made October twenty-seventh
(Some ancient Bible gives the date), he shot
Across my path as sped from Ensign's bow,
More gruesome, haggard-seeming than before.
Ere from his sinister armpit his right hand
Could pluck the sheets, I thundered forth, "Aroint!"
Not using the Anglo-Saxon Shibboleth,
But exorcismal terms, unusual, fierce,
Such as would make a saint disintimate.
The witless terror in his face nigh stayed
My speech, but I was firm and passed him by.
Ah, not three weeks were sped, ere he again
Waylaid me in the meadows, with these words:
"I saw thet suthin' riled you, the last time;
Be you in sperrits now?"—and drew again—
But why go on? I met him yesterday,
The nineteenth time,—pale, sad, but patient still.
When Hakon steered the dragons, there was place,
Though but a thrall's, beside the eagle-helms,
For him who rhymed instead of rougher work,
For speech is thwarted deed: the Berserk fire
But smolders now in strange attempts at verse,
While hammering sword-blows mend the halting rhyme,
Give mood and tense unto the well-thewed arm,
And turn these ignorant Ahabs into bards!

Zoïlus. Faith! I think each of us imitates most amusingly the very authors whom he most admires. I might have made something fiercer, but it wouldn't have been more characteristic.

The Gannet. When you seem dissatisfied with Lowell's work, I can still see that you recognize his genius. I agree with you that he sometimes mistakes roughness for strength, and is sometimes consciously careless; but neither his faults nor his virtues are of the common order. I like him for the

very quality out of which both grow,—his evident faith in the inspiration of the poet. In *The Cathedral* he says "second thoughts are prose," which is always true of the prime conception; but he seems often to apply it to the details of verse. His sympathy with the Norse and Nibelungen elements in literature, and with the old English ballads, is natural and very strong. Perhaps it is not always smoothly fused with the other spirit which is born of his scholarship and taste and artistic feeling. I care less for that: to my mind, he is always grandly tonic and stimulating.

THE ANCIENT. I think the objection which Zoïlus makes comes simply from the fact that many of Lowell's poems are overweighted with ideas. Instead of pouring a thin, smooth stream, he tilts the bottle a little too much, and there is an impetuous, uneven crowding of thought. But I should rather say that he is like his own "Cathedral," large, Gothic, with many a flying buttress, pinnacles melting in the air, and now and then a grotesque gargoyle staring down upon you. There is a great range between *Hosea Biglow* and the *Harvard Ode*.

ZOÏLUS. I confess I don't like unmixed enthusiasm, and I'm frequently provoked to spy out the weak points of any author who gets much of it. How I should feel if it were bestowed on me, I can't tell; probably as complacent as the rest of you.

THE GANNET. O Zoïlus, when you know that *I'm* only considered "brilliant," and get the most superficial praise!

THE ANCIENT. Come, come! This is a sort of personality. Who's next?

GALAHAD. Zoïlus was ready first.

ZOÏLUS. Yes, and none too soon. Mrs. Barrett Browning was a tough subject for me, and I was glad to get her off my hands. Do you know that it is much more difficult to travesty a woman's poem than a man's? (*Reads.*)

GWENDOLINE

'Twas not the brown of chestnut boughs
That shadowed her so finely;
It was the hair that swept her brows,
And framed her face divinely;

Her tawny hair, her purple eyes,
The spirit was ensphered in,
That took you with such swift surprise,
Provided you had peered in.

Her velvet foot amid the moss
And on the daisies patted,
As, querulous with sense of loss,
It tore the herbage matted:
"And come he early, come he late,"
She saith, "it will undo me;
The sharp fore-speeded shaft of fate
Already quivers through me.

"When I beheld his red-roan steed,
I knew what aim impelled it;
And that dim scarf of silver brede,
I guessed for whom he held it:
I recked not, while he flaunted by,
Of Love's relentless vi'lence,
Yet o'er me crashed the summer sky,
In thunders of blue silence.

"His hoof-prints crumbled down the vale,
But left behind their lava;
What should have been my woman's mail
Grew jellied as guava:
I looked him proud, but 'neath my pride
I felt a boneless tremor;
He was the Beër, I descried,
And I was but the Seemer!

"Ah, how to be what then I seemed,
And bid him seem that is so!
We always tangle threads we dreamed,
And contravene our bliss so.
I see the red-roan steed again!
He looks, as something sought he:
Why, hoity-toity!—*he* is fain,
So *I'll* be cold and haughty!"

THE ANCIENT. You have done about as well as could be expected; but I am not sure that I should have recognized it,

without the red-roan steed and the thunders of blue silence. However, Mrs. Browning's force is always so truly feminine that one cannot easily analyze it. There is an underlying weakness—or, at least, a sense of reliance—when she is most vigorous, and you feel the beating of an excited pulse when she is most calmly classic. She often slips into questionable epithets and incongruous images, I grant you; but I can see the first form of her thought through them.

GALAHAD. Has any other woman reached an equal height in English poetry?

THE CHORUS. No!

THE GANNET. George Eliot?

ZOÏLUS. Now you bring the two squarely before my mind, I also say, No! I do not rightly know where to place George Eliot.

THE ANCIENT. Among the phenomena,—unsurpassed as a prose writer, and with every quality of the poet except the single one which is born and never acquired. It is amazing to see how admirable her verse is, and how near to high poetry,—as if only a sheet of plate-glass were between,—and yet it is *not* poetry. Her lines are like the dancing figures on a frieze, symmetry itself, but they do not move. When I read them, I am always on the very verge of recognizing her as a poet, always expecting the warm-blooded measures which sing their way into my own blood, and yet I never cross the invisible boundary.

THE GANNET. Shall we go on? I have Bayard Taylor, who took possession of me readily enough. I know his earlier Oriental better than his later poems. He doesn't seem to have any definite place yet as a poet.

ZOÏLUS. Then it comes of having too many irons in the fire.

GALAHAD. He may have made some mistakes; indeed, I think so, myself; but I find signs of a struggle towards some new form of development in his later poems, and mean to give him a little more opportunity. His rhetoric is at the same time his strength and his weakness, for it has often led him away from the true substance of poetry.

THE ANCIENT. There you are right, Galahad. Nature and

ıe sensuous delight of life for a while got the upper hand of im, and he wrote many things which aimed to be more, and 'erc not. I think better of his later direction; but how far it 'ill carry him depends on his industry and faith. Let us have ıe echo!

THE GANNET. (*Reads.*)

HADRAMAUT

The grand conglomerate hills of Araby
  That stand empanoplied in utmost thought,
With dazzling ramparts front the Indian sea,
    Down there in Hadramaut.

The sunshine smashes in the doors of morn
  And leaves them open; there the vibrant calm
Of life magniloquent pervades forlorn
    The giant fronds of palm.

The cockatoo upon the upas screams;
  The armadillo fluctuates o'er the hill;
And like a flag, incarnadined in dreams,
    All crimsonly I thrill!

There have iconoclasts no power to harm,
  So, folded grandly in translucent mist,
I let the light stream down my jasper arm,
    And o'er my opal fist.

An Adamite of old, primeval Earth,
  I see the Sphinx upon the porphyry shore,
Deprived of utterance, ages are her birth,
    As I am,—only more!

Who shall ensnare me with invested gold,
  Or paper symbols, backed like malachite?
Let gaunt reformers objurgate and scold,
    I gorge me with delight.

I do not yearn for what I covet most;
  I give the winds the passionate gifts I sought;
And slumber fiercely on the torrid coast,
    Down there in Hadramaut!

GALAHAD. That is extravagantly and absurdly like some of his poems. You seem to have had in your mind the very feature I mentioned,—his rhetoric. I doubt whether I shall succeed as well with Boker. He and Bayard Taylor are both Pennsylvanians, of nearly the same age, yet they are not at all alike.

THE ANCIENT. I remember Boker's first volume. There was a flavor of the Elizabethan English about it, which was unusual at the time. Then came his tragedy of *Calaynos,* one of the few successful modern plays formed on the old classic models; it ran for nearly a hundred nights in England. But you cannot imitate his best work, which is in this and the later plays; you must choose between his ballads and his sonnets.

GALAHAD. I have tried something half ballad and half song, in his style. (*Reads.*)

PHŒBE THE FAIR

I lie and I languish for Phœbe the Fair,
Ah, welladay!
The blue of her eyes, the brown of her hair,
The elbows that dance and the ankles that gleam,
As she bends at her washing-tub there by the stream,
Disdaining to see me, so what can I say
But, ah, welladay!

I met her last night when the moon was at full,
Alas and alack!
Bewitchingly hooded with mufflers of wool;
Her cloak of gray duffle she wore to a charm,
So boldly I offered the maiden my arm,
But she coolly responded, "You take the back track!"
Alas and alack!

Though I'm but a blacksmith and Hugo a lord,
Sing hey, nonny nonny!
Though I've but a hammer and he has a sword,
When he leans from his destrier Phœbe to greet,
I could smash him to cinders before her white feet,
For lords have no business with maidens so bonny,
Sing hey, nonny nonny!

I've given up Margery, given up Maud,
Ah, welladay, Phœbe!
But the snow of your bosom by love is unthawed.
The hues of my life are all fading, I guess,
As the calico fades in the suds that you press:
You are scouring the heart of your languishing G. B.
Ah, welladay, Phœbe!

THE GANNET. I remember those ballads, with a curious antique flavor about them; but I am best acquainted with Boker's sonnets. I don't think they have been appreciated as they deserve; but then, there are hardly twelve sonnets in the English language which can be called popular. Take one of Keats, three of Wordsworth, three of Milton, possibly Blanco White's one, and four or five of Shakespeare, and you have nearly all that are familiarly known. I'll try my hand at an imitation of Boker's grave, sustained measure. (*Writes.*)

THE ANCIENT. No one of our authors is so isolated as he, and it is a double disadvantage. When Philadelphia ceased to be a literary center, which happened very suddenly and unexpectedly, the tone of society there seemed to change. Instead of the open satisfaction of Boston in her brilliant circle of authors, or the passive indifference of our New York, there is almost a positive depreciation of home talent in Philadelphia. Boker is most disparaged in his native city, and most appreciated in New England. There is always less of petty envy where the range of culture is highest.

ZOÏLUS. No, there is not less, granting the culture to be higher; there is only more tact and policy in expressing it.

THE GANNET. Listen to Boker's 999th sonnet, dictated through me! (*Reads.*)

I charge not with degrees of excellence
That fair revolt which rested on thy name,
Nor burden with uncomprehended blame
The speech, which still eludes my swooning sense,
Though this poor rhyme at least were some defense
Against thy chill suspicion: yet, if Fame
Lift up and burnish what is now my shame,
'Twould mitigate a passion so intense.
This trampled verse awhile my heart relieves

From stringent pain, that cleft me as I turned
Away from beauty, graciously displayed;
And still one dominant emotion cleaves
The clouds, whereon thy passing luster burned,
And leaves behind it gulfs of blacker shade.

GALAHAD. How *could* you echo the tone and atmosphere of a sonnet, without adding one particle of sense?

THE GANNET. Attribute it to my empty head, if you please. I really cannot explain how these imitations arise in my mind. In the "trance condition," you know, one is void of all active consciousness.

ZOÏLUS. If you go on indulging such an idea, you will end by becoming a professional medium.

THE GANNET. Well,—at least I'll dictate to the world better verse than has ever yet come, in that way, from the unfortunate dead poets.

GALAHAD. Could you equal Demosthenes?

THE ANCIENT. For the sake of Human Reason let us drop that subject! There are some aberrations which dishearten us, and it is best simply to turn our backs on them. For my part, I crave music. Zoïlus, give us Herrick's *Julia* before the stirrup-cup!

Night The Seventh

THIS NIGHT the Gannet led the way to the more earnest conversation by returning to a point touched by the Ancient at their fifth meeting. He said: "I should like to know wherein the period of fermentation, which precedes the appearance of an important era in literature, and the period of subsidence, or decadence, which follows it, differ from each other."

ZOÏLUS. H'm! that's rather a tough problem to be solved at a moment's warning. I should guess that the difference is something like that between the first and second childhood of an individual. In the first case, the faults are natural, heedless, graceful, and always suggestive of something to be developed; in the latter, they are helpless repetitions, which point only towards the past.

GALAHAD. Are you not taking the correspondence for granted? Is it exactly justified by the history of any great era in literature?

THE ANCIENT. Not entirely. But there is surely an irregular groping for new modes of thought and new forms of expression in advance; and a struggle, after the masters of the age have gone, to keep up their pitch of achievement.

THE GANNET. Very well; you are near enough in accord to consider my next question. In which period are we living at present? The Ancient says that we have had the heroes and the *epigonoi,* and that there will be many fallow years: I, on the contrary, feel very sure that we are approaching another great era; and the confusion of which he spoke the other night is an additional proof of it.

THE ANCIENT. If you remember, I disclaimed any power of prediction.

THE GANNET. So you did; but I insist that the reasons you gave are just as powerful against your conclusions, unless you can show us that the phenomena of our day are those which *invariably* characterize a period of decadence. I have been reflecting upon the subject with more earnestness than is usual to me. In our modern literature I do *not* find echoes of any other than the masters who are still living and producing, especially Browning, Longfellow, and Tennyson; the faint reflections of Poe seem to have ceased; and the chief characteristic of this day, so far as the younger authors are concerned, is a straining after novel effects, new costumes for old thoughts, if you please, but certainly something very different from a mere repetition of forms of style which already exist. That there is confusion, an absence of pure, clearly outlined ideals of art, I am willing to admit. I accept the premises, but challenge the inferences.

GALAHAD. I am only too ready to agree with you.

THE ANCIENT. What I wish is that we should try to comprehend the literary aspects of our time. If we can turn our modern habit of introversion away from our individual selves, and give it more of an objective character (though this sounds rather paradoxical), it will be a gain in every way. A

period of decadence is not necessarily characterized by repetition; it may manifest itself in exactly such straining for effect as the Gannet admits. Poe, for instance, or Heine, or Browning, makes a new manner successful; what more natural, then, than that an inferior poet should say to himself: "The manner is everything; I will invent one for myself!" I find something too much of this prevalent, and it does not inspire me with hope.

Zoïlus. But the costume of the thought, as of the man, is really more important than the body it hides. And I insist that manner is more than symmetry, or even strength, as the French have been shrewd enough to discover. We are moving towards an equal brilliancy of style, only most of us are zigzagging on all sides of the true path. But we shall find it, and then look out for a shining age of literature!

The Gannet (*to* The Ancient). You were speaking of the introversion which is such a characteristic of modern thought. Can a writer avoid it, without showing, in the very effort, that he possesses it?

The Ancient. I doubt it. Goethe tried the experiment, and did not fairly succeed. It seems to me that the character of an author is relative to the highest culture of his generation. I have never found that there was much development without self-study; for the true artist must know the exact measure of his qualities, in order to use them in his one true way. This is a law as applicable to Shakespeare as to you; but he may choose to conceal the process, and you may choose to betray it. For a poet to speculate upon his own nature, in his poems, is a modern fashion, which originated with Wordsworth. To us it seems an overconsciousness; yet it may seem the height of naïve candor, and therefore a delightful characteristic, to the critics of two centuries hence.

Zoïlus. Well, upon my word, Ancient, you are the most bewildering of guides! You talk of eternal laws, you refer to positive systems, but when we come to apply them, there is nothing permanent, nothing settled, only a labyrinth of perhapses and may-seems. What are we to do?

THE GANNET (*offering the hat*). To draw your name and write.

ZOÏLUS (*drawing*). Julia Ward Howe: and I feel no mission within me! I shall miserably fail.

THE GANNET. Jean Ingelow: I need no mission.

GALAHAD. The saints help me! Walt Whitman.

THE ANCIENT. Buchanan Read: *I* must call on the Pope, to judge from the last poem of his which I have read. There are but one or two more slips in the hat: whom have we? Piatt, Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller! Galahad, I suggest that you return our yawping cosmos, and take Piatt in his stead; then let us add John Hay, and we shall have all the latest names together for our next and final night of diversions.

THE GANNET. I second your proposal. It will separate the last and most curious phenomena in poetry from those which preceded them. Perhaps we may be able to guess what they portend.

GALAHAD (*changing the name*). I am so grateful for the permission that I will write two; adding to the imitation of Piatt that of the author of *A Woman's Poems*,[1] in whose poetical fortunes, I imagine, he feels more interest than even in his own. I am attracted by her poems as the Gannet is attracted by Mrs. Stoddard's, though the two are wholly unlike. In *The Woman* I also see indications of a struggle between thought and language, a reluctance to catch the flying Psyche by the wings and hold her until every wavering outline is clear. Women poets generally stand in too much awe of their own conceptions.

ZOÏLUS (*solemnly*). I am possessed! *Procul, O procul,*—or at least be silent. (*Writes.*)

(*All write steadily, and finish their tasks nearly at the same time.*)

THE CHORUS. You came up so nearly neck and neck that only we who timed you can decide. The Gannet first.

THE GANNET. Then hearken to Jean Ingelow. (*Reads.*)

[1]Sarah M. B. Piatt. *A Woman's Poems* (1871) had just appeared. E. W.

THE SHRIMP-GATHERERS

Scarlet spaces of sand and ocean,
  Gulls that circle and winds that blow;
Baskets and boats and men in motion,
  Sailing and scattering to and fro.

Girls are waiting, their wimples adorning
  With crimson sprinkles the broad gray flood;
And down the beach the blush of the morning
  Shines reflected from moisture and mud.

Broad from the yard the sail hangs limpy;
  Lightly the steersman whistles a lay;
Pull with a will, for the nets are shrimpy,
  Pull with a whistle, our hearts are gay!

Tuppence a quart; there are more than fifty!
  Coffee is certain, and beer galore:
Coats are corduroy, minds are thrifty,
  Won't we go it on sea and shore!

See, behind, how the hills are freckled
  With low white huts, where the lasses bide!
See, before, how the sea is speckled
  With sloops and schooners that wait the tide!

Yarmouth fishers may rail and roister,
  Tyne-side boys may shout, "Give way!"
Let them dredge for the lobster and oyster,
  Pink and sweet are our shrimps today!

Shrimps and the delicate periwinkle,
  Such are the sea-fruits lasses love:
Ho! to your nets till the blue stars twinkle.
  And the shutterless cottages gleam above!

THE CHORUS. A very courteous echo. The Ancient was next.

THE ANCIENT. I think if Buchanan Read had confined himself to those short, sweet, graceful lyrics by which he first became known, he would have attained a better success. It is singular, by the by, that his art does not color his poetry,

as in Rossetti's case; no one could guess that he is also a painter. But I remember that Washington Allston is a similar instance. Read's best poems are those which have a pastoral character, and I have turned to them for his characteristic manner. (*Reads.*)

A Sylvan Scene

The moon, a reaper of the ripened stars,
  Held out her silver sickle in the west;
I leaned against the shadowy pasture-bars,
  A hermit, with a burden in my breast.

The lilies leaned beside me as I stood;
  The lilied heifers gleamed beneath the shed;
And spirits from the high ancestral wood
  Cast their articulate benisons on my head.

The twilight oriole sang her valentine
  From pendulous nests above the stable-sill,
And like a beggar, asking alms and wine,
  Came the importunate murmur of the mill.

Love threw his flying shuttle through my woof,
  And made the web a pattern I abhorred;
Wherefore alone I sang, and far aloof,
  My melting melodies, mightier than the sword.

The white-sleeved mowers, coming slowly home,
  With scythes like rainbows on their shoulders hung,
Sniffed not, in passing me, the scent of Rome,
  Nor heard the music trickling from my tongue.

The milkmaid, following, delayed her step,
  Still singing as she left the stable yard:
'Twas *Sheridan's Ride* she sang: I turned and wep',
  For woman's homage soothes the suffering bard!

Galahad. Why didn't you take Read's *Drifting?*

The Ancient. It is a beautiful poem, but would betray itself in any imitation. My object was to catch his especial poetic dialect.

The Chorus. Now, Zoïlus.

Zoïlus. I have followed exactly the Ancient's plan, but with the disadvantage of not having read Mrs. Howe's *Passion Flowers* lately; so I was forced to take whatever features were accessible, from her prose as well as verse. (*Reads.*)

The Coming Race

When with crisped fingers I have tried to part
The petals which compose
The azure flower of high aesthetic art,
More firmly did they close.

Yet woman is not undeveloped man,—
So singeth Tennyson:
Desire, that ever Duty's feet outran,
Begins, but sees not done.

Our life is full of passionate dismay
At larger schemes grown small;
That which thou doest, do this very day,
Then art thou known of all.

The thing that was ungerms the thing to be;
Before reflects Behind;
So blends our moral trigonometry
With spheroids of the mind.

Time shall transfigure many a paradox,
Now crushed with hoofs of scorn,
When in the beauty of the hollyhocks
The Coming Man is born.

His hand the new Evangels then shall hold,
That make earth epicene,
And on his shoulder, coiffed with chrismal gold,
The Coming Woman lean!

The Gannet. Oh, she should not lean on his shoulder! That is a dependent attitude.

Zoïlus. I know; but there is the exigency of an immediate rhyme, and "epicene" is a word which I could not sacrifice.

The Ancient. You have hit upon one of the vices of our literary class,—the superficial refinement which vents itself

on words and phrases. I have seen expressions of both love and grief which were too elegant for passion. The strong thought always finds the best speech, but as its total form: it does not pause to prink itself by the way, or to study its face in a glass. I beg pardon, Zoïlus; I am not speaking of, but *from*, you.

ZOÏLUS. As the sinner furnishes more texts than the saint.

THE CHORUS. Let us not keep Galahad waiting.

GALAHAD. I promised two, but have only finished the first. The Gannet must keep me company; for we were nigh forgetting William Winter, and he must be entertained before our board is cleared for the last comers. I dare say we shall remember others; indeed, I can think of several who ought to please the Ancient, for they simply give us their ideas without any manner at all.

THE ANCIENT. Sarcasm from Galahad is sarcasm indeed! I am assailed on all sides tonight. But let us have Piatt; we have all looked through his *Western Windows*.

GALAHAD. (*Reads.*)

THE OLD FENCE-RAIL

It lies and rots by the roadside,
  Among the withering weeds;
The blackberry vines run o'er it,
  And the thistles drop their seeds.

Below, the Miami murmurs
  He flows as he always flowed;
And the people, eastward and westward,
  Travel the National Road.

At times a maiden's glances
  Gild it with tints of dawn,
But the schoolboy snorts with his nostrils,
  Kicks it, and hastens on.

Above it the pioneer's chimney,
  Lonely and rickety, leans;
Beside it the pioneer's garden
  Is a wildering growth of greens.

It was built by the stalwart settler,
  One of the ancient race,
And the hands of his tow-haired children
  Lifted it into its place.

Years after the gawky lover
  Sat on it, dangling his heels,
While his girl forgot her milking,
  And the pen, with its hungry squeals.

Ah, the rail has its own romances,
  The scenes and changes of years:
I pause whenever I see it,
  And drop on it several tears.

ZOÏLUS. Don't you all feel, with me, that our imitations become more and more difficult as we take the younger authors who give us sentiment, fancy, pure meters—in short, very agreeable and meritorious work—but who neither conquer us by their daring nor provoke us by offending our tastes?

THE ANCIENT. We foresaw this the first evening, you will remember. There are many excellent poets who cannot be amusingly travestied,—Collins, or Goldsmith, for example. I was just deliberating whether to suggest the names of two women who have written very good poems, Lucy Larcom and she who calls herself "H. H." The former has rhetoric and rhythm, and uses both quite independently; her *Hannah Binding Shoes* struck an original vein, which I wish she had gone on quarrying. But her finest poem, *The Rose Enthroned,* could only be appreciated by about one per cent of her readers. "H. H." shows delicacy and purity of sentiment, yet her verse is not precisely *song.* Her ear fails to catch the rarer music which lurks behind metrical correctness. I don't well see how either could be imitated; so we will leave the Gannet and Galahad to their second task.

THE GANNET (*looking up*). What you have been saying also applies to my present model. Just the best poems in his *Witness* are so simple, so sweetly and smoothly finished, so marked by pure taste and delicate fancy, that a good travesty would have the air of a serious imitation.

ZOÏLUS (*to* THE ANCIENT). However we may disagree, I heartily join you in relishing a marked individuality in poetry.

THE ANCIENT. When it is honest, when it frankly expresses the individual nature, not too much restricted by the conventionalisms of the day, nor yielding too indolently to the influences of other minds. It is a notable characteristic of nearly all our younger poets that they wander, as if at random, over such a wide field, before selecting their separate paths. One cause of this, I should guess, is the seduction exercised by that refinement in form, that richness and variety of metrical effect, which marks our modern poetry. Twenty years ago our only criticism almost ignored the idea in a poem; it concerned itself with words, lines, or stanzas, italicizing every agreeable little touch of fancy, as a guide to the reader. Leigh Hunt made this fashion popular; Poe imitated him; and our young authors were taught to believe in detached beauties of expression instead of pure and symmetrical conceptions. Take the earlier poems of Stoddard, Read, Aldrich, Bayard Taylor, and others, and you cannot fail to see how they were led astray.

ZOÏLUS. Then, I suppose, their genuine poetical quality is tested by the extent to which they have emancipated themselves from those early influences, and discovered their proper individualities?

THE ANCIENT. Most certainly; and if you had grown up with the generation, as I have (being very little older), you would see, as I do now, how each is struggling out of the general wilderness. Boker had not far to go; he grew up under the broad wings of the old English dramatists. Stoddard first struck his highest performance in *The Fisher and Charon,* and Stedman in his *Alectryon,* though both are still best known by their lighter lyrics. Aldrich seems now to be aware of his native grace and delicacy of fancy, and Howells of the sportive, lightsome element, which the *Weltschmerz* of youth for a time suppressed. In his *Pastorals,* Bayard Taylor seems inclined to seek for the substance of poetry, rather than the flash and glitter of its rhetorical drapery. Piatt is turning more and more to that which lies nearest

him: in short, without pretending to decide how far each is successful, I think that each, now, is attending seriously to his own special work.

ZOÏLUS. How much longer do you give them, to reach their highest planes of performance?

THE ANCIENT. All their lives; and I refer you to Bryant, Emerson, Longfellow, and Whittier, as instances of continuous development. If our American atmosphere, as you said the other night, retards the growth of literary men, you cannot deny that it wonderfully prolongs the period of their growth.

THE GANNET. Here have Galahad and myself been waiting with our manuscripts, knowing that you two can never agree, but hoping that each might exhaust the other.

ZOÏLUS. This from you, for whom there is neither time, space, nor place, when you get fairly started! But who are you now?

THE GANNET. William Winter, at your service. (*Reads.*)

LOVE'S DIET

There be who crave the flavors rich
  Of boneless turkey and of beef;
There be who seek the relish which
  To palsied palates brings relief:
But I, in love's most patient hush,
Partake with thee of simple mush.

The pheasant seems so bright of wing,
  Because 'tis wedded with expense;
The rarer Strasburg pasties bring
  But fleet enjoyment to the sense;
Yet common things, that seem too nigh,
Both purse and heart may satisfy.

'Tis sweet to browse on dishes rare,
  When those who give them can afford:
Sweeter this unpretending fare,
  When thou art seated at the board,
With spoony fingers to unfold
The yielding mush's mass of gold.

Thou pour'st the milk that whiter seems
  Than is the orbit of thy brow,
And I indulge with lamblike dreams,
  And many a white and harmless vow;
I only wish that there could be
One bowl, not two, for thee and me.

ZOÏLUS. I was not expecting even so much success.

THE GANNET. Galahad was generous to give me the lighter task. It would have quite bewildered me to imitate *A Woman's Poems,* because their chief characteristic is a psychological one. If we had taken that wonderful volume of the songstresses of the *South Land,* now——

ZOÏLUS. That reminds me of a graceful Southern singer, who is like a bard alone in the desert,—Paul H. Hayne. Talk of *our* lack of sympathy and encouragement, here, in New York! What mate has he, for hundreds of miles around him? Why, there is not even the challenge of a rival lance; he must ride around the lonely lists, with neither antagonist to prove his mettle nor queen to crown him for success.

THE ANCIENT. An author *must* have an audience, however thin. We are told that Poetry is its own exceeding great reward; very well; but what if you sing your song into the air and never find it again in the heart of a friend! Genius without sympathetic recognition is like a kindled fire without flue or draught: it smolders miserably away instead of leaping, sparkling, and giving cheer. I have seen some parts of the country where a man of sensitive, poetical nature would surely die if he could not escape. We ought to be very tender towards all honest efforts in literature.

GALAHAD. The "Woman" whom I have imitated needs only the encounter of kind, yet positive minds, to give her dreams what they still lack—a distinct reality. I have purposely tried to exaggerate her principal fault, for it was the only thing I could do. (*Reads.*)

THE PLASTER CAST

The white thought sleeps in it enshrined,
  Though mean and cheap the substance seems,

As sleep conceptions in the mind,
  Hardened, and unreleased by dreams.

A parrot only! yet the child
  Stares with untutored, dim surprise,
And fain would know what secret mild
  Is ambushed in those moveless eyes.

His cherry from the painted beak
  Falls, when his gentle hand would give,
So early some return we seek
  From that which only seems to live.

Ah, let us even these symbols guard,
  Nor shatter them with curious touch;
For, should we break ideals hard,
  The fragments would not move us much.

ZOÏLUS. You have fairly bewildered me, Galahad. I thought there was an actual idea in the verses, but it slips from my hand like an eel.

THE ANCIENT. It would better answer for the travesty of a school which has a limited popularity at present, but to which *A Woman* does not belong.

GALAHAD. What school? I know of none such.

THE ANCIENT. The most active members would no doubt be much astonished if I were to tell them of it, but it is a kind of school nevertheless. I think it must have originated as long ago as the days of *The Dial*, and has not yet wholly gone out of fashion with a rather large class of readers. You will find plenty of specimens in newspapers of a mixed religious and literary character, and now and then in the magazines.

THE CHORUS. Give us its peculiarities.

THE ANCIENT. First, great gravity, if not solemnity of tone; a rhythm, sometimes weak, sometimes hard, but usually halting; obscurity and incoherence of thought, and a perpetual reference to abstract morality.

ZOÏLUS. Don't describe, but imitate.

THE ANCIENT. I could give you a stanza, by way of illustration. Furnish me with a subject—anything you please.

(Zoïlus *writes.*) *The Fifth Wheel!* that will answer; for the poets of this school always begin far away from their themes. The first stanza might run thus:

> From sunshine and from moral truth
> Let Life be woven athwart thy breast!
> The rapid cycles of thy youth
> But fetter Duty's solemn quest.

Omnes. Go on!

The Ancient. Now I may get a little nearer to the subject, though I don't clearly see how. (*After a pause.*)

> Vibration gives but faint assent
> To that which in thee seems complete,
> But time evolves the Incident
> Behind the dust-driven chariot's feet.
>
> Be well provided! Overplus
> Is Life's stern law, none can evade;
> Thou to the goal shall hasten thus,
> When selfish natures' wheels are stayed.

Zoïlus. Great Jove! to think that I never discovered the undying Laura Matilda in this prim disguise! It is the languishing creature grown older, with a high-necked dress, a linen collar, and all her curls brushed smooth! Ancient, you have purged mine eyes from visual film; this boon wipes out all remembrance of our strife.

Omnes. Enough for tonight! [*Exeunt.*]

Night The Eighth

(*All the members promptly on hand.*)

The chorus. How much does any author distinctly know of himself, or the quality of his works?

Zoïlus. Not much.

Galahad. Everything!

The Gannet. Only what makes a hit, and what doesn't.

THE ANCIENT. It depends on who and what the author is: you will find both extremes represented.

THE CHORUS. Yourselves, for instance!

ZOÏLUS. To be frank, I think I have more merit than luck. But when I come to contrast the degrees of popularity with the character of the performance, I am puzzled.

GALAHAD. Popularity has nothing to do with it. I know that some of my qualities are genuine, while other necessary ones are weakly represented. Our talk the last night satisfied me that I have not yet found the one best direction; but, on the other hand, one dare not force one's own development, and I think I see whither I am tending.

THE GANNET. Do you want to see where you stand now, or very nearly the spot?

GALAHAD. Show me if you can?

(THE GANNET *takes a sheet of paper and writes.*)

ZOÏLUS (*to* THE ANCIENT). Do you think that a poet is generally a correct judge of his own works?

THE ANCIENT. Please don't repeat that dismal platitude! A genuine poet is *always* the best judge of his own works, simply because he has an ideal standard by which he measures whatever he does. He may not be able to guess what will be most popular; he may attach an exorbitant value to that which is born of some occult individual mood, in which few others can ever share; but in regard to the quality of the calm, ripened product of his brain he cannot be mistaken! To admit that he can be, substitutes chance for law in the poetic art, and brings us down to the vulgar idea of a wayward and accidental inspiration, instead of conscious growth followed by conscious achievement.

ZOÏLUS. You astonish me.

THE ANCIENT. Then be glad; it is a sign that you are not poetically *blasé*.

GALAHAD. Never! One can never be that.

THE GANNET. Wait till you hear how your theorbo sounds in my ears. What I have attempted is a serious, not a comical, echo of your style.

OMNES. Give it to us!

THE GANNET. Keep Galahad's hands off me till I have finished. (*Reads.*)

THE TWO LIVES

Down in the dell I wandered,
  The loneliest of our dells,
Where grow the lowland lilies,
  Dropping their foam-white bells,
And the brook among the grasses
  Toys with its sands and shells.

Fair were the meads and thickets,
  And sumptuous grew the trees,
And the folding hills of harvest
  Were lulled with the fanning breeze,
But I heard, beyond the valley,
  The roar of the plunging seas.

The birds and the vernal grasses,
  They wooed me sweetly and long,
But the magic of ocean called me,
  Murmuring vast and strong;
Here was the flutelike cadence,
  There was the world-wide song!

"Lie in the wood's embraces,
  Sleep in the dell's repose!"
"Float on the limitless azure,
  Flecked with its foamy snows!"
Such were the changing voices
  Heard at the twilight's close.

Free with the winds and waters,
  Nestled in shade and dew:
Bliss in the soft green shelter,
  Fame on the boundless blue;
Which shall I yield forever?
  Which forever pursue?

OMNES (*clapping their hands*). Galahad! Galahad!

GALAHAD (*with a melancholy air*). It is worse than the most savage criticism. There is just enough of my own sen-

timent and poetical manner in it to show me how monstrously blind I have been in not perceiving that scores of clever fellows may write the same things, if they should choose. I ought to relapse into the corner of a country newspaper.

THE ANCIENT. Take heart, my dear boy! We all begin with sentiment and melodious rhythm,—or what seems to us to be such. We all discover the same old metaphors over again, and they are as new to us as if they had never been used before. Very few young poets have the slightest presentiment of their coming development. They have the keenest delight, the profoundest satisfaction, with their crudest works. With knowledge comes the sense of imperfection, which increases as they rise in performance. Remember that the Gannet is five or six years older than you, and can now write in cold blood what only comes from the summer heat of your mind.

GALAHAD. I understand you, and don't mean to be discouraged. But Zoïlus is fully avenged now.

ZOÏLUS. I'll prove it by my notice of your next poem in the ——. Let us turn to our remaining models. Whatever may be thought of them at home, they have all made a very positive impression in England; how do you account for it, Ancient?

THE ANCIENT. I can only guess at an explanation apart from the merits which three of them certainly possess. While the average literary culture in England was perhaps never so high as now, the prevalent style of writing was never so conventional. The sensational school, which has been so popular here as well as there, is beginning to fatigue the majority of readers, yet it still spoils their enjoyment of simple, honest work; so, every new appearance in literature, which is racy, which carries the flavor of a fresh soil with it, unconventional yet seemingly natural, neither suggesting the superficial refinement of which they are surfeited nor the nobler refinement which they have forgotten how to relish,—all such appearances, I suspect, furnish just the change they crave.

THE GANNET. But the changes of popular taste in the

two countries are very similar. This is evident in the cases of Bret Harte and Hay; but Walt Whitman seems to have a large circle of enthusiastic admirers in England, and only some half-dozen disciples among us. Do you suppose that the passages of his *Leaves of Grass,* which are prose catalogues to us, or the phrases which are our slang, have a kind of poetical charm there, because they are not understood?

ZOÏLUS. As Tartar or Mongolian *Leaves of Grass* might have to us? Very likely. There are splendid lines and brief passages in Walt Whitman: there is a modern, half-Bowery-boy, half-Emersonian apprehension of the old Greek idea of physical life, which many take to be wholly new on account of the singular form in which it is presented. I will even admit that the elements of a fine poet exist in him, in a state of chaos. It is curious that while he proclaims his human sympathies to be without bounds, his intellectual sympathies should be so narrow. There never was a man at once so arrogant, and so tender towards his fellowmen.

THE ANCIENT. You have very correctly described him. The same art which he despises would have increased his power and influence. He forgets that the poet must not only have somewhat to say, but must strenuously acquire the power of saying it most purely and completely. A truer sense of art would have prevented that fault which has been called immorality, but it is only a coarse, offensive frankness.

THE GANNET. Let us divide our labors. There is only one name apiece: how shall we apportion them?

ZOÏLUS. Take Joaquin Miller, and give Walt Whitman to the Ancient. Choose of these two, Galahad!

GALAHAD (*opening the paper*). Bret Harte.

ZOÏLUS. Then Hay remains to me.

(*They all write steadily for half an hour.*)

THE GANNET. Our last is our most difficult task; for we have to give the local flavor of the poetry, as well as its peculiar form and tone.

ZOÏLUS. I should like to know how much of that local flavor is genuine. I am suspicious of Bret Harte's California

dialect: some features of it are evidently English, and very suggestive of Dickens. Hay's is nearer the real thing. Miller's scenery and accessories also inspire me with doubt. Now, much of the value of this *genre* poetry (as I should call it) depends upon its fidelity to nature. Sham slang and sham barbarism are worse than sham refinement and luxury.

THE ANCIENT. Harte's use of "which" as an expletive is certainly an English peculiarity, which he may have heard in some individual miner, but which is not a feature of California slang. So, when Miggles says "Oh, if you please, I'm Miggles," it is an English girl who speaks. Aside from a few little details of this kind, Harte's sketches and poems are truly and admirably colored. He deserves his success, for he has separated himself by a broad gulf from all the literary buffoonery of this day, which is sometimes grotesque and always inane. But he is *picturesque,* and the coarsest humor of his characters rests on a pure human pathos.

GALAHAD. Somehow, the use of a vulgar dialect in poetry is always unpleasant to me; it is like a grinning mask over a beautiful face. And yet, how charming is *'Zekel's Courtship!*

THE ANCIENT. Lowell has done all that is possible with the New England dialect. He has now and then steeped it in an odor of poetry which it never before exhaled and perhaps never may again. Compare it, for instance, with the Scotch of Burns, where every elision makes the word sweeter on the tongue, and where the words which are its special property are nearly always musical. The New England changes are generally on the side of roughness and clumsiness. *With* becomes an ugly *'th,* instead of the soft Scotch *wi'; have* hardens into *hev,* instead of flowing into *hae;* and *got* coarsens into *gut,* instead of the quaint sharpness of *gat.* It is the very opposite of the mellow broadness of the Scotch; it sacrifices the vowels and aggravates the consonants; its raciest qualities hint of prevarication and non-committal, and its sentiment is grotesque even when it is frank and touching. Yet Lowell's genius sometimes so completely transfigures this harsh material that one's ear forgets it and hears only the finer music of his thought.

ZOÏLUS. Shall we read? I suggest that we take the authors,

tonight, in the order of their appearance. Walt Whitman leads.

THE ANCIENT. (*Reads*).

CAMERADOS

Everywhere, everywhere, following me;
Taking me by the buttonhole, pulling off my boots, hustling me with the elbows;
Sitting down with me to clams and the chowder-kettle;
Plunging naked at my side into the sleek, irascible surges;
Soothing me with the strain that I neither permit nor prohibit;
Flocking this way and that, reverent, eager, orotund, irrepressible;
Denser than sycamore leaves when the north-winds are scouring Paumanok;
What can I do to restrain them? Nothing, verily nothing.
Everywhere, everywhere, crying aloud for me;
Crying, I hear; and I satisfy them out of my nature;
And he that comes at the end of the feast shall find something over.
Whatever they want I give; though it be something else, they shall have it.
Drunkard, leper, Tammanyite, smallpox and cholera patient, shoddy, and codfish millionnaire,
And the beautiful young men, and the beautiful young women, all the same,
Crowding, hundreds of thousands, cosmical multitudes,
Buss me and hang on my hips and lean up to my shoulders,
Everywhere listening to my yawp and glad whenever they hear it;
Everywhere saying, say it, Walt, we believe it:
Everywhere, everywhere.

ZOÏLUS. By Jove, Ancient! you could soon develop into a Kosmos.

THE ANCIENT. It would not be difficult, so far as the form is concerned. The immortal Tupper, in his rivalry with Solomon, substituted semi-rhythmical prose lines for verse; but Walt, being thoroughly in earnest, often makes his lines wholly rhythmical. I confess I enjoy his decameters and hecatameters.

THE CHORUS. Bret Harte was the next appearance, after a very long interval. You will have to do your best, Galahad.

GALAHAD. A superficial imitation is easy enough, but I shall certainly fail to reproduce his subtile wit and pathos. (*Reads*).

TRUTHFUL JAMES'S SONG OF THE SHIRT

Which his name it was Sam;
He had sluiced for a while
Up at Murderer's Dam,
Till he got a good pile,
And the heft of each dollar,
Two thousand or more,
He'd put in the Chollar
For he seed it was ore
That runs thick up and down, without ceilin' or floor.

And, says he, it's a game
That's got but one stake;
If I put up that same,
It'll bust me or make.
At fifty the foot
I've entered my pile,
And the whole derned cahoot
I'll let soak for a while,
And jest loaf around here,—say, Jim, will you smile?

Tom Fakes was the chum,
Down in Frisco, of Sam;
And one mornin' there come
This here telegram:
"You can sell for five hundred,
Come down by the train!"
Sam By-Joed and By-Thundered,—
'Twas whistlin' quite plain,
And down to Dutch Flat rushed with might and with main.

He had no time to sarch,
But he grabbed up a shirt
That showed bilin' and starch,
And a coat with less dirt.

He jumped on the step
As the train shoved away,
And likewise was swep',
All galliant and gay,
Round the edge of the mounting and down to'rds the Bay.

Seven minutes, to pass
Through the hole by the Flat!
Says he, I'm an ass
If I can't shift in that!
But the train behind time,
Only *three* was enough,—
It came pat as a rhyme—
He was stripped to the buff
When they jumped from the tunnel to daylight! 'Twas rough.

What else? Here's to you!
Which he sold of his feet
At five hundred, 'tis true,
And the same I repeat:
But acquaintances, friends,
They likes to divert,
And the tale never ends
Of Sam and his shirt,
And to stop it from goin' he'd give all his dirt!

ZOÏLUS. You were right to take a merely comical incident. You couldn't possibly have echoed the strong feeling which underlies the surface slang of such a poem as *Jim*, which I consider Harte's masterpiece in his special vein.

GALAHAD. He never could have written that if he had been only a humorist. His later work shows that he is a genuine poet.

THE ANCIENT. Yes, that special vein is like many in the Nevada mines, rich on the surface, narrowing as it goes down, pinched off by the primitive strata, opening again unexpectedly into a pocket, but never to be fully depended upon. Harte's instincts are too true not to see this: I believe he will do still better, and therefore probably less popular work.

THE GANNET. Now, Zoïlus, give us Hay, and let *me* close with a war-whoop!

ZOÏLUS. I'm not quite sure of my Pike dialect, but I fancy the tone is rough enough to satisfy you. (*Reads.*)

BIG BILL

There's them that eats till they're bustin',
And them that drinks till they're blind,
And them that's snufflin' and spooney,
But the best of all, to my mind
(And I've been around in my time, boys,
And cavorted with any you like),
Was Big Bill, that lived in the slashes,
We called him Big Bill o' Pike.

If he put his hand to his bowie
Or scratched the scruff of his neck,
You could only tell by waitin'
To see if you bled a peck:
And the way he fired, 'twas lovely!
Nobody knowed which was dead,
Till Big Bill grinned, and the stiff 'un
Tumbled over onto his head!

At school he killed his master;
Courtin', he killed seven more:
And the hearse was always a-waitin'
A little ways from his door.
There wasn't much growth in the county
As the census returns will show,
But we had Big Bill we was proud of,
And that was enough to grow.

And now Big Bill is an angel,—
Damn me, it makes me cry!
Jist when he was rampin' the roughest,
The poor fellow had to die.
A thievin' and sneakin' Yankee
Got the start on our blessed Bill,
And there's no one to do our killin'
And nobody left to kill!

ZOÏLUS. Hay's realism, in those ballads, is of the grimmest kind. It is like the old Dance of Death, in a new form.

I have been greatly amused by the actual fury which his *Little Breeches* and *Jim Bludso* have aroused in some sectarian quarters. To read the attacks, one would suppose that Christianity was threatened by the declaration that angels may interpose to save children, or that a man, ignorant or regardless of ordinary morality, may redeem his soul by the noblest sacrifice. Really, it seems to me that to diminish the range of individual damnation renders many good people unhappy.

THE ANCIENT. Hay has made his name known in the most legitimate way,—by representing phenomena of common Western life which he has observed. He might have faintly echoed Shelley or Tennyson for a decade, and accomplished nothing. Those ballads are not, strictly speaking, poetry; but it is impossible that they should not give him a tendency to base his better poems on the realities of our American life.

THE CHORUS. Let us hear the Gannet's war whoop!

THE GANNET. There is nothing easier than to exaggerate exaggeration. (*Reads.*)

THE FATE OF THE FRONTIERSMAN

That whiskey jug! For, dry or wet,
My tale will need its help, you bet!

We made for the desert, she and I,
Though life was loathsome, and love a lie,
And she gazed on me with her glorious eye,
But all the same, I let her die!
For why?—there was barely water for one
In the small canteen, and of provender, none!
A splendid snake, with an emerald scale,
Slid before us along the trail,
With a famished parrot pecking its head;
And, seizing a huge and dark brown rock
In her dark brown hands, as you crush a crock,
With the dark brown rock she crushed it dead.
But ere her teeth in its flesh could meet,
I laid her as dead as the snake at my feet,
And grabbed the snake for myself to eat.

The plain stretched wide, from side to side,
As bare and blistered and cracked and dried
As a moccasin sole of buffalo hide,
And my throat grew hot, as I walked the trail,
My blood in a sizzle, my muscles dry,
A crimson glare in my glorious eye,
And I felt my sinews wither and fail,
Like one who has lavished, for fifty nights,
His pile in a hell of gambling delights,
And is kicked at dawn from bottle and bed,
And sent to the gulches without a red.
There was no penguin to pick or pluck,
No armadillo's throat to be stuck,
Not even a bilberry's ball of blue
To slush my tongue with its indigo dew,
And the dry brown palm-trees rattled and roared
Like the swish and swizzle of Walker's sword.
I was nigh rubbed out; when, far away,
A shanty baked in the furnace of day,
And I petered on, for an hour or more,
Till I dropped, like a mangy hound, at the door.

No soul to be seen; but a basin stood
On the bench, with a mess of dubious food,
Stringy and doughy and lumpy and thick,
As the clay ere flame has turned it to brick.
I gobbled it up with a furious fire,
A prairie squall of hungry desire,
And strength came back; when, lo! a scream
Closed my stomach and burst my dream.
She stood before me, as lithe and tall
As a musqueet-bush on the Pimos wall,
Fierce as the Zuñi panther's leap,
Fair as the slim Apache sheep.
A lariat draped her broad brown hips,
As she stood and glared with parted lips,
While piercing stitches and maddening shoots
Ran through my body, from brain to boots.
I would have clasped her, but, ere I could,
She flung back her hair's tempestuous hood,
And screamed, in a voice like a tiger-cat's:
"You've gone and ett up my pizen for rats!"
My blood grew limp and my hair grew hard

As the steely tail of the desert pard:
I sank at her feet, convulsed and pale,
And kissed in anguish her brown toe-nail.
You may rip the cloud from the frescoed sky,
Or tear the man from his place in the moon,
Fur from the buzzard and plumes from the coon,
But you can't tear me from the truth I cry,
That life is loathsome and love a lie.
She lifted me up to her bare brown face,
She cracked my ribs in her brown embrace,
And there in the shanty, side by side,
Each on the other's bosom died.

She's now the mistress of Buffalo Bill,
And pure as the heart of a lily still;
While I've killed all who have cared for me,
And I'm just as lonely as I can be,
So, pass the whisky,—we'll have a spree!

OMNES. The real thing!

ZOÏLUS. You've beaten us all, but no wonder! Much of Joaquin Miller's verse is in itself a travesty of poetry. Ancient, you talk about high ideals of literary art, and all that sort of thing: can you tell me what Rossetti and the rest of the English critics mean in hailing this man as the great American poet?

THE ANCIENT. One thing, of course, they cannot see,—the thorough spuriousness of his characters, with their costumes, scenery, and all other accessories. Why, he takes Lara and the Giaour, puts them in a fantastic, impossible country called "Arizona" or "California," and describes them with a rhythm borrowed from Swinburne and a frenzy all his own—and we are called upon to accept this as something original and grand! The amazed admiration of a class in England, and the gushing gratitude of one in America, form, together, a spectacle over which the pure, serene gods must bend in convulsions of inextinguishable laughter.

ZOÏLUS. Give me your hand! As Thackeray said, let us swear eternal friendship! You have often provoked me by persistently mollifying my judgments of authors; but, if you had done so in this case, I could not have forgiven you.

Joaquin Miller, and he alone, would prove the decadence of our literature: he is an Indianized copy of Byron, made up of shrieks and war-paint, and the life he describes is too brutal, selfish, and insane ever to have existed anywhere. A few fine lines or couplets, or an occasional glittering bit of description, are not enough make him a genius, or even an unusual talent.

THE GANNET. But the material—not *his*, the true, Arizonian material—is good, and he has shown shrewdness in selecting it. He is clever, in some ways, or he never could have made so much capital in England. His temporary success here is only an echo of his success there.

ZOÏLUS. If he were a young fellow of twenty, I should say, wait; but his is not the exaggeration of youth, it is the affectation of manhood.

GALAHAD. If anybody ever seriously said, "Alas!" I should say it now. I have picked up many a grain of good counsel in the midst of our fun, and the fun itself has become an agreeable stimulus which I shall miss. We must not give up our habit wholly.

ZOÏLUS. There is no end of intellectual and poetic gymnastics which we may try. I propose that we close with a grand satirical American *Walpurgis Night*, modeled on Goethe's Intermezzo in *Faust*.

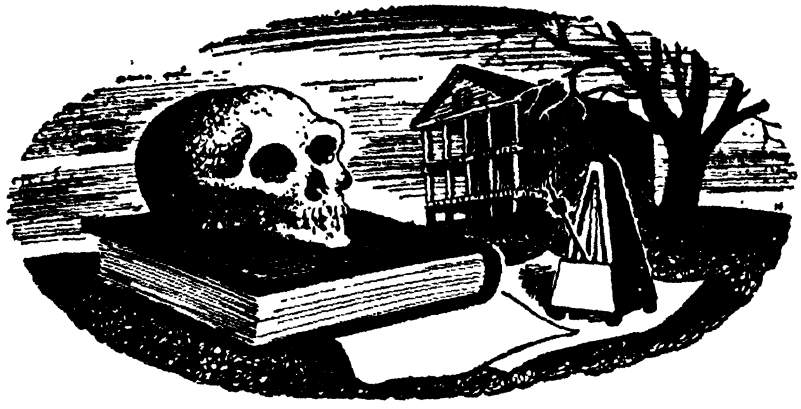
THE GANNET. That is a good idea, but how shall we carry it out?

ZOÏLUS. Let each write a stanza or two, satirizing some literary school, author, magazine, or newspaper, throw it into the hat, and then take another, as long as we can keep up the game. When all are exhausted, give the hat to the Ancient and let him read the whole collection of squibs, in the order in which they turn up.

OMNES (*eagerly*). Accepted!

[Here, I am compelled to state, my liberty as a reporter ceases. The plan was carried out, and I think it was not entirely unsuccessful. But our mirth was partly at the expense of others: many of the stanzas were only lively and good-humored, but many others thrust out a sharp sting in the last line. As I was not an accomplice, I was perfectly

willing that they should all be given to the public. Zoïlus did not seriously object; but the other three were peremptory in their prohibition. Even the Gannet confessed that he was not courageous enough to run the risk of making half-a-dozen permanent enemies by shafts of four lines apiece: he knew how largely the element of *personal* profit and reputation enters into American literary life, and how touchy a sensitiveness it develops. There was no denying this, for they related many instances to prove it. I yielded, of course, although it was a disappointment to me. After having thus entered authorship by a side door, as it were, I find the field very pleasant; and I withdraw now, since there is no alternative, with reluctance.—THE NAMELESS REPORTER.]



A FEW of Poe's stories were translated into French and published in 1847. Charles Baudelaire read them and "experienced a strange commotion." He looked Poe up in American magazines and found poems and stories of which he said that he had thought of writing them himself. Poe became an obsession with him. In a note in his journal, he indicates an intention of praying every morning to God, to his father, and to Poe. He published, between 1856 and 1865, several volumes of translations of the American; and Poe became one of the chief influences in the Symbolist Movement of the end of the century.

Stéphane Mallarmé, who translated *The Raven* and *Ulalume,* wrote a very fine sonnet on Poe, which was read at Baltimore, November 17, 1875, on the occasion of the unveiling of a tombstone for the poet.

Walt Whitman also attended this ceremony and left a record of his feelings in connection with it. He was obviously unsympathetic with those elements in Poe which delighted the French, and he seems rather dismayed that the poetry of his time was running to "morbidity" and "abnormal beauty" rather than taking the "democratic" direction which

he had hoped to induce it to follow. But, though Whitman declined to make a speech, he had "felt a strong impulse" to go to the meeting.

The occasion has been described by H. L. Mencken in the First Series of his *Prejudices:*

The myth that there is a monument to Edgar Allan Poe in Baltimore is widely believed; there are even persons who, stopping off in Baltimore to eat oysters, go to look at it. As a matter of fact, no such monument exists. All that the explorer actually finds is a cheap and hideous tombstone in the corner of a Presbyterian churchyard—a tombstone quite as bad as the worst in Père Lachaise. For twenty-six years after Poe's death there was not even this: the grave remained wholly unmarked. Poe had surviving relatives in Baltimore, and they were well-to-do. One day one of them ordered a local stonecutter to put a plain stone over the grave. The stonecutter hacked it out and was preparing to haul it to the churchyard when a runaway freight-train smashed into his stoneyard and broke the stone to bits. Thereafter the Poes seem to have forgotten Cousin Edgar; at all events, nothing further was done.

The existing tombstone was erected by a committee of Baltimore schoolmarms, and cost about $1,000. It took the dear girls ten long years to raise the money. They started out with a "literary entertainment" which yielded $380. This was in 1865. Six years later the fund had made such slow progress that, with accumulated interest, it came to but $587.02. Three years more went by: it now reached $627.55. Then some anonymous Poeista came down with $100, two others gave $50 each, one of the devoted schoolmarms raised $52 in nickels and dimes, and George W. Childs agreed to pay any remaining deficit. During all this time not a single American author of position gave the project any aid. And when, finally, a stone was carved and set up and the time came for the unveiling, the only one who appeared at the ceremony was Walt Whitman. All the other persons present were Baltimore nobodies—chiefly schoolteachers and preachers. There were three set speeches—one by the principal of a local high school, the second by a teacher in the same seminary, and the third by a man who was invited to give his "personal recollections" of Poe, but who announced in his third sentence that "I never saw Poe but once, and our interview did not last an hour."

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

LE TOMBEAU D'EDGAR POE

Tel qu'en Lui-même enfin l'éternité le change,
Le Poète suscite avec un glaive nu
Son siècle epouvanté de n'avoir pas connu
Que la mort triomphant dans cette voix étrange!

Eux, comme un vil sursaut d'hydre oyant jadis l'ange
Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu
Proclamèrent très haute le sortilège bu
Dans le flot sans honneur de quelque noir mélange

Du sol et de la nue hostiles, ô grief!
Si notre idée avec ne sculpte un bas-relief
Dont la tombe de Poe éblouissante s'orne

Calme bloc ici-bas chu d'un désastre obscur
Que ce granit du moins montre à jamais sa borne
Aux noirs vols de Blasphème épars dans le futur.

THE TOMB OF EDGAR POE

Translation and Commentary by ROGER FRY

Such as to himself eternity's changed him,
The Poet arouses with his naked sword
His age fright-stricken for not having known
That Death was triumphing in that strange voice!

They, with a Hydra's vile spasm at hearing the angel
Giving a sense more pure to the words of their tribe
Proclaimed aloud the sortilege drunk
In the dishonored flow of some black brew.

Oh, Grief! From soil and from the hostile cloud,
If thence our idea cannot carve a relief
Wherewith to adorn Poe's shining tomb

Calm block fallen down here from some dark disaster
May this granite at least show forever their bourn
To the black flights of Blasphemy sparse in the future.

This piece needs rather a literary commentary than an explanation. It contains two or three of Mallarmé's best-known lines:

"Such as to himself eternity's changed him" might serve as the theme for a dissertation on Death and the Absolute in the poet's works, while "Giving a sense more pure to the words of their tribe" might serve as epigraph to a Mallarméan esthetic.

"This sonnet," writes Mallarmé, "was recited at the unveiling, at Baltimore, of a block of basalt as a monument to Poe, with which America weighted down the poet's light shadow, *in order to make sure that it never reappeared.*" The ironical remark that is here italicized is a trace of the indignation that animates the sonnet.

The two quatrains appear to sketch the bas-reliefs whose absence from the monument the poet regrets in the first tercet. Eternity presents the poet under his true shape, as the angel of death; the age which misunderstood him is the "Hydra's vile spasm." The strangeness of the poet's voice (really an attempt at poetic purity) the vulgar take to be the effect of drink. The world, from earth to sky, shows itself hostile to genius. This hostility should form the subject of the bas-reliefs. If not, we can at least make this block a boundary stone against future stupidity.

There are few obscurities. "They" is an intentionally contemptuous reference to the members of the amorphous crowd, which divides into individuals for an instant, only to reunite

with "a Hydra's vile spasm." "The dishonored flow of some dark brew" may, in view of Mallarmé's more than metaphysical poetic habits, mean stout.

It seems harder to explain clearly "Calm block fallen down here from some dark disaster." It may be an allusion to the volcanic origin of basalt. At any rate, this idea of a cosmic catastrophe makes even stranger the notion of this immense, bare block, an erratic rock or giant meteorite. At first apparently meaningless, it rises black, calm, and strange, like Poe himself, "Such as to himself eternity's changed him." This is why we are not astonished at the irrelevance; the overtones of rock and poet are too strongly related. The "dark disaster" whence the block has fallen is subtly confused with the disasters of genius, the struggle of angel and hydra grows more cosmic, and Poe, if possible, more granitic. Thus the last tercet suddenly acquires a terrifying and desolate grandeur. For this idea of an erratic block suggests an immense, empty plain, from which all life has disappeared. (Notice how, in the first tercet, all idea of human beings has disappeared, and there is no longer question of any but elemental forces—rock and cloud.) The spectacle presented to the imagination is that of an empty earth and an atmosphere of desolation. The last line can now display its sinister extent. At the end of the sonnet, "Blasphemy," like a flock of crows, wheels in an empty sky unable to cross a black boundary, over which the wrath of God seems to hang.

EDGAR POE'S SIGNIFICANCE

Jan. 1, '80.

In diagnosing this disease called humanity—to assume for the nonce what seems a chief mood of the personality and writings of my subject—I have thought that poets, somewhere or other on the list, present the most mark'd indications. Comprehending artists in a mass, musicians, painters, actors, and so on, and considering each and all of them as radiations or flanges of that furious whirling wheel, poetry, the centre and axis of the whole, where else indeed may we so well investigate the causes, growths, tally-marks of the time—the age's matter and malady?

By common consent there is nothing better for man or woman than a perfect and noble life, morally without flaw, happily balanced in activity, physically sound and pure, giving its due proportion, and no more, to the sympathetic, the human emotional element—a life, in all these, unhasting, unresting, untiring to the end. And yet there is another shape of personality dearer far to the artist-sense, (which likes the play of strongest lights and shades) where the perfect character, the good, the heroic, although never attain'd, is never lost sight of, but through failures, sorrows, temporary downfalls, is return'd to again and again, and while often violated, is passionately adhered to as long as mind, muscles, voice, obey the power we call volition. This

sort of personality we see more or less in Burns, Byron, Schiller, and George Sand. But we do not see it in Edgar Poe. (All this is the result of reading at intervals the last three days a new volume of his poems—I took it on my rambles down by the pond, and by degrees read it all through there.) While to the character first outlined the service Poe renders is certainly that entire contrast and contradiction which is next best to fully exemplifying it.

Almost without the first sign of moral principle, or of the concrete or its heroisms, or the simpler affections of the heart, Poe's verses illustrate an intense faculty for technical and abstract beauty, with the rhyming art to excess, an incorrigible propensity toward nocturnal themes, a demoniac undertone behind every page—and, by final judgment, probably belong among the electric lights of imaginative literature, brilliant and dazzling, but with no heat. There is an indescribable magnetism about the poet's life and reminiscences, as well as the poems. To one who could work out their subtle retracing and retrospect, the latter would make a close tally no doubt between the author's birth and antecedents, his childhood and youth, his physique, his so-call'd education, his studies and associates, the literary and social Baltimore, Richmond, Philadelphia and New York, of those times—not only the places and circumstances in themselves, but often, very often, in a strange spurning of, and reaction from them all.

The following from a report in the Washington *Star* of November 16, 1875, may afford those who care for it something further of my point of view toward this interesting figure and influence of our era. There occurr'd about that date in Baltimore a public reburial of Poe's remains, and dedication of a monument over the grave:

"Being in Washington on a visit at the time, 'the old gray' went over to Baltimore, and though ill from paralysis, consented to hobble up and silently take a seat on the platform, but refused to make any speech, saying, 'I have felt a strong impulse to come over and be here today myself in memory of Poe, which I have obey'd, but not the slightest

impulse to make a speech, which, my dear friends, must also be obeyed.' In an informal circle, however, in conversation after the ceremonies, Whitman said: 'For a long while, and until lately, I had a distaste for Poe's writings. I wanted, and still want for poetry, the clear sun shining, and fresh air blowing—the strength and power of health, not of delirium, even amid the stormiest passions—with always the background of the eternal moralities. Non-complying with these requirements, Poe's genius has yet conquer'd a special recognition for itself, and I too have come to fully admit it, and appreciate it and him.

"'In a dream I once had, I saw a vessel on the sea, at midnight, in a storm. It was no great full-rigg'd ship, nor majestic steamer, steering firmly through the gale, but seem'd one of those superb little schooner yachts I had often seen lying anchor'd, rocking so jauntily, in the waters around New York, or up Long Island sound—now flying uncontroll'd with torn sails and broken spars through the wild sleet and winds and waves of the night. On the deck was a slender, slight, beautiful figure, a dim man, apparently enjoying all the terror, the murk, and the dislocation of which he was the center and the victim. That figure of my lurid dream might stand for Edgar Poe, his spirit, his fortunes, and his poems —themselves all lurid dreams.'"

Much more may be said, but I most desired to exploit the idea put at the beginning. By its popular poets the calibers of an age, the weak spots of its embankments, its subcurrents (often more significant than the biggest surface ones), are unerringly indicated. The lush and the weird that have taken such extraordinary possession of nineteenth century verse-lovers—what mean they? The inevitable tendency of poetic culture to morbidity, abnormal beauty—the sickliness of all technical thought or refinement in itself—the abnegation of the perennial and democratic concretes at first hand, the body, the earth and sea, sex and the like—and the substitution of something for them at second or third hand—what bearings have they on current pathological study?

THIS MONOGRAPH by Henry James on Hawthorne, published in 1879, must be the first extended study ever made of an American writer. It still remains one of the best; and it is one of the most satisfactory of the earlier books of James. It is curious to note the various ways in which the other American writers—Poe, Melville, James, and Eliot—deal with Hawthorne. They seem to get out of him rather different things; but they agree in being particularly interested in him and admiring him more, perhaps, than we usually do today. For the Americans who read Hawthorne in his lifetime he was certainly both original and important. The work of all three of these younger writers has certain fundamental features in common with the work of Hawthorne; and even Eliot glances back to pay a tribute to him.

The novel and short story in America had never before the end of the century particularly concerned itself either with personality or with social observation as fiction had in France, England, and Russia. We had regional and professional differences, which our novelists such as Cooper show, and we had *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* and in the latter half of the century we had social novelists of the second rank like

George Cable and William Dean Howells; but social categories were few and fluid, and, except in the South (see Faulkner), we had no such soil for personalities as Dickens or Tolstoy, say, had: where characters could take root and ripen like the cucumbers and vegetable marrows that Mrs. Nickleby's eccentric neighbor used to throw at her over the wall, or perfect themselves each in its species like the bears and the wolves and the woodcock that the country people in Tolstoy love to hunt. All through the nineteenth century our best stories—Poe's tales, *The Scarlet Letter, Moby Dick, Huckleberry Finn*—tend to be symbolical fables, moral parables, fairy tales. The first important exception to this is precisely Henry James, who regarded himself as a realist and set out to become, in the Balzacian sense, the secretary of American society. But some of the earliest of James's stories are poetical-philosophical legends which probably owe as much to Hawthorne as to the Balzacian *Peau de Chagrin* and *Le Chef-d'oeuvre Inconnu;* and he was to revert in *The Golden Bowl,* his last completed novel, to a symbolism that goes straight back to Hawthorne: the golden bowl itself and the curio dealer who sells it belong certainly to the world of *The Birth-Mark* and *The Minister's Black Veil.* And there is also the moral preoccupation, the refinement of the Puritan conscience, of which Hawthorne had been the great exemplar and which was to continue to motivate James through the whole of his literary career—an indication of Hawthorne's authority which is all the more impressive because James was not himself a New Englander but a New Yorker of Irish stock whose father had been a Swedenborgian liberal and who had been educated partly abroad.

HENRY JAMES

HAWTHORNE

I. Early Years

IT WILL BE NECESSARY, for several reasons, to give this short sketch the form rather of a critical essay than of a biography. The data for a life of Nathaniel Hawthorne are the reverse of copious, and even if they were abundant they would serve but in a limited measure the purpose of the biographer. Hawthorne's career was probably as tranquil and uneventful a one as ever fell to the lot of a man of letters; it was almost strikingly deficient in incident, in what may be called the dramatic quality. Few men of equal genius and of equal eminence can have led on the whole a simpler life. His six volumes of *Note-Books* illustrate this simplicity; they are a sort of monument to an unagitated fortune. Hawthorne's career had few vicissitudes or variations; it was passed for the most part in a small and homogeneous society, in a provincial, rural community; it had few perceptible points of contact with what is called the world, with public events, with the manners of his time, even with the life of his neighbors. Its literary incidents are not numerous. He produced, in quantity, but little. His works consist of four novels and the fragment of another, five volumes of short tales, a collection of sketches, and a couple of storybooks

for children. And yet some account of the man and the writer is well worth giving. Whatever may have been Hawthorne's private lot, he has the importance of being the most beautiful and most eminent representative of a literature. The importance of the literature may be questioned, but at any rate, in the field of letters, Hawthorne is the most valuable example of the American genius. That genius has not, as a whole, been literary; but Hawthorne was on his limited scale a master of expression. He is the writer to whom his countrymen most confidently point when they wish to make a claim to have enriched the mother tongue, and, judging from present appearances, he will long occupy this honorable position. If there is something very fortunate for him in the way that he borrows an added relief from the absence of competitors in his own line and from the general flatness of the literary field that surrounds him, there is also, to a spectator, something almost touching in his situation. He was so modest and delicate a genius that we may fancy him appealing from the lonely honor of a representative attitude—perceiving a painful incongruity between his imponderable literary baggage and the large conditions of American life. Hawthorne on the one side is so subtle and slender and unpretending, and the American world on the other is so vast and various and substantial, that it might seem to the author of *The Scarlet Letter* and the *Mosses from an Old Manse* that we render him a poor service in contrasting his proportions with those of a great civilization. But our author must accept the awkward as well as the graceful side of his fame; for he has the advantage of pointing a valuable moral. This moral is that the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion. American civilization has hitherto had other things to do than to produce flowers, and before giving birth to writers it has wisely occupied itself with providing something for them to write about. Three or four beautiful talents of trans-Atlantic growth are the sum of what the world usually recognizes, and in this modest nosegay the genius of Haw-

thorne is admitted to have the rarest and sweetest fragrance.

His very simplicity has been in his favor; it has helped him to appear complete and homogeneous. To talk of his being national would be to force the note and make a mistake of proportion; but he is, in spite of the absence of the realistic quality, intensely and vividly local. Out of the soil of New England he sprang—in a crevice of that immitigable granite he sprouted and bloomed. Half of the interest that he possesses for an American reader with any turn for analysis must reside in his latent New England savor; and I think it no more than just to say that whatever entertainment he may yield to those who know him at a distance, it is an almost indispensable condition of properly appreciating him to have received a personal impression of the manners, the morals, indeed of the very climate, of the great region of which the remarkable city of Boston is the metropolis. The cold, bright air of New England seems to blow through his pages, and these, in the opinion of many people, are the medium in which it is most agreeable to make the acquaintance of that tonic atmosphere. As to whether it is worth while to seek to know something of New England in order to extract a more intimate quality from *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance,* I need not pronounce; but it is certain that a considerable observation of the society to which these productions were more directly addressed is a capital preparation for enjoying them. I have alluded to the absence in Hawthorne of that quality of realism which is now so much in fashion, an absence in regard to which there will of course be more to say; and yet I think I am not fanciful in saying that he testifies to the sentiments of the society in which he flourished almost as pertinently (proportions observed) as Balzac and some of his descendants—MM. Flaubert and Zola—testify to the manners and morals of the French people. He was not a man with a literary theory; he was guiltless of a system, and I am not sure that he had ever heard of Realism, this remarkable compound having (although it was invented sometime earlier) come into general use only since his death. He had certainly not proposed to

himself to give an account of the social idiosyncrasies of his fellow citizens, for his touch on such points is always light and vague, he has none of the apparatus of an historian, and his shadowy style of portraiture never suggests a rigid standard of accuracy. Nevertheless, he virtually offers the most vivid reflection of New England life that has found its way into literature. His value in this respect is not diminished by the fact that he has not attempted to portray the usual Yankee of comedy, and that he has been almost culpably indifferent to his opportunities for commemorating the variations of colloquial English that may be observed in the New World. His characters do not express themselves in the dialect of the *Biglow Papers*—their language indeed is apt to be too elegant, too delicate. They are not portraits of actual types, and in their phraseology there is nothing imitative. But nonetheless, Hawthorne's work savors thoroughly of the local soil—it is redolent of the social system in which he had his being.

This could hardly fail to be the case, when the man himself was so deeply rooted in the soil. Hawthorne sprang from the primitive New England stock; he had a very definite and conspicuous pedigree. He was born at Salem, Massachusetts, on the 4th of July, 1804, and his birthday was the great American festival, the anniversary of the Declaration of national Independence.[1] Hawthorne was in his disposition an unqualified and unflinching American; he found occasion to give us the measure of the fact during the seven years that he spent in Europe toward the close of his life; and this was no more than proper on the part of

[1]It is proper that before I go further I should acknowledge my large obligations to the only biography of our author, of any considerable length, that has been written—the little volume entitled *A Study of Hawthorne*, by Mr. George Parsons Lathrop, the son-in-law of the subject of the work. (Boston, 1876.) To this ingenious and sympathetic sketch, in which the author has taken great pains to collect the more interesting facts of Hawthorne's life, I am greatly indebted. Mr. Lathrop's work is not pitched in the key which many another writer would have chosen, and his tone is not to my sense the truly critical one; but without the help afforded by his elaborate essay, the present little volume could not have been prepared.

a man who had enjoyed the honor of coming into the world on the day on which of all the days in the year the great Republic enjoys her acutest fit of self-consciousness. Moreover, a person who has been ushered into life by the ringing of bells and the booming of cannon (unless indeed he be frightened straight out of it again by the uproar of his awakening) receives by this very fact an injunction to do something great, something that will justify such striking natal accompaniments. Hawthorne was by race of the clearest Puritan strain. His earliest American ancestor (who wrote the name "Hathorne"—the shape in which it was transmitted to Nathaniel, who inserted the *w*) was the younger son of a Wiltshire family, whose residence, according to a note of our author's in 1837, was "Wigcastle, Wigton." Hawthorne, in the note in question, mentions the gentleman who was at that time the head of the family; but it does not appear that he at any period renewed acquaintance with his English kinsfolk. Major William Hathorne came out to Massachusetts in the early years of the Puritan settlement; in 1635 or 1636, according to the note to which I have just alluded; in 1630, according to information presumably more accurate. He was one of the band of companions of the virtuous and exemplary John Winthrop, the almost lifelong royal Governor of the young colony, and the brightest and most amiable figure in the early Puritan annals. How amiable William Hathorne may have been I know not, but he was evidently of the stuff of which the citizens of the Commonwealth were best advised to be made. He was a sturdy fighting man, doing solid execution upon both the inward and outward enemies of the State. The latter were the savages, the former the Quakers; the energy expended by the early Puritans in resistance to the tomahawk not weakening their disposition to deal with spiritual dangers. They employed the same—or almost the same—weapons in both directions; the flintlock and the halberd against the Indians, and the cat-o'-nine-tails against the heretics. One of the longest, though by no means one of the most successful, of Hawthorne's shorter tales (*The Gentle Boy*) deals with this pitiful persecution of the least

aggressive of all schismatic bodies. William Hathorne, who had been made a magistrate of the town of Salem, where a grant of land had been offered him as an inducement to residence, figures in New England history as having given orders that "Anne Coleman and four of her friends" should be whipped through Salem, Boston, and Dedham. This Anne Coleman, I suppose, is the woman alluded to in that fine passage in the Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter,* in which Hawthorne pays a qualified tribute to the founder of the American branch of his race:

> The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present, phase of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned progenitor—who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trod the unworn street with such a stately port, and made so large a figure as a man of war and peace—a stronger claim than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face hardly known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor, as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any of his better deeds, though these were many.

William Hathorne died in 1681; but those hard qualities that his descendant speaks of were reproduced in his son John, who bore the title of Colonel, and who was connected, too intimately for his honor, with that deplorable episode of New England history, the persecution of the so-called Witches of Salem. John Hathorne is introduced into the little drama entitled *The Salem Farms* in Longfellow's *New England Tragedies.* I know not whether he had the compensating merits of his father, but our author speaks of him, in the continuation of the passage I have just quoted, as having made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of

the witches that their blood may be said to have left a stain upon him. "So deep a stain, indeed," Hawthorne adds, characteristically, "that his old dry bones in the Charter Street burial ground must still retain it, if they have not crumbled utterly to dust." Readers of *The House of the Seven Gables* will remember that the story concerns itself with a family which is supposed to be overshadowed by a curse launched against one of its earlier members by a poor man occupying a lowlier place in the world, whom this ill-advised ancestor had been the means of bringing to justice for the crime of witchcraft. Hawthorne apparently found the idea of the history of the Pyncheons in his own family annals. His witch-judging ancestor was reported to have incurred a malediction from one of his victims, in consequence of which the prosperity of the race faded utterly away. "I know not," the passage I have already quoted goes on, "whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties, or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them—as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race for some time back would argue to exist—may be now and henceforth removed." The two first American Hathornes had been people of importance and responsibility; but with the third generation the family lapsed into an obscurity from which it emerged in the very person of the writer who begs so gracefully for a turn in its affairs. It is very true, Hawthorne proceeds, in the Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter,* that from the original point of view such luster as he might have contrived to confer upon the name would have appeared more than questionable.

Either of these stern and black-browed Puritans would have thought it quite a sufficient retribution for his sins that after so long a lapse of years the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, as its topmost bough, an idler like myself. No aim that I have ever cherished would they recognize as laudable; no success of mine, if my life, beyond its domestic scope, had ever been brightened by success,

would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. "What is he?" murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. "A writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life, what manner of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation, may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!" Such are the compliments bandied between my great grandsires and myself across the gulf of time! And yet, let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine.

In this last observation we may imagine that there was not a little truth. Poet and novelist as Hawthorne was, skeptic and dreamer and little of a man of action, late-coming fruit of a tree which might seem to have lost the power to bloom, he was morally, in an appreciative degree, a chip of the old block. His forefathers had crossed the Atlantic for conscience' sake, and it was the idea of the urgent conscience that haunted the imagination of their so-called degenerate successor. The Puritan strain in his blood ran clear—there are passages in his Diaries, kept during his residence in Europe, which might almost have been written by the grimmest of the old Salem worthies. To him as to them, the consciousness of *sin* was the most importunate fact of life, and if they had undertaken to write little tales, this baleful substantive, with its attendant adjective, could hardly have been more frequent in their pages than in those of their fanciful descendant. Hawthorne had moreover in his composition, contemplator and dreamer as he was, an element of simplicity and rigidity, a something plain and masculine and sensible, which might have kept his black-browed grandsires on better terms with him than he admits to be possible. However little they might have appreciated the artist, they would have approved of the man. The play of Hawthorne's intellect was light and capricious, but the man himself was firm and rational. The imagination was profane, but the temper was not degenerate.

The "dreary and unprosperous condition" that he speaks of in regard to the fortunes of his family is an allusion to the fact that several generations followed each other on the soil in which they had been planted, that during the eighteenth

century a succession of Hathornes trod the simple streets of Salem without ever conferring any especial luster upon the town or receiving, presumably, any great delight from it. A hundred years of Salem would perhaps be rather a dead weight for any family to carry, and we venture to imagine that the Hathornes were dull and depressed. They did what they could, however, to improve their situation; they trod the Salem streets as little as possible. They went to sea, and made long voyages; seamanship became the regular profession of the family. Hawthorne has said it in charming language. "From father to son, for above a hundred years, they followed the sea; a gray-headed shipmaster, in each generation, retiring from the quarter-deck to the homestead, while a boy of fourteen took the hereditary place before the mast, confronting the salt spray and the gale which had blustered against his sire and grandsire. The boy also, in due time, passed from the forecastle to the cabin, spent a tempestuous manhood, and returned from his world-wanderings to grow old and die and mingle his dust with the natal earth." Our author's grandfather, Daniel Hathorne, is mentioned by Mr. Lathrop, his biographer and son-in-law, as a hardy privateer during the War of Independence. His father, from whom he was named, was also a shipmaster, and he died in foreign lands, in the exercise of his profession. He was carried off by a fever, at Surinam, in 1808. He left three children, of whom Nathaniel was the only boy. The boy's mother, who had been a Miss Manning, came of a New England stock almost as long established as that of her husband; she is described by our author's biographer as a woman of remarkable beauty, and by an authority whom he quotes as being "a minute observer of religious festivals," of "feasts, fasts, new moons, and Sabbaths." Of feasts the poor lady in her Puritanic home can have had but a very limited number to celebrate; but of new moons, she may be supposed to have enjoyed the usual, and of Sabbaths even more than the usual, proportion.

In quiet provincial Salem, Nathaniel Hawthorne passed the greater part of his boyhood, as well as many years of his later life. Mr. Lathrop has much to say about the ancient

picturesqueness of the place, and about the mystic influences it would project upon such a mind and character as Hawthorne's. These things are always relative, and in appreciating them everything depends upon the point of view. Mr. Lathrop writes for American readers, who in such a matter as this are very easy to please.[1] Americans have as a general thing a hungry passion for the picturesque, and they are so fond of local color that they contrive to perceive it in localities in which the amateurs of other countries would detect only the most neutral tints. History, as yet, has left in the United States but so thin and impalpable a deposit that we very soon touch the hard substratum of nature; and nature herself, in the western world, has the peculiarity of seeming rather crude and immature. The very air looks new and young; the light of the sun seems fresh and innocent, as if it knew as yet but few of the secrets of the world and none of the weariness of shining; the vegetation has the appearance of not having reached its majority. A large juvenility is stamped upon the face of things, and in the vividness of the present, the past, which died so young and had time to produce so little, attracts but scanty attention. I doubt whether English observers would discover any very striking trace of it in the ancient town of Salem. Still, with all respect to a York and a Shrewsbury, to a Toledo and a Verona, Salem has a physiognomy in which the past plays a more important part than the present. It is of course a very recent past; but one must remember that the dead of yesterday are not more alive than those of a century ago. I know not of what picturesqueness Hawthorne was conscious in his respectable birthplace; I suspect his perception of it was less keen than his biographer assumes it to have been; but he must have felt at least that of whatever complexity of earlier life there had been in the country, the elm-shadowed streets of Salem were a recognizable memento. He has made considerable mention of the place, here and there, in his tales; but he has nowhere dilated upon it very lovingly, and it is noteworthy that in *The House of the Seven Gables,* the only one of his novels

[1]Henry James's study was written for the English Men of Letters series.

of which the scene is laid in it, he has by no means availed himself of the opportunity to give a description of it. He had of course a filial fondness for it—a deep-seated sense of connection with it; but he must have spent some very dreary years there, and the two feelings, the mingled tenderness and rancor, are visible in the Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter.*

> The old town of Salem [he writes] my native place, though I have dwelt much away from it, both in boyhood and in maturer years—possesses, or did possess, a hold on my affections, the force of which I have never realized during my seasons of actual residence here. Indeed, so far as the physical aspect is concerned, with its flat, unvaried surface, covered chiefly with wooden houses, few or none of which pretend to architectural beauty; its irregularity, which is neither picturesque nor quaint, but only tame; its long and lazy street, lounging wearisomely through the whole extent of the peninsula, with Gallows Hill and New Guinea at one end, and a view of the almshouse at the other—such being the features of my native town it would be quite as reasonable to form a sentimental attachment to a disarranged checkerboard.

But he goes on to say that he has never divested himself of the sense of intensely belonging to it—that the spell of the continuity of his life with that of his predecessors has never been broken. "It is no matter that the place is joyless for him; that he is weary of the old wooden houses, the mud and the dust, the dead level of site and sentiment, the chill east wind, and the chilliest of social atmospheres,—all these and whatever faults besides he may see or imagine, are nothing to the purpose. The spell survives, and just as powerfully as if the natal spot were an earthly paradise." There is a very American quality in this perpetual consciousness of a spell on Hawthorne's part; it is only in a country where newness and change and brevity of tenure are the common substance of life that the fact of one's ancestors having lived for a hundred and seventy years in a single spot would become an element of one's morality. It is only an imaginative American that would feel urged to keep reverting to this circumstance, to keep analyzing and cunningly considering it.

The Salem of today has, as New England towns go, a

physiognomy of its own, and in spite of Hawthorne's analogy of the disarranged draughtboard, it is a decidedly agreeable one. The spreading elms in its streets, the proportion of large, square, honorable-looking houses, suggesting an easy, copious material life, the little gardens, the grassy waysides, the open windows, the air of space and salubrity and decency, and above all the intimation of larger antecedents—these things compose a picture which has little of the element that painters call depth of tone, but which is not without something that they would admit to be style. To English eyes the oldest and most honorable of the smaller American towns must seem in a manner primitive and rustic; the shabby, straggling, village-quality appears marked in them, and their social tone is not unnaturally inferred to bear the village stamp. Village-like they are, and it would be no gross incivility to describe them as large, respectable, prosperous, democratic villages. But even a village, in a great and vigorous democracy, where there are no overshadowing squires, where the "county" has no social existence, where the villagers are conscious of no superincumbent strata of gentility, piled upwards into vague regions of privilege—even a village is not an institution to accept of more or less graceful patronage; it thinks extremely well of itself, and is absolute in its own regard. Salem is a seaport, but it is a seaport deserted and decayed. It belongs to that rather melancholy group of old coast towns, scattered along the great sea-face of New England, and of which the list is completed by the names of Portsmouth, Plymouth, New Bedford, Newburyport, Newport—superannuated centers of the traffic with foreign lands, which have seen their trade carried away from them by the greater cities. As Hawthorne says, their ventures have gone "to swell, needlessly and imperceptibly, the mighty flood of commerce at New York or Boston." Salem, at the beginning of the present century, played a great part in the Eastern trade; it was the residence of enterprising shipowners who despatched their vessels to Indian and Chinese seas. It was a place of large fortunes, many of which have remained, though the activity that produced them has passed away. These successful traders constituted what Hawthorne calls "the aristocratic

class." He alludes in one of his slighter sketches (*The Sister Years*) to the sway of this class and the "moral influence of wealth" having been more marked in Salem than in any other New England town. The sway, we may believe, was on the whole gently exercised, and the moral influence of wealth was not exerted in the cause of immorality. Hawthorne was probably but imperfectly conscious of an advantage which familiarity had made stale—the fact that he lived in the most democratic and most virtuous of modern communities. Of the virtue it is but civil to suppose that his own family had a liberal share; but not much of the wealth, apparently, came into their way. Hawthorne was not born to a patrimony, and his income, later in life, never exceeded very modest proportions.

Of his childish years there appears to be nothing very definite to relate, though his biographer devotes a good many graceful pages to them. There is a considerable sameness in the behavior of small boys, and it is probable that if we were acquainted with the details of our author's infantine career we should find it to be made up of the same pleasures and pains as that of many ingenuous lads for whom fame has had nothing in keeping.

The absence of precocious symptoms of genius is on the whole more striking in the lives of men who have distinguished themselves than their juvenile promise; though it must be added that Mr. Lathrop has made out, as he was almost in duty bound to do, a very good case in favor of Hawthorne's having been an interesting child. He was not at any time what would be called a sociable man, and there is therefore nothing unexpected in the fact that he was fond of long walks in which he was not known to have had a companion. "Juvenile literature" was but scantily known at that time, and the enormous and extraordinary contribution made by the United States to this department of human happiness was locked in the bosom of futurity. The young Hawthorne, therefore, like many of his contemporaries, was constrained to amuse himself, for want of anything better, with the *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Faery Queen*. A boy may have worse company than Bunyan and Spenser, and it is

very probable that in his childish rambles our author may have had associates of whom there could be no record. When he was nine years old he met with an accident at school which threatened for a while to have serious results. He was struck on the foot by a ball and so severely lamed that he was kept at home for a long time, and had not completely recovered before his twelfth year. His school, it is to be supposed, was the common day school of New England—the primary factor in that extraordinarily pervasive system of instruction in the plainer branches of learning which forms one of the principal ornaments of American life. In 1818, when he was fourteen years old, he was taken by his mother to live in the house of an uncle, her brother, who was established in the town of Raymond, near Lake Sebago, in the State of Maine. The immense State of Maine, in the year 1818, must have had an even more magnificently natural character than it possesses at the present day, and the uncle's dwelling, in consequence of being in a little smarter style than the primitive structures that surrounded it, was known by the villagers as Manning's Folly. Mr. Lathrop pronounces this region to be of a "weird and woodsy" character; and Hawthorne, later in life, spoke of it to a friend as the place where "I first got my cursed habits of solitude." The outlook, indeed, for an embryonic novelist, would not seem to have been cheerful; the social dreariness of a small New England community lost amid the forests of Maine, at the beginning of the present century, must have been consummate. But for a boy with a relish for solitude there were many natural resources, and we can understand that Hawthorne should in after years have spoken very tenderly of this episode. "I lived in Maine like a bird of the air, so perfect was the freedom I enjoyed." During the long summer days he roamed, gun in hand, through the great woods, and during the moonlight nights of winter, says his biographer, quoting another informant, "he would skate until midnight, all alone, upon Sebago Lake, with the deep shadows of the icy hills on either hand."

In 1819 he was sent back to Salem to school, and in the following year he wrote to his mother, who had remained at

Raymond (the boy had found a home at Salem with another uncle), "I have left school and have begun to fit for college under Benjm. L. Oliver, Lawyer. So you are in danger of having one learned man in your family. . . . I get my lessons at home and recite them to him (Mr. Oliver) at seven o'clock in the morning. . . . Shall you want me to be a Minister, Doctor, or Lawyer? A Minister I will not be." He adds, at the close of this epistle: "O how I wish I was again with you, with nothing to do but to go a-gunning! But the happiest days of my life are gone." In 1821, in his seventeenth year, he entered Bowdoin College, at Brunswick, Maine. This institution was in the year 1821—a quarter of a century after its foundation—a highly honorable, but not a very elaborately organized, nor a particularly impressive, seat of learning. I say it was not impressive, but I immediately remember that impressions depend upon the minds receiving them; and that to a group of simple New England lads, upwards of sixty years ago, the halls and groves of Bowdoin, neither dense nor lofty though they can have been, may have seemed replete with academic stateliness. It was a homely, simple, frugal "country college," of the old-fashioned American stamp; exerting within its limits a civilizing influence, working, amid the forests and the lakes, the log-houses and clearings, toward the amenities and humanities and other collegiate graces, and offering a very sufficient education to the future lawyers, merchants, clergymen, politicians, and editors, of the very active and knowledge-loving community that supported it. It did more than this—it numbered poets and statesmen among its undergraduates, and on the roll call of its sons it has several distinguished names. Among Hawthorne's fellow-students was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who divides with our author the honor of being the most distinguished of American men of letters. I know not whether Mr. Longfellow was especially intimate with Hawthorne at this period (they were very good friends later in life), but with two of his companions he formed a friendship which lasted always. One of these was Franklin Pierce, who was destined to fill what Hawthorne calls "the most august position in the world." Pierce was elected President of the

United States in 1852. The other was Horatio Bridge, who afterwards served with distinction in the Navy, and to whom the charming prefatory letter of the collection of tales published under the name of the *Snow Image* is addressed. "If anybody is responsible at this day for my being an author it is yourself. I know not whence your faith came; but while we were lads together at a country college—gathering blueberries in study-hours under those tall academic pines; or watching the great logs as they tumbled along the current of the Androscoggin; or shooting pigeons and gray squirrels in the woods; or bat-fowling in the summer twilight; or catching trout in that shadowy little stream which, I suppose, is still wandering riverward through the forest—though you and I will never cast a line in it again—two idle lads, in short (as we need not fear to acknowledge now), doing a hundred things the faculty never heard of, or else it had been worse for us—still it was your prognostic of your friend's destiny that he was to be a writer of fiction." That is a very pretty picture, but it is a picture of happy urchins at school, rather than of undergraduates "panting," as Macaulay says, "for one and twenty." Poor Hawthorne was indeed thousands of miles away from Oxford and Cambridge; that touch about the blueberries and the logs on the Androscoggin tells the whole story, and strikes the note, as it were, of his circumstances. But if the pleasures at Bowdoin were not expensive, so neither were the penalties. The amount of Hawthorne's collegiate bill for one term was less than 4*l.*, and of this sum more than 9*s.* was made up of fines. The fines, however, were not heavy. Mr. Lathrop prints a letter addressed by the President to "Mrs. Elizabeth C. Hathorne," requesting her co-operation with the officers of this college, "in the attempt to induce your son faithfully to observe the laws of this institution." He has just been fined fifty cents for playing cards for money during the preceding term. "Perhaps he might not have gamed," the professor adds, "were it not for the influence of a student whom we have dismissed from college." The biographer quotes a letter from Hawthorne to one of his sisters, in which the writer says, in allusion to this

remark, that it is a great mistake to think that he has been led away by the wicked ones. "I was fully as willing to play as the person he suspects of having enticed me, and would have been influenced by no one. I have a great mind to commence playing again, merely to show him that I scorn to be seduced by another into anything wrong." There is something in these few words that accords with the impression that the observant reader of Hawthorne gathers of the personal character that underlay his duskily-sportive imagination—an impression of simple manliness and transparent honesty.

He appears to have been a fair scholar, but not a brilliant one; and it is very probable that as the standard of scholarship at Bowdoin was not high, he graduated nonetheless comfortably on this account. Mr. Lathrop is able to testify to the fact, by no means a surprising one, that he wrote verses at college, though the few stanzas that the biographer quotes are not such as to make us especially regret that his rhyming mood was a transient one.

> The ocean hath its silent caves,
> Deep, quiet, and alone.
> Though there be fury on the waves,
> Beneath them there is none.

That quatrain may suffice to decorate our page. And in connection with his college days I may mention his first novel, a short romance entitled *Fanshawe,* which was published in Boston in 1828, three years after he graduated. It was probably also written after that event, but the scene of the tale is laid at Bowdoin (which figures under an altered name), and Hawthorne's attitude with regard to the book, even shortly after it was published, was such as to assign it to this boyish period. It was issued anonymously, but he so repented of his venture that he annihilated the edition, of which, according to Mr. Lathrop, "not half-a-dozen copies are now known to be extant." I have seen none of these rare volumes, and I know nothing of *Fanshawe* but what the writer just quoted relates. It is the story of a young lady who goes in

rather an odd fashion to reside at "Harley College" (equivalent of Bowdoin), under the care and guardianship of Dr. Melmoth, the President of the institution, a venerable, amiable, unworldly, and henpecked scholar. Here she becomes very naturally an object of interest to two of the students; in regard to whom I cannot do better than quote Mr. Lathrop. One of these young men "is Edward Wolcott, a wealthy, handsome, generous, healthy young fellow from one of the seaport towns; and the other Fanshawe, the hero, who is a poor but ambitious recluse, already passing into a decline through overmuch devotion to books and meditation. Fanshawe, though the deeper nature of the two, and intensely moved by his new passion, perceiving that a union between himself and Ellen could not be a happy one, resigns the hope of it from the beginning. But circumstances bring him into intimate relation with her. The real action of the book, after the preliminaries, takes up only some three days, and turns upon the attempt of a man named Butler to entice Ellen away under his protection, then marry her, and secure the fortune to which she is heiress. This scheme is partly frustrated by circumstances, and Butler's purpose towards Ellen thus becomes a much more sinister one. From this she is rescued by Fanshawe, and knowing that he loves her, but is concealing his passion, she gives him the opportunity and the right to claim her hand. For a moment the rush of desire and hope is so great that he hesitates; then he refuses to take advantage of her generosity, and parts with her for a last time. Ellen becomes engaged to Wolcott, who had won her heart from the first; and Fanshawe, sinking into rapid consumption, dies before his class graduates." The story must have had a good deal of innocent lightness; and it is a proof of how little the world of observation lay open to Hawthorne, at this time, that he should have had no other choice than to make his little drama go forward between the rather naked walls of Bowdoin, where the presence of his heroine was an essential incongruity. He was twenty-four years old, but the 'world," in its social sense, had not disclosed itself to him. He had, however, already, at moments, a very pretty writer's touch, as witness this passage, quoted by Mr. Lathrop, and

which is worth transcribing. The heroine has gone off with the nefarious Butler, and the good Dr. Melmoth starts in pursuit of her, attended by young Wolcott.

"Alas, youth, these are strange times," observed the President, "when a doctor of divinity and an undergraduate set forth, like a knight-errant and his squire, in search of a stray damsel. Methinks I am an epitome of the church militant, or a new species of polemical divinity. Pray Heaven, however, there be no such encounter in store for us; for I utterly forgot to provide myself with weapons."

"I took some thought for that matter, reverend knight," replied Edward, whose imagination was highly tickled by Dr. Melmoth's chivalrous comparison.

"Aye, I see that you have girded on a sword," said the divine. "But wherewith shall I defend myself? my hand being empty except of this golden-headed staff, the gift of Mr. Langton."

"One of these, if you will accept it," answered Edward, exhibiting a brace of pistols, "will serve to begin the conflict before you join the battle hand to hand."

"Nay, I shall find little safety in meddling with that deadly instrument, since I know not accurately from which end proceeds the bullet," said Dr. Melmoth. "But were it not better, since we are so well provided with artillery, to betake ourselves, in the event of an encounter, to some stone wall or other place of strength?"

"If I may presume to advise," said the squire, "you, as being most valiant and experienced, should ride forward, lance in hand (your long staff serving for a lance), while I annoy the enemy from afar."

"Like Teucer, behind the shield of Ajax," interrupted Dr. Melmoth, "or David with his stone and sling. No, no, young man; I have left unfinished in my study a learned treatise, important not only to the present age, but to posterity, for whose sake I must take heed to my safety. But, lo! who rides yonder?"

On leaving college Hawthorne had gone back to live at Salem.

II. Early Manhood

THE twelve years that followed were not the happiest or most brilliant phase of Hawthorne's life; they strike me

indeed as having had an altogether peculiar dreariness. They had their uses; they were the period of incubation of the admirable compositions which eventually brought him reputation and prosperity. But of their actual aridity the young man must have had a painful consciousness; he never lost the impression of it. Mr. Lathrop quotes a phrase to this effect from one of his letters, late in life: "I am disposed to thank God for the gloom and chill of my early life, in the hope that my share of adversity came then, when I bore it alone." And the same writer alludes to a touching passage in the English *Note-Books,* which I shall quote entire:

I think I have been happier this Christmas (1854) than ever before—by my own fireside, and with my wife and children about me—more content to enjoy what I have, less anxious for anything beyond it, in this life. My early life was perhaps a good preparation for the declining half of life; it having been such a blank that any thereafter would compare favorably with it. For a long, long while, I have occasionally been visited with a singular dream; and I have an impression that I have dreamed it ever since I have been in England. It is, that I am still at college, or, sometimes, even, at school—and there is a sense that I have been there unconscionably long, and have quite failed to make such progress as my contemporaries have done; and I seem to meet some of them with a feeling of shame and depression that broods over me as I think of it, even when awake. This dream, recurring all through these twenty or thirty years, must be one of the effects of that heavy seclusion in which I shut myself up for twelve years after leaving college, when everybody moved onward and left me behind. How strange that it should come now, when I may call myself famous and prosperous!—when I am happy too.

The allusion here is to a state of solitude which was the young man's positive choice at the time—or into which he drifted at least under the pressure of his natural shyness and reserve. He was not expansive, he was not addicted to experiments and adventures of intercourse, he was not, personally, in a word, what is called sociable. The general impression of this silence-loving and shade-seeking side of his character is doubtless exaggerated, and, in so far as it points to him as a

somber and sinister figure, is almost ludicrously at fault. He was silent, diffident, more inclined to hesitate, to watch and wait and meditate, than to produce himself, and fonder, on almost any occasion, of being absent than of being present. This quality betrays itself in all his writings. There is in all of them something cold and light and thin, something belonging to the imagination alone, which indicates a man but little disposed to multiply his relations, his points of contact, with society. If we read the six volumes of *Note-Books* with an eye to the evidence of this unsocial side of his life, we find it in sufficient abundance. But we find at the same time that there was nothing unamiable or invidious in his shyness, and above all that there was nothing preponderantly gloomy. The qualities to which the *Note-Books* most testify are, on the whole, his serenity and amenity of mind. They reveal these characteristics indeed in an almost phenomenal degree. The serenity, the simplicity, seem in certain portions almost child-like; of brilliant gaiety, of high spirits, there is little; but the placidity and evenness of temper, the cheerful and contented view of the things he notes, never belie themselves. I know not what else he may have written in this copious record, and what passages of gloom and melancholy may have been suppressed; but as his diaries stand, they offer in a remarkable degree the reflection of a mind whose development was not in the direction of sadness. A very clever French critic, whose fancy is often more lively than his observation is deep, M. Emile Montégut, writing in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* in the year 1860, invents for our author the appellation of "Un Romancier Pessimiste." Superficially speaking, perhaps, the title is a happy one; but only superficially. Pessimism consists in having morbid and bitter views and theories about human nature; not in indulging in shadowy fancies and conceits. There is nothing whatever to show that Hawthorne had any such doctrines or convictions; certainly, the note of depression, of despair, of the disposition to undervalue the human race, is never sounded in his diaries. These volumes contain the record of very few convictions or theories of any kind; they move with curious evenness, with a charming, graceful flow, on a level which lies above that of

a man's philosophy. They adhere with such persistence to this upper level that they prompt the reader to believe that Hawthorne had no appreciable philosophy at all—no general views that were in the least uncomfortable. They are the exhibition of an unperplexed intellect. I said just now that the development of Hawthorne's mind was not towards sadness; and I should be inclined to go still further, and say that his mind proper—his mind in so far as it was a repository of opinions and articles of faith—had no development that it is of especial importance to look into. What had a development was his imagination—that delicate and penetrating imagination which was always at play, always entertaining itself, always engaged in a game of hide and seek in the region in which it seemed to him that the game could best be played—among the shadows and substructions, the dark-based pillars and supports, of our moral nature. Beneath this movement and ripple of his imagination—as free and spontaneous as that of the sea surface—lay directly his personal affections. These were solid and strong, but, according to my impression, they had the place very much to themselves.

His innocent reserve, then, and his exaggerated, but by no means cynical, relish for solitude, imposed themselves upon him, in a great measure, with a persistency which helped to make the time a tolerably arid one—so arid a one indeed that we have seen that in the light of later happiness he pronounced it a blank. But in truth, if these were dull years, it was not all Hawthorne's fault. His situation was intrinsically poor—poor with a poverty that one almost hesitates to look into. When we think of what the conditions of intellectual life, of taste, must have been in a small New England town fifty years ago; and when we think of a young man of beautiful genius, with a love of literature and romance, of the picturesque, of style and form and color, trying to make a career for himself in the midst of them, compassion for the young man becomes our dominant sentiment, and we see the large dry village picture in perhaps almost too hard a light. It seems to me then that it was possibly a blessing for Hawthorne that he was not expansive and inquisitive, that

he lived much to himself and asked but little of his *milieu*. If he had been exacting and ambitious, if his appetite had been large and his knowledge various, he would probably have found the bounds of Salem intolerably narrow. But his culture had been of a simple sort—there was little of any other sort to be obtained in America in those days, and though he was doubtless haunted by visions of more suggestive opportunities, we may safely assume that he was not to his own perception the object of compassion that he appears to a critic who judges him after half a century's civilization has filtered into the twilight of that earlier time. If New England was socially a very small place in those days, Salem was a still smaller one; and if the American tone at large was intensely provincial, that of New England was not greatly helped by having the best of it. The state of things was extremely natural, and there could be now no greater mistake than to speak of it with a redundancy of irony. American life had begun to constitute itself from the foundations; it had begun to *be*, simply; it was at an immeasurable distance from having begun to enjoy. I imagine there was no appreciable group of people in New England at that time proposing to itself to enjoy life; this was not an undertaking for which any provision had been made, or to which any encouragement was offered. Hawthorne must have vaguely entertained some such design upon destiny; but he must have felt that his success would have to depend wholly upon his own ingenuity. I say he must have proposed to himself to enjoy, simply because he proposed to be an artist, and because this enters inevitably into the artist's scheme. There are a thousand ways of enjoying life, and that of the artist is one of the most innocent. But for all that, it connects itself with the idea of pleasure. He proposes to give pleasure, and to give it he must first get it. Where he gets it will depend upon circumstances, and circumstances were not encouraging to Hawthorne.

He was poor, he was solitary, and he undertook to devote himself to literature in a community in which the interest in literature was as yet of the smallest. It is not too much to say that even to the present day it is a considerable discomfort

in the United States not to be "in business." The young man who attempts to launch himself in a career that does not belong to the so-called practical order; the young man who has not, in a word, an office in the business quarter of the town, with his name painted on the door, has but a limited place in the social system, finds no particular bough to perch upon. He is not looked at askance, he is not regarded as an idler; literature and the arts have always been held in extreme honor in the American world, and those who practise them are received on easier terms than in other countries. If the tone of the American world is in some respects provincial, it is in none more so than in this matter of the exaggerated homage rendered to authorship. The gentleman or the lady who has written a book is in many circles the object of an admiration too indiscriminating to operate as an encouragement to good writing. There is no reason to suppose that this was less the case fifty years ago; but fifty years ago, greatly more than now, the literary man must have lacked the comfort and inspiration of belonging to a class. The best things come, as a general thing, from the talents that are members of a group; every man works better when he has companions working in the same line, and yielding the stimulus of suggestion, comparison, emulation. Great things of course have been done by solitary workers; but they have usually been done with double the pains they would have cost if they had been produced in more genial circumstances. The solitary worker loses the profit of example and discussion; he is apt to make awkward experiments; he is in the nature of the case more or less of an empiric. The empiric may, as I say, be treated by the world as an expert; but the drawbacks and discomforts of empiricism remain to him, and are in fact increased by the suspicion that is mingled with his gratitude, of a want in the public taste of a sense of the proportions of things. Poor Hawthorne, beginning to write subtle short tales at Salem, was empirical enough; he was one of, at most, some dozen Americans who had taken up literature as a profession. The profession in the United States is still very young, and of diminutive stature; but in the year 1830 its head could hardly have been seen above ground. It strikes the observer

of today that Hawthorne showed great courage in entering a field in which the honors and emoluments were so scanty as the profits of authorship must have been at that time. I have said that in the United States at present authorship is a pedestal, and literature is the fashion; but Hawthorne's history is a proof that it was possible, fifty years ago, to write a great many little masterpieces without becoming known. He begins the preface to the *Twice-Told Tales* by remarking that he was "for many years the obscurest man of letters in America." When once this work obtained recognition, the recognition left little to be desired. Hawthorne never, I believe, made large sums of money by his writings, and the early profits of these charming sketches could not have been considerable; for many of them, indeed, as they appeared in journals and magazines, he had never been paid at all; but the honor, when once it dawned—and it dawned tolerably early in the author's career—was never thereafter wanting. Hawthorne's countrymen are solidly proud of him, and the tone of Mr. Lathrop's *Study* is in itself sufficient evidence of the manner in which an American story-teller may in some cases look to have his eulogy pronounced.

Hawthorne's early attempt to support himself by his pen appears to have been deliberate; we hear nothing of those experiments in countinghouses or lawyers' offices, of which a permanent invocation to the Muse is often the inconsequent sequel. He began to write, and to try and dispose of his writings; and he remained at Salem apparently only because his family, his mother and his two sisters, lived there. His mother had a house, of which during the twelve years that elapsed until 1838 he appears to have been an inmate. Mr. Lathrop learned from his surviving sister that after publishing *Fanshawe* he produced a group of short stories entitled *Seven Tales of My Native Land,* and that this lady retained a very favorable recollection of the work, which her brother had given her to read. But it never saw the light; his attempts to get it published were unsuccessful, and at last, in a fit of irritation and despair, the young author burned the manuscript.

There is probably something autobiographic in the striking

little tale of *The Devil in Manuscript.* "They have been offered to seventeen publishers," says the hero of that sketch in regard to a pile of his own lucubrations.

> It would make you stare to read their answers. . . . One man publishes nothing but schoolbooks; another has five novels already under examination; . . . another gentleman is just giving up business, on purpose, I verily believe, to avoid publishing my book. In short, of all the seventeen booksellers, only one has vouchsafed even to read my tales; and he—a literary dabbler himself, I should judge—has the impertinence to criticize them, proposing what he calls vast improvements, and concluding, after a general sentence of condemnation, with the definitive assurance that he will not be concerned on any terms. . . . But there does seem to be one righteous man among these seventeen unrighteous ones, and he tells me, fairly, that no American publisher will meddle with an American work—seldom if by a known writer, and never if by a new one—unless at the writer's risk.

But though the *Seven Tales* was not printed, Hawthorne proceeded to write others that were; the two collections of the *Twice-Told Tales* and the *Snow Image* are gathered from a series of contributions to the local journals and the annuals of that day. To make these three volumes, he picked out the things he thought the best. "Some very small part," he says of what remains, "might yet be rummaged out (but it would not be worth the trouble) among the dingy pages of fifteen or twenty-years-old periodicals, or within the shabby morocco covers of faded *Souvenirs.*" These three volumes represent no large amount of literary labor for so long a period, and the author admits that there is little to show "for the thought and industry of that portion of his life." He attributes the paucity of his productions to a "total lack of sympathy at the age when his mind would naturally have been most effervescent." "He had no incitement to literary effort in a reasonable prospect of reputation or profit; nothing but the pleasure itself of composition, an enjoyment not at all amiss in its way, and perhaps essential to the merit of the work in hand, but which in the long run will hardly keep the chill out of a writer's heart, or the numbness out of

his fingers." These words occur in the preface attached in 1851 to the second edition of the *Twice-Told Tales; à propos* of which I may say that there is always a charm in Hawthorne's prefaces which makes one grateful for a pretext to quote from them. At this time *The Scarlet Letter* had just made his fame, and the short tales were certain of a large welcome; but the account he gives of the failure of the earlier edition to produce a sensation (it had been published in two volumes, at four years apart) may appear to contradict my assertion that, though he was not recognized immediately, he was recognized betimes. In 1850, when *The Scarlet Letter* appeared, Hawthorne was forty-six years old, and this may certainly seem a long-delayed popularity. On the other hand, it must be remembered that he had not appealed to the world with any great energy. The *Twice-Told Tales,* charming as they are, do not constitute a very massive literary pedestal. As soon as the author, resorting to severer measures, put forth *The Scarlet Letter,* the public ear was touched and charmed, and after that it was held to the end. "Well it might have been!" the reader will exclaim. "But what a grievous pity that the dulness of this same organ should have operated so long as a deterrent, and by making Hawthorne wait till he was nearly fifty to publish his first novel, have abbreviated by so much his productive career!" The truth is, he cannot have been in any very high degree ambitious; he was not an abundant producer, and there was manifestly a strain of generous indolence in his composition. There was a lovable want of eagerness about him. Let the encouragement offered have been what it might, he had waited till he was lapsing from middle life to strike his first noticeable blow; and during the last ten years of his career he put forth but two complete works, and the fragment of a third.

It is very true, however, that during this early period he seems to have been very glad to do whatever came to his hand. Certain of his tales found their way into one of the annuals of the time, a publication endowed with the brilliant title of *The Boston Token and Atlantic Souvenir.* The editor of this graceful repository was S. G. Goodrich, a gentleman who, I suppose, may be called one of the pioneers of Amer-

ican periodical literature. He is better known to the world as Mr. Peter Parley, a name under which he produced a multitude of popular school-books, story-books, and other attempts to vulgarize human knowledge and adapt it to the infant mind. This enterprising purveyor of literary wares appears, incongruously enough, to have been Hawthorne's earliest protector, if protection is the proper word for the treatment that the young author received from him. Mr. Goodrich induced him in 1836 to go to Boston to edit a periodical in which he was interested, *The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge.* I have never seen the work in question, but Hawthorne's biographer gives a sorry account of it. It was managed by the so-called Bewick Company, which "took its name from Thomas Bewick, the English restorer of the art of wood engraving, and the magazine was to do his memory honor by his admirable illustrations. But in fact it never did anyone honor, nor brought anyone profit. It was a penny popular affair, containing condensed information about innumerable subjects, no fiction, and little poetry. The woodcuts were of the crudest and most frightful sort. It passed through the hands of several editors and several publishers. Hawthorne was engaged at a salary of five hundred dollars a year; but it appears that he got next to nothing, and did not stay in the position long." Hawthorne wrote from Boston in the winter of 1836: "I came here trusting to Goodrich's positive promise to pay me forty-five dollars as soon as I arrived; and he has kept promising from one day to another, till I do not see that he means to pay at all. I have now broke off all intercourse with him, and never think of going near him. . . . I don't feel at all obliged to him about the editorship, for he is a stockholder and director in the Bewick Company . . . and I defy them to get another to do for a thousand dollars what I do for five hundred."—"I make nothing," he says in another letter, "of writing a history or biography before dinner." Goodrich proposed to him to write a *Universal History* for the use of schools, offering him a hundred dollars for his share in the work. Hawthorne accepted the offer and took a hand—I know not how large a one—in the job. His biographer has been able to identify a

single phrase as our author's. He is speaking of George IV: "Even when he was quite a young man this king cared as much about dress as any young coxcomb. He had a great deal of taste in such matters, and it is a pity that he was a king, for he might otherwise have made an excellent tailor." The *Universal History* had a great vogue and passed through hundreds of editions; but it does not appear that Hawthorne ever received more than his hundred dollars. The writer of these pages vividly remembers making its acquaintance at an early stage of his education—a very fat, stumpy-looking book, bound in boards covered with green paper, and having in the text very small woodcuts of the most primitive sort. He associates it to this day with the names of Sesostris and Semiramis whenever he encounters them, there having been, he supposes, some account of the conquests of these potentates that would impress itself upon the imagination of a child. At the end of four months, Hawthorne had received but twenty dollars—four pounds—for his editorship of the *American Magazine*.

There is something pitiful in this episode, and something really touching in the sight of a delicate and superior genius obliged to concern himself with such paltry undertakings. The simple fact was that for a man attempting at that time in America to live by his pen, there were no larger openings; and to live at all Hawthorne had, as the phrase is, to make himself small. This cost him less, moreover, than it would have cost a more copious and strenuous genius, for his modesty was evidently extreme, and I doubt whether he had any very ardent consciousness of rare talent. He went back to Salem, and from this tranquil standpoint, in the spring of 1837, he watched the first volume of his *Twice-Told Tales* come into the world. He had by this time been living some ten years of his manhood in Salem, and an American commentator may be excused for feeling the desire to construct, from the very scanty material that offers itself, a slight picture of his life there. I have quoted his own allusions to its dulness and blankness, but I confess that these observations serve rather to quicken than to depress my curiosity. A biographer has of necessity a relish for detail; his business is

to multiply points of characterization. Mr. Lathrop tells us that our author "had little communication with even the members of his family. Frequently his meals were brought and left at his locked door, and it was not often that the four inmates of the old Herbert Street mansion met in family circle. He never read his stories aloud to his mother and sisters. . . . It was the custom in this household for the several members to remain very much by themselves; the three ladies were perhaps nearly as rigorous recluses as himself, and, speaking of the isolation which reigned among them, Hawthorne once said, 'We do not even *live* at our house!'" It is added that he was not in the habit of going to church. This is not a lively picture, nor is that other sketch of his daily habits much more exhilarating, in which Mr. Lathrop affirms that though the statement that for several years "he never saw the sun" is entirely an error, yet it is true that he stirred little abroad all day and "seldom chose to walk in the town except at night." In the dusky hours he took walks of many miles along the coast, or else wandered about the sleeping streets of Salem. These were his pastimes, and these were apparently his most intimate occasions of contact with life. Life, on such occasions, was not very exuberant, as anyone will reflect who has been acquainted with the physiognomy of a small New England town after nine o'clock in the evening. Hawthorne, however, was an inveterate observer of small things, and he found a field for fancy among the most trivial accidents. There could be no better example of this happy faculty than the little paper entitled *Night Sketches,* included among the *Twice-Told Tales.* This small dissertation is about nothing at all, and to call attention to it is almost to overrate its importance. This fact is equally true, indeed, of a great many of its companions, which give even the most appreciative critic a singular feeling of his own indiscretion—almost of his own cruelty. They are so light, so slight, so tenderly trivial, that simply to mention them is to put them in a false position. The author's claim for them is barely audible, even to the most acute listener. They are things to take or to leave—to enjoy, but not to talk about. Not to read them would be to do them an injustice (to read them is

essentially to relish them), but to bring the machinery of criticism to bear upon them would be to do them a still greater wrong. I must remember, however, that to carry this principle too far would be to endanger the general validity of the present little work—a consummation which it can only be my desire to avert. Therefore it is that I think it permissible to remark that in Hawthorne, the whole class of little descriptive effusions directed upon common things, to which these just-mentioned *Night Sketches* belong, have a greater charm than there is any warrant for in their substance. The charm is made up of the spontaneity, the personal quality, of the fancy that plays through them, its mingled simplicity and subtlety, its purity and its *bonhomie*. The *Night Sketches* are simply the light, familiar record of a walk under an umbrella, at the end of a long, dull, rainy day, through the sloppy, ill-paved streets of a country town, where the rare gas lamps twinkle in the large puddles, and the blue jars in the druggist's window shine through the vulgar drizzle. One would say that the inspiration of such a theme could have had no great force, and such doubtless was the case; but out of the Salem puddles, nevertheless, springs, flowerlike, a charming and natural piece of prose.

I have said that Hawthorne was an observer of small things, and indeed he appears to have thought nothing too trivial to be suggestive. His *Note-Books* give us the measure of his perception of common and casual things, and of his habit of converting them into *memoranda*. These *Note-Books*, by the way—this seems as good a place as any other to say it—are a very singular series of volumes; I doubt whether there is anything exactly corresponding to them in the whole body of literature. They were published—in six volumes, issued at intervals—some years after Hawthorne's death, and no person attempting to write an account of the romancer could afford to regret that they should have been given to the world. There is a point of view from which this may be regretted; but the attitude of the biographer is to desire as many documents as possible. I am thankful, then, as a biographer, for the *Note-Books*, but I am obliged to confess that, though I have just reread them carefully, I am still at a loss

to perceive how they came to be written—what was Hawthorne's purpose in carrying on for so many years this minute and often trivial chronicle. For a person desiring information about him at any cost, it is valuable; it sheds a vivid light upon his character, his habits, the nature of his mind. But we find ourselves wondering what was its value to Hawthorne himself. It is in a very partial degree a register of impressions, and in a still smaller sense a record of emotions. Outward objects play much the larger part in it; opinions, convictions, ideas pure and simple, are almost absent. He rarely takes his note-book into his confidence or commits to its pages any reflections that might be adapted for publicity; the simplest way to describe the tone of these extremely objective journals is to say that they read like a series of very pleasant, though rather dullish and decidedly formal, letters, addressed to himself by a man who, having suspicions that they might be opened in the post, should have determined to insert nothing compromising. They contain much that is too futile for things intended for publicity; whereas, on the other hand, as a receptacle of private impressions and opinions, they are curiously cold and empty. They widen, as I have said, our glimpse of Hawthorne's mind (I do not say that they elevate our estimate of it), but they do so by what they fail to contain, as much as by what we find in them. Our business for the moment, however, is not with the light that they throw upon his intellect, but with the information they offer about his habits and his social circumstances.

I know not at what age he began to keep a diary; the first entries in the American volumes are of the summer of 1835. There is a phrase in the preface to his novel of *Transformation,* which must have lingered in the minds of many Americans who have tried to write novels and to lay the scene of them in the western world. "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land." The perusal of

Hawthorne's American *Note-Books* operates as a practical commentary upon this somewhat ominous text. It does so at least to my own mind; it would be too much perhaps to say that the effect would be the same for the usual English reader. An American reads between the lines—he completes the suggestions—he constructs a picture. I think I am not guilty of any gross injustice in saying that the picture he constructs from Hawthorne's American diaries, though by no means without charms of its own, is not, on the whole, an interesting one. It is characterized by an extraordinary blankness—a curious paleness of color and paucity of detail. Hawthorne, as I have said, has a large and healthy appetite for detail, and one is therefore the more struck with the lightness of the diet to which his observation was condemned. For myself, as I turn the pages of his journals, I seem to see the image of the crude and simple society in which he lived. I use these epithets, of course, not invidiously, but descriptively; if one desire to enter as closely as possible into Hawthorne's situation, one must endeavor to reproduce his circumstances. We are struck with the large number of elements that were absent from them, and the coldness, the thinness, the blankness, to repeat my epithet, present themselves so vividly that our foremost feeling is that of compassion for a romancer looking for subjects in such a field. It takes so many things, as Hawthorne must have felt later in life, when he made the acquaintance of the denser, richer, warmer European spectacle—it takes such an accumulation of history and custom, such a complexity of manners and types, to form a fund of suggestion for a novelist. If Hawthorne had been a young Englishman, or a young Frenchman of the same degree of genius, the same cast of mind, the same habits, his consciousness of the world around him would have been a very different affair; however obscure, however reserved, his own personal life, his sense of the life of his fellow-mortals would have been almost infinitely more various. The negative side of the spectacle on which Hawthorne looked out, in his contemplative saunterings and reveries, might, indeed, with a little ingenuity, be made almost ludicrous; one might enumerate the items of high

civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left. No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great universities nor public schools—no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class—no Epsom nor Ascot! Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life—especially in the American life of forty years ago, the effect of which, upon an English or a French imagination, would probably as a general thing be appalling. The natural remark, in the almost lurid light of such an indictment, would be that if these things are left out, everything is left out. The American knows that a good deal remains; what it is that remains—that is his secret, his joke, as one may say. It would be cruel, in this terrible denudation, to deny him the consolation of his national gift, that "American humor" of which of late years we have heard so much.

But in helping us to measure what remains, our author's diaries, as I have already intimated, would give comfort rather to persons who might have taken the alarm from the brief sketch I have just attempted of what I have called the negative side of the American social situation, than do those reminding themselves of its fine compensations. Hawthorne's entries are to a great degree accounts of walks in the country, drives in stage-coaches, people he met in taverns. The minuteness of the things that attract his attention and that he deems worthy of being commemorated is frequently extreme, and from this fact we get the impression of a general vacancy in the field of vision. "Sunday evening, going by the jail, the setting sun kindled up the windows most cheerfully; as if there were a bright, comfortable light within its darksome stone wall." "I went yesterday with Monsieur S— to pick

raspberries. He fell through an old log bridge, thrown over a hollow; looking back, only his head and shoulders appeared through the rotten logs and among the bushes.—A shower coming on, the rapid running of a little barefooted boy, coming up unheard, and dashing swiftly past us, and showing us the soles of his naked feet as he ran adown the path and up the opposite side." In another place he devotes a page to a description of a dog whom he saw running round after its tail; in still another he remarks, in a paragraph by itself—"The aromatic odor of peat-smoke in the sunny autumnal air is very pleasant." The reader says to himself that when a man turned thirty gives a place in his mind—and his inkstand—to such trifles as these, it is because nothing else of superior importance demands admission. Everything in the notes indicates a simple, democratic, thinly-composed society; there is no evidence of the writer finding himself in any variety or intimacy of relations with anyone or with anything. We find a good deal of warrant for believing that if we add that statement of Mr. Lathrop's about his meals being left at the door of his room, to rural rambles of which an impression of the temporary phases of the local apple-crop were the usual, and an encounter with an organ-grinder, or an eccentric dog, the rarer, outcome, we construct a rough image of our author's daily life during the several years that preceded his marriage. He appears to have read a good deal, and that he must have been familiar with the sources of good English we see from his charming, expressive, slightly self-conscious, cultivated, but not too cultivated, style. Yet neither in these early volumes of his *Note-Books* nor in the later is there any mention of his reading. There are no literary judgments or impressions—there is almost no allusion to works or to authors. The allusions to individuals of any kind are indeed much less numerous than one might have expected; there is little psychology, little description of manners. We are told by Mr. Lathrop that there existed at Salem during the early part of Hawthorne's life "a strong circle of wealthy families," which "maintained rigorously the distinctions of class," and whose "entertainments were splendid, their manners magnificent." This is a rather pictorial way of

saying that there were a number of people in the place—the commercial and professional aristocracy, as it were—who lived in high comfort and respectability, and who, in their small provincial way, doubtless had pretensions to be exclusive. Into this delectable company Mr. Lathrop intimates that his hero was free to penetrate. It is easy to believe it, and it would be difficult to perceive why the privilege should have been denied to a young man of genius and culture, who was very good-looking (Hawthorne must have been in these days, judging by his appearance later in life, a strikingly handsome fellow), and whose American pedigree was virtually as long as the longest they could show. But in fact Hawthorne appears to have ignored the good society of his native place almost completely; no echo of its conversation is to be found in his tales or his journals. Such an echo would possibly not have been especially melodious, and if we regret the shyness and stiffness, the reserve, the timidity, the suspicion, or whatever it was, that kept him from knowing what there was to be known, it is not because we have any very definite assurance that his gains would have been great. Still, since a beautiful writer was growing up in Salem, it is a pity that he should not have given himself a chance to commemorate some of the types that flourished in the richest soil of the place. Like almost all people who possess in a strong degree the story-telling faculty, Hawthorne had a democratic strain in his composition and a relish for the commoner stuff of human nature. Thoroughly American in all ways, he was in none more so than in the vagueness of his sense of social distinctions and his readiness to forget them if a moral or intellectual sensation were to be gained by it. He liked to fraternize with plain people, to take them on their own terms, and put himself if possible into their shoes. His *Note-Books*, and even his tales, are full of evidence of this easy and natural feeling about all his unconventional fellow mortals—this imaginative interest and contemplative curiosity—and it sometimes takes the most charming and graceful forms. Commingled as it is with his own subtlety and delicacy, his complete exemption from vulgarity, it is one of the points in his character which his reader comes

most to appreciate—that reader I mean for whom he is not, as for some few, a dusky and malarious genius.

But even if he had had, personally, as many pretensions as he had few, he must in the nature of things have been more or less of a consenting democrat, for democracy was the very keystone of the simple social structure in which he played his part. The air of his journals and his tales alike is full of the genuine democratic feeling. This feeling has by no means passed out of New England life; it still flourishes in perfection in the great stock of the people, especially in rural communities; but it is probable that at the present hour a writer of Hawthorne's general fastidiousness would not express it quite so artlessly. "A shrewd gentlewoman, who kept a tavern in the town," he says, in *Chippings with a Chisel,* "was anxious to obtain two or three gravestones for the deceased members of her family, and to pay for these solemn commodities by taking the sculptor to board." This image of a gentlewoman keeping a tavern and looking out for boarders seems, from the point of view to which I allude, not at all incongruous. It will be observed that the lady in question was shrewd; it was probable that she was substantially educated, and of reputable life, and it is certain that she was energetic. These qualities would make it natural to Hawthorne to speak of her as a gentlewoman; the natural tendency in societies where the sense of equality prevails being to take for granted the high level rather than the low. Perhaps the most striking example of the democratic sentiment in all our author's tales, however, is the figure of Uncle Venner, in *The House of the Seven Gables.* Uncle Venner is a poor old man in a brimless hat and patched trousers, who picks up a precarious subsistence by rendering, for a compensation, in the houses and gardens of the good people of Salem, those services that are known in New England as "chores." He carries parcels, splits firewood, digs potatoes, collects refuse for the maintenance of his pigs, and looks forward with philosophic equanimity to the time when he shall end his days in the almshouse. But in spite of the very modest place that he occupies in the social scale, he is received on a footing of familiarity in the household of the

far-descended Miss Pyncheon; and when this ancient lady and her companions take the air in the garden of a summer evening, he steps into the estimable circle and mingles the smoke of his pipe with their refined conversation. This obviously is rather imaginative—Uncle Venner is a creation with a purpose. He is an original, a natural moralist, a philosopher; and Hawthorne, who knew perfectly what he was about in introducing him—Hawthorne always knew perfectly what he was about—wished to give in his person an example of humorous resignation and of a life reduced to the simplest and homeliest elements, as opposed to the fantastic pretensions of the antiquated heroine of the story. He wished to strike a certain exclusively human and personal note. He knew that for this purpose he was taking a license; but the point is that he felt he was not indulging in any extravagant violation of reality. Giving in a letter, about 1830, an account of a little journey he was making in Connecticut, he says, of the end of a seventeen miles' stage, that "in the evening, however, I went to a Bible class with a very polite and agreeable gentleman, whom I afterwards discovered to be a strolling tailor of very questionable habits."

Hawthorne appears on various occasions to have absented himself from Salem, and to have wandered somewhat through the New England States. But the only one of these episodes of which there is a considerable account in the *Note-Books* is a visit that he paid in the summer of 1837 to his old college-mate, Horatio Bridge, who was living upon his father's property in Maine, in company with an eccentric young Frenchman, a teacher of his native tongue, who was looking for pupils among the northern forests. I have said that there was less psychology in Hawthorne's journals than might have been looked for; but there is nevertheless a certain amount of it, and nowhere more than in a number of pages relating to this remarkable "Monsieur S." (Hawthorne, intimate as he apparently became with him, always calls him "Monsieur," just as throughout all his diaries he invariably speaks of all his friends, even the most familiar, as "Mr." He confers the prefix upon the unconventional Thoreau, his fellow-woodsman at Concord, and upon the emancipated

brethren at Brook Farm.) These pages are completely occupied with Monsieur S., who was evidently a man of character, with the full complement of his national vivacity. There is an elaborate effort to analyze the poor young Frenchman's disposition, something conscientious and painstaking, respectful, explicit, almost solemn. These passages are very curious as a reminder of the absence of the offhand element in the manner in which many Americans, and many New Englanders especially, make up their minds about people whom they meet. This, in turn, is a reminder of something that may be called the importance of the individual in the American world; which is a result of the newness and youthfulness of society and of the absence of keen competition. The individual counts for more, as it were, and, thanks to the absence of a variety of social types and of settled heads under which he may be easily and conveniently pigeonholed, he is to a certain extent a wonder and a mystery. An Englishman, a Frenchman—a Frenchman above all—judges quickly, easily, from his own social standpoint, and makes an end of it. He has not that rather chilly and isolated sense of moral responsibility which is apt to visit a New Englander in such processes; and he has the advantage that his standards are fixed by the general consent of the society in which he lives. A Frenchman, in this respect, is particularly happy and comfortable, happy and comfortable to a degree which I think is hardly to be overestimated; his standards being the most definite in the world, the most easily and promptly appealed to, and the most identical with what happens to be the practice of the French genius itself. The Englishman is not quite so well off, but he is better off than his poor interrogative and tentative cousin beyond the seas. He is blessed with a healthy mistrust of analysis, and hair-splitting is the occupation he most despises. There is always a little of the Dr. Johnson in him, and Dr. Johnson would have had wofully little patience with that tendency to weigh moonbeams which in Hawthorne was almost as much a quality of race as of genius; albeit that Hawthorne has paid to Boswell's hero (in the chapter on "Lichfield and Uttoxeter," in his volume on England) a tribute of the finest appre-

ciation. American intellectual standards are vague, and Hawthorne's countrymen are apt to hold the scales with a rather uncertain hand and a somewhat agitated conscience.

III. Early Writings

THE second volume of the *Twice-Told Tales* was published in 1845, in Boston; and at this time a good many of the stories which were afterwards collected into the *Mosses from an Old Manse* had already appeared, chiefly in *The Democratic Review,* a sufficiently flourishing periodical of that period. In mentioning these things I anticipate; but I touch upon the year 1845 in order to speak of the two collections of *Twice-Told Tales* at once. During the same year Hawthorne edited an interesting volume, the *Journals of an African Cruiser,* by his friend Bridge, who had gone into the Navy and seen something of distant waters. His biographer mentions that even then Hawthorne's name was thought to bespeak attention for a book, and he insists on this fact in contradiction to the idea that his productions had hitherto been as little noticed as his own declaration that he remained "for a good many years the obscurest man of letters in America," might lead one, and has led many people, to suppose. "In this dismal chamber FAME was won," he writes in Salem in 1836. And we find in the *Note-Books* (1840) this singularly beautiful and touching passage:

> Here I sit in my old accustomed chamber, where I used to sit in days gone by. . . . Here I have written many tales—many that have been burned to ashes, many that have doubtless deserved the same fate. This claims to be called a haunted chamber, for thousands upon thousands of visions have appeared to me in it; and some few of them have become visible to the world. If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed; and here I have been glad and hopeful, and here I have been despondent. And here I sat a long, long time, waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner, or whether

it would ever know me at all—at least till I were in my grave. And sometimes it seems to me as if I were already in the grave, with only life enough to be chilled and benumbed. But oftener I was happy—at least as happy as I then knew how to be, or was aware of the possibility of being. By and by the world found me out in my lonely chamber and called me forth—not indeed with a loud roar of acclamation, but rather with a still small voice—and forth I went, but found nothing in the world I thought preferable to my solitude till now. . . . And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart might have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude. . . . But living in solitude till the fulness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart. . . . I used to think that I could imagine all passions, all feelings, and states of the heart and mind; but how little did I know! . . . Indeed, we are but shadows; we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream—till the heart be touched. That touch creates us—then we begin to be—thereby we are beings of reality and inheritors of eternity.

There is something exquisite in the soft philosophy of this little retrospect, and it helps us to appreciate it to know that the writer had at this time just become engaged to be married to a charming and accomplished person, with whom his union, which took place two years later, was complete and full of happiness. But I quote it more particularly for the evidence it affords that, already in 1840, Hawthorne could speak of the world finding him out and calling him forth, as of an event tolerably well in the past. He had sent the first of the *Twice-Told* series to his old college friend, Longfellow, who had already laid, solidly, the foundation of his great poetic reputation, and at the time of his sending it had written him a letter from which it will be to our purpose to quote a few lines:

You tell me you have met with troubles and changes. I know not what these may have been; but I can assure you that trouble is the next best thing to enjoyment, and that there is no fate in

the world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows. For the last ten years I have not lived, but only dreamed of living. It may be true that there may have been some unsubstantial pleasures here in the shade, which I might have missed in the sunshine, but you cannot conceive how utterly devoid of satisfaction all my retrospects are. I have laid up no treasure of pleasant remembrances against old age; but there is some comfort in thinking that future years may be more varied, and therefore more tolerable, than the past. You give me more credit than I deserve in supposing that I have led a studious life. I have indeed turned over a good many books, but in so desultory a way that it cannot be called study, nor has it left me the fruits of study. . . . I have another great difficulty in the lack of materials; for I have seen so little of the world that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories of, and it is not easy to give a lifelike semblance to such shadowy stuff. Sometimes, through a peephole, I have caught a glimpse of the real world, and the two or three articles in which I have portrayed these glimpses please me better than the others.

It is more particularly for the sake of the concluding lines that I have quoted this passage; for evidently no portrait of Hawthorne at this period is at all exact which fails to insist upon the constant struggle which must have gone on between his shyness and his desire to know something of life; between what may be called his evasive and his inquisitive tendencies. I suppose it is no injustice to Hawthorne to say that on the whole his shyness always prevailed; and yet, obviously, the struggle was constantly there. He says of his *Twice-Told Tales,* in the preface, "They are not the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart (had it been so they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently valuable) but his attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world." We are speaking here of small things, it must be remembered—of little attempts, little sketches, a little world. But everything is relative, and this smallness of scale must not render less apparent the interesting character of Hawthorne's efforts. As for the *Twice-Told Tales* themselves, they are an old story now; everyone knows them a little, and those who admire them particularly have read them a great many times.

The writer of this sketch belongs to the latter class, and he has been trying to forget his familiarity with them, and ask himself what impression they would have made upon him at the time they appeared, in the first bloom of their freshness, and before the particular Hawthorne quality, as it may be called, had become an established, a recognized and valued, fact. Certainly, I am inclined to think, if one had encountered these delicate, dusky flowers in the blossomless garden of American journalism, one would have plucked them with a very tender hand; one would have felt that here was something essentially fresh and new; here, in no extraordinary force or abundance, but in a degree distinctly appreciable, was an original element in literature. When I think of it, I almost envy Hawthorne's earliest readers; the sensation of opening upon *The Great Carbuncle, The Seven Vagabonds,* or *The Threefold Destiny* in an American annual of forty years ago must have been highly agreeable.

Among these shorter things (it is better to speak of the whole collection, including the *Snow Image,* and the *Mosses from an Old Manse* at once) there are three sorts of tales, each one of which has an original stamp. There are, to begin with, the stories of fantasy and allegory—those among which the three I have just mentioned would be numbered, and which, on the whole, are the most original. This is the group to which such little masterpieces as *Malvin's Burial, Rappacini's Daughter,* and *Young Goodman Brown* also belong —these two last perhaps representing the highest point that Hawthorne reached in this direction. Then there are the little tales of New England history, which are scarcely less admirable, and of which *The Grey Champion, The Maypole of Merry Mount,* and the four beautiful *Legends of the Province House,* as they are called, are the most successful specimens. Lastly come the slender sketches of actual scenes and of the objects and manners about him, by means of which, more particularly, he endeavored "to open an intercourse with the world," and which, in spite of their slenderness, have an infinite grace and charm. Among these things *A Rill from the Town Pump, The Village Uncle, The Toll-Gatherer's Day,* the *Chippings with a Chisel,* may most nat-

urally be mentioned. As we turn over these volumes we feel that the pieces that spring most directly from his fancy, constitute, as I have said (putting his four novels aside), his most substantial claim to our attention. It would be a mistake to insist too much upon them; Hawthorne was himself the first to recognize that. "These fitful sketches," he says in the preface to the *Mosses from an Old Manse,* "with so little of external life about them, yet claiming no profundity of purpose—so reserved even while they sometimes seem so frank—often but half in earnest, and never, even when most so, expressing satisfactorily the thoughts which they profess to image—such trifles, I truly feel, afford no solid basis for a literary reputation." This is very becomingly uttered; but it may be said, partly in answer to it, and partly in confirmation, that the valuable element in these things was not what Hawthorne put into them consciously, but what passed into them without his being able to measure it—the element of simple genius, the quality of imagination. This is the real charm of Hawthorne's writing—this purity and spontaneity and naturalness of fancy. For the rest, it is interesting to see how it borrowed a particular color from the other faculties that lay near it—how the imagination, in this capital son of the old Puritans, reflected the hue of the more purely moral part, of the dusky, overshadowed conscience. The conscience, by no fault of its own, in every genuine offshoot of that somber lineage, lay under the shadow of the sense of *sin.* This darkening cloud was no essential part of the nature of the individual; it stood fixed in the general moral heaven under which he grew up and looked at life. It projected from above, from outside, a black patch over his spirit, and it was for him to do what he could with the black patch. There were all sorts of possible ways of dealing with it; they depended upon the personal temperament. Some natures would let it lie as it fell, and contrive to be tolerably comfortable beneath it. Others would groan and sweat and suffer; but the dusky blight would remain, and their lives would be lives of misery. Here and there an individual, irritated beyond endurance, would throw it off in anger, plunging probably into what would be deemed deeper abysses of de-

pravity. Hawthorne's way was the best, for he contrived, by an exquisite process, best known to himself, to transmute this heavy moral burden into the very substance of the imagination, to make it evaporate in the light and charming fumes of artistic production. But Hawthorne, of course, was exceptionally fortunate; he had his genius to help him. Nothing is more curious and interesting than this almost exclusively *imported* character of the sense of sin in Hawthorne's mind; it seems to exist there merely for an artistic or literary purpose. He had ample cognizance of the Puritan conscience; it was his natural heritage; it was reproduced in him; looking into his soul, he found it there. But his relation to it was only, as one may say, intellectual; it was not moral and theological. He played with it and used it as a pigment; he treated it, as the metaphysicians say, objectively. He was not discomposed, disturbed, haunted by it, in the manner of its usual and regular victims, who had not the little postern door of fancy to slip through, to the other side of the wall. It was, indeed, to his imaginative vision, the great fact of man's nature; the light element that had been mingled with his own composition always clung to this rugged prominence of moral responsibility, like the mist that hovers about the mountain. It was a necessary condition for a man of Hawthorne's stock that if his imagination should take license to amuse itself, it should at least select this grim precinct of the Puritan morality for its playground. He speaks of the dark disapproval with which his old ancestors, in the case of their coming to life, would see him trifling himself away as a story-teller. But how far more darkly would they have frowned could they have understood that he had converted the very principle of their own being into one of his toys!

It will be seen that I am far from being struck with the justice of that view of the author of the *Twice-Told Tales,* which is so happily expressed by the French critic to whom I alluded at an earlier stage of this essay. To speak of Hawthorne, as M. Emile Montégut does, as a *romancier pessimiste,* seems to me very much beside the mark. He is no more a pessimist than an optimist, though he is certainly not much of either. He does not pretend to conclude, or to have

a philosophy of human nature; indeed, I should even say that at bottom he does not take human nature as hard as he may seem to do. "His bitterness," says M. Montégut, "is without abatement, and his bad opinion of man is without compensation. . . . His little tales have the air of confessions which the soul makes to itself; they are so many little slaps which the author applies to our face." This, it seems to me, is to exaggerate almost immeasurably the reach of Hawthorne's relish of gloomy subjects. What pleased him in such subjects was their picturesqueness, their rich duskiness of color, their chiaroscuro; but they were not the expression of a hopeless, or even of a predominantly melancholy, feeling about the human soul. Such at least is my own impression. He is to a considerable degree ironical—this is part of his charm—part even, one may say, of his brightness; but he is neither bitter nor cynical—he is rarely even what I should call tragical. There have certainly been story-tellers of a gayer and lighter spirit; there have been observers more humorous, more hilarious—though on the whole Hawthorne's observation has a smile in it oftener than may at first appear; but there has rarely been an observer more serene, less agitated by what he sees, and less disposed to call things deeply into question. As I have already intimated, his *Note-Books* are full of this simple and almost childlike serenity. That dusky preoccupation with the misery of human life and the wickedness of the human heart which such a critic as M. Emile Montégut talks about, is totally absent from them; and if we may suppose a person to have read these diaries before looking into the tales, we may be sure that such a reader would be greatly surprised to hear the author described as a disappointed, disdainful genius. "This marked love of cases of conscience," says M. Montégut, "this taciturn, scornful cast of mind, this habit of seeing sin everywhere and hell always gaping open, this dusky gaze bent always upon a damned world and a nature draped in mourning, these lonely conversations of the imagination with the conscience, this pitiless analysis resulting from a perpetual examination of one's self, and from the tortures of a heart closed before men and open to God—all these elements of

the Puritan character have passed into Mr. Hawthorne, or to speak more justly, have *filtered* into him, through a long succession of generations." This is a very pretty and very vivid account of Hawthorne, superficially considered; and it is just such a view of the case as would commend itself most easily and most naturally to a hasty critic. It is all true indeed, with a difference; Hawthorne was all that M. Montégut says, *minus* the conviction. The old Puritan moral sense, the consciousness of sin and hell, of the fearful nature of our responsibilities and the savage character of our Taskmaster—these things had been lodged in the mind of a man of Fancy, whose fancy had straightway begun to take liberties and play tricks with them—to judge them (Heaven forgive him!) from the poetic and aesthetic point of view, the point of view of entertainment and irony. This absence of conviction makes the difference; but the difference is great. Hawthorne was a man of fancy, and I suppose that in speaking of him it is inevitable that we should feel ourselves confronted with the familiar problem of the difference between the fancy and the imagination. Of the larger and more potent faculty he certainly possessed a liberal share; no one can read *The House of the Seven Gables* without feeling it to be a deeply imaginative work. But I am often struck, especially in the shorter tales, of which I am now chiefly speaking, with a kind of small ingenuity, a taste for conceits and analogies, which bears more particularly what is called the fanciful stamp. The finer of the shorter tales are redolent of a rich imagination.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of witch-meeting? Be it so, if you will; but, alas, it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown! a stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate, man, did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen, because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit, with power and fervid eloquence, and with his hand on the open Bible of the sacred truth of our religion, and of saintlike lives and triumphant

deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown grow pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children, and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.

There is imagination in that, and in many another passage that I might quote; but as a general thing I should characterize the more metaphysical of our author's short stories as graceful and felicitous conceits. They seem to me to be qualified in this manner by the very fact that they belong to the province of allegory. Hawthorne, in his metaphysical moods, is nothing if not allegorical, and allegory, to my sense, is quite one of the lighter exercises of the imagination. Many excellent judges, I know, have a great stomach for it; they delight in symbols and correspondences, in seeing a story told as if it were another and a very different story. I frankly confess that I have as a general thing but little enjoyment of it and that it has never seemed to me to be, as it were, a first-rate literary form. It has produced assuredly some first-rate works; and Hawthorne in his younger years had been a great reader and devotee of Bunyan and Spenser, the great masters of allegory. But it is apt to spoil two good things—a story and a moral, a meaning and a form; and the taste for it is responsible for a large part of the forcible-feeble writing that has been inflicted upon the world. The only case in which it is endurable is when it is extremely spontaneous, when the analogy presents itself with eager promptitude. When it shows signs of having been groped and fumbled for, the needful illusion is of course absent and the failure complete. Then the machinery alone is visible, and the end to which it operates becomes a matter of indifference. There was but little literary criticism in the United States at the time Hawthorne's earlier works

were published; but among the reviewers Edgar Poe perhaps held the scales the highest. He at any rate rattled them loudest, and pretended, more than anyone else, to conduct the weighing process on scientific principles. Very remarkable was this process of Edgar Poe's, and very extraordinary were his principles; but he had the advantage of being a man of genius, and his intelligence was frequently great. His collection of critical sketches of the American writers flourishing in what M. Taine would call his *milieu* and *moment* is very curious and interesting reading, and it has one quality which ought to keep it from ever being completely forgotten. It is probably the most complete and exquisite specimen of *provincialism* ever prepared for the edification of men. Poe's judgments are pretentious, spiteful, vulgar; but they contain a great deal of sense and discrimination as well, and here and there, sometimes at frequent intervals, we find a phrase of happy insight imbedded in a patch of the most fatuous pedantry. He wrote a chapter upon Hawthorne, and spoke of him on the whole very kindly; and his estimate is of sufficient value to make it noticeable that he should express lively disapproval of the large part allotted to allegory in his tales—in defense of which, he says, "however, or for whatever object employed, there is scarcely one respectable word to be said. . . . The deepest emotion," he goes on, "aroused within us by the happiest allegory *as* allegory, is a very, *very* imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer's ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. . . . One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction"; and Poe has furthermore the courage to remark that the *Pilgrim's Progress* is a "ludicrously overrated book." Certainly, as a general thing, we are struck with the ingenuity and felicity of Hawthorne's analogies and correspondences; the idea appears to have made itself at home in them easily. Nothing could be better in this respect than the *Snow-Image* (a little masterpiece), or *The Great Carbuncle,* or *Doctor Heidegger's Experiment,* or *Rappacini's Daughter.* But in such things as *The Birth-Mark* and *The Bosom-Serpent* we are struck with something stiff and mechanical,

slightly incongruous, as if the kernel had not assimilated its envelope. But these are matters of light impression, and there would be a want of tact in pretending to discriminate too closely among things which all, in one way or another, have a charm. The charm—the great charm—is that they are glimpses of a great field, of the whole deep mystery of man's soul and conscience. They are moral, and their interest is moral; they deal with something more than the mere accidents and conventionalities, the surface occurrences of life. The fine thing in Hawthorne is that he cared for the deeper psychology, and that, in his way, he tried to become familiar with it. This natural, yet fanciful familiarity with it, this air, on the author's part, of being a confirmed *habitué* of a region of mysteries and subtleties, constitutes the originality of his tales. And then they have the further merit of seeming, for what they are, to spring up so freely and lightly. The author has all the ease, indeed, of a regular dweller in the moral, psychological realm; he goes to and fro in it, as a man who knows his way. His tread is a light and modest one, but he keeps the key in his pocket.

His little historical stories all seem to me admirable; they are so good that you may reread them many times. They are not numerous, and they are very short; but they are full of a vivid and delightful sense of the New England past; they have, moreover, the distinction, little tales of a dozen and fifteen pages as they are, of being the only successful attempts at historical fiction that have been made in the United States. Hawthorne was at home in the early New England history; he had thumbed its records and he had breathed its air, in whatever odd receptacles this somewhat pungent compound still lurked. He was fond of it, and he was proud of it, as any New Englander must be, measuring the part of that handful of half-starved fanatics who formed his earliest precursors, in laying the foundations of a mighty empire. Hungry for the picturesque as he always was, and not finding any very copious provision of it around him, he turned back into the two preceding centuries, with the earnest determination that the primitive annals of Massachusetts should at least *appear* picturesque. His fancy, which was always alive,

played a little with the somewhat meager and angular facts of the colonial period and forthwith converted a great many of them into impressive legends and pictures. There is a little infusion of color, a little vagueness about certain details, but it is very gracefully and discreetly done, and realities are kept in view sufficiently to make us feel that if we are reading romance, it is romance that rather supplements than contradicts history. The early annals of New England were not fertile in legend, but Hawthorne laid his hands upon everything that would serve his purpose, and in two or three cases his version of the story has a great deal of beauty. *The Grey Champion* is a sketch of less than eight pages, but the little figures stand up in the tale as stoutly, at the least, as if they were propped up on half-a-dozen chapters by a dryer annalist, and the whole thing has the merit of those cabinet pictures in which the artist has been able to make his persons look the size of life. Hawthorne, to say it again, was not in the least a realist—he was not to my mind enough of one; but there is no genuine lover of the good city of Boston but will feel grateful to him for his courage in attempting to recount the "traditions" of Washington Street, the main thoroughfare of the Puritan capital. The four *Legends of the Province House* are certain shadowy stories which he professes to have gathered in an ancient tavern lurking behind the modern shop-fronts of this part of the city. The Province House disappeared some years ago, but while it stood it was pointed to as the residence of the Royal Governors of Massachusetts before the Revolution. I have no recollection of it, but it cannot have been, even from Hawthorne's account of it, which is as pictorial as he ventures to make it, a very imposing piece of antiquity. The writer's charming touch, however, throws a rich brown tone over its rather shallow venerableness; and we are beguiled into believing, for instance, at the close of *Howe's Masquerade* (a story of a strange occurrence at an entertainment given by Sir William Howe, the last of the Royal Governors, during the siege of Boston by Washington), that "superstition, among other legends of this mansion, repeats the wondrous tale that on the anniversary night of Britain's discom-

fiture the ghosts of the ancient governors of Massachusetts still glide through the Province House. And last of all comes a figure shrouded in a military cloak, tossing his clenched hands into the air and stamping his iron-shod boots upon the freestone steps, with a semblance of feverish despair, but without the sound of a foot-tramp." Hawthorne had, as regards the two earlier centuries of New England life, that faculty which is called nowadays the historic consciousness. He never sought to exhibit it on a large scale; he exhibited it indeed on a scale so minute that we must not linger too much upon it. His vision of the past was filled with definite images—images nonetheless definite, that they were concerned with events as shadowy as this dramatic passing away of the last of King George's representatives in his long loyal but finally alienated colony.

I have said that Hawthorne had become engaged in about his thirty-fifth year; but he was not married until 1842. Before this event took place he passed through two episodes which (putting his falling in love aside) were much the most important things that had yet happened to him. They interrupted the painful monotony of his life, and brought the affairs of men within his personal experience. One of these was moreover in itself a curious and interesting chapter of observation, and it fructified, in Hawthorne's memory, in one of his best productions. How urgently he needed at this time to be drawn within the circle of social accidents, a little anecdote related by Mr. Lathrop in connection with his first acquaintance with the young lady he was to marry may serve as an example. This young lady became known to him through her sister, who had first approached him as an admirer of the *Twice-Told Tales* (as to the authorship of which she had been so much in the dark as to have attributed it first, conjecturally, to one of the two Miss Hathornes); and the two Miss Peabodys, desiring to see more of the charming writer, caused him to be invited to a species of *conversazione* at the house of one of their friends, at which they themselves took care to be punctual. Several other ladies, however, were as punctual as they, and Hawthorne presently arriving, and seeing a bevy of admirers where he had expected but

three or four, fell into a state of agitation, which is vividly described by his biographer. He "stood perfectly motionless, but with the look of a sylvan creature on the point of fleeing away . . . He was stricken with dismay; his face lost color and took on a warm paleness . . . his agitation was very great; he stood by a table and, taking up some small object that lay upon it, he found his hand trembling so that he was obliged to lay it down." It was desirable, certainly, that something should occur to break the spell of a diffidence that might justly be called morbid. There is another little sentence dropped by Mr. Lathrop in relation to this period of Hawthorne's life, which appears to me worth quoting, though I am by no means sure that it will seem so to the reader. It has a very simple and innocent air, but to a person not without an impression of the early days of "culture" in New England, it will be pregnant with historic meaning. The elder Miss Peabody, who afterwards was Hawthorne's sister-in-law and who acquired later in life a very honorable American fame as a woman of benevolence, of learning, and of literary accomplishment, had invited the Miss Hathornes to come to her house for the evening, and to bring with them their brother, whom she wished to thank for his beautiful tales. "Entirely to her surprise," says Mr. Lathrop, completing thereby his picture of the attitude of this remarkable family toward society—"entirely to her surprise they came. She herself opened the door, and there, before her, between his sisters, stood a splendidly handsome youth, tall and strong, with no appearance whatever of timidity, but instead, an almost fierce determination making his face stern. This was his resource for carrying off the extreme inward tremor which he really felt. His hostess brought out Flaxman's designs for Dante, just received from Professor Felton, of Harvard, and the party made an evening's entertainment out of them." This last sentence is the one I allude to; and were it not for fear of appearing too fanciful I should say that these few words were, to the initiated mind, an unconscious expression of the lonely frigidity which characterized most attempts at social recreation in the New England world some forty years ago. There was at that time a great desire for

culture, a great interest in knowledge, in art, in aesthetics, together with a very scanty supply of the materials for such pursuits. Small things were made to do large service; and there is something even touching in the solemnity of consideration that was bestowed by the emancipated New England conscience upon little wandering books and prints, little echoes and rumors of observation and experience. There flourished at that time in Boston a very remarkable and interesting woman, of whom we shall have more to say, Miss Margaret Fuller by name. This lady was the apostle of culture, of intellectual curiosity, and in the peculiarly interesting account of her life, published in 1852 by Emerson and two other of her friends, there are pages of her letters and diaries which narrate her visits to the Boston Athenaeum and the emotions aroused in her mind by turning over portfolios of engravings. These emotions were ardent and passionate—could hardly have been more so had she been prostrate with contemplation in the Sistine Chapel or in one of the chambers of the Pitti Palace. The only analogy I can recall to this earnestness of interest in great works of art at a distance from them is furnished by the great Goethe's elaborate study of plaster casts and pencil drawings at Weimar. I mention Margaret Fuller here because a glimpse of her state of mind—her vivacity of desire and poverty of knowledge—helps to define the situation. The situation lives for a moment in those few words of Mr. Lathrop's. The initiated mind, as I have ventured to call it, has a vision of a little unadorned parlor, with the snow-drifts of a Massachusetts winter piled up about its windows, and a group of sensitive and serious people, modest votaries of opportunity, fixing their eyes upon a bookful of Flaxman's attenuated outlines.

At the beginning of the year 1839 he received, through political interest, an appointment as weigher and gauger in the Boston Custom-house. Mr. Van Buren then occupied the Presidency, and it appears that the Democratic party, whose successful candidate he had been, rather took credit for the patronage it had bestowed upon literary men. Hawthorne was a Democrat, and apparently a zealous one; even in later years, after the Whigs had vivified their principles

by the adoption of the Republican platform, and by taking up an honest attitude on the question of slavery, his political faith never wavered. His Democratic sympathies were eminently natural, and there would have been an incongruity in his belonging to the other party. He was not only by conviction, but personally and by association, a Democrat. When in later years he found himself in contact with European civilization, he appears to have become conscious of a good deal of latent radicalism in his disposition; he was oppressed with the burden of antiquity in Europe, and he found himself sighing for lightness and freshness and facility of change. But these things are relative to the point of view, and in his own country Hawthorne cast his lot with the party of conservatism, the party opposed to change and freshness. The people who found something musty and moldy in his literary productions would have regarded this quite as a matter of course; but we are not obliged to use invidious epithets in describing his political preferences. The sentiment that attached him to the Democracy was a subtle and honorable one, and the author of an attempt to sketch a portrait of him should be the last to complain of this adjustment of his sympathies. It falls much more smoothly into his reader's conception of him than any other would do; and if he had had the perversity to be a Republican, I am afraid our ingenuity would have been considerably taxed in devising a proper explanation of the circumstance. At any rate, the Democrats gave him a small post in the Boston Custom-house, to which an annual salary of $1,200 was attached, and Hawthorne appears at first to have joyously welcomed the gift. The duties of the office were not very congruous to the genius of a man of fancy; but it had the advantage that it broke the spell of his cursed solitude, as he called it, drew him away from Salem, and threw him, comparatively speaking, into the world. The first volume of the American *Note-Books* contains some extracts from letters written during his tenure of this modest office, which indicate sufficiently that his occupations cannot have been intrinsically gratifying.

I have been measuring coal all day, he writes, during the winter of 1840, on board of a black little British schooner, in a

dismal dock at the north end of the city. Most of the time I paced the deck to keep myself warm; for the wind (northeast, I believe) blew up through the dock as if it had been the pipe of a pair of bellows. The vessel lying deep between two wharves, there was no more delightful prospect, on the right hand and on the left, than the posts and timbers, half immersed in the water and covered with ice, which the rising and falling of successive tides had left upon them, so that they looked like immense icicles. Across the water, however, not more than half a mile off, appeared the Bunker's Hill Monument, and what interested me considerably more, a church-steeple, with the dial of a clock upon it, whereby I was enabled to measure the march of the weary hours. Sometimes I descended into the dirty little cabin of the schooner, and warmed myself by a red-hot stove, among biscuit-barrels, pots and kettles, sea-chests, and innumerable lumber of all sorts—my olfactories meanwhile being greatly refreshed with the odor of a pipe, which the captain, or some one of his crew, was smoking. But at last came the sunset, with delicate clouds, and a purple light upon the islands; and I blessed it, because it was the signal of my release.

A worse man than Hawthorne would have measured coal quite as well, and of all the dismal tasks to which an unremunerated imagination has ever had to accommodate itself, I remember none more sordid than the business depicted in the foregoing lines. "I pray," he writes some weeks later, "that in one year more I may find some way of escaping from this unblest Custom-house; for it is a very grievous thraldom. I do detest all offices; all, at least, that are held on a political tenure, and I want nothing to do with politicians. Their hearts wither away and die out of their bodies. Their consciences are turned to india-rubber, or to some substance as black as that and which will stretch as much. One thing, if no more, I have gained by my Custom-house experience—to know a politician. It is a knowledge which no previous thought or power of sympathy could have taught me; because the animal, or the machine rather, is not in nature." A few days later he goes on in the same strain:

I do not think it is the doom laid upon me of murdering so many of the brightest hours of the day at the Custom-house

that makes such havoc with my wits, for here I am again trying to write worthily . . . yet with a sense as if all the noblest part of man had been left out of my composition, or had decayed out of it since my nature was given to my own keeping. . . . Never comes any bird of Paradise into that dismal region. A salt or even a coal-ship is ten million times preferable; for there the sky is above me, and the fresh breeze around me, and my thoughts, having hardly anything to do with my occupation, are as free as air. Nevertheless . . . it is only once in a while that the image and desire of a better and happier life makes me feel the iron of my chain; for after all a human spirit may find no insufficiency of food for it, even in the Custom-house. And with such materials as these I do think and feel and learn things that are worth knowing, and which I should not know unless I had learned them there; so that the present position of my life shall not be quite left out of the sum of my real existence. . . . It is good for me, on many accounts, that my life has had this passage in it. I know much more than I did a year ago. I have a stronger sense of power to act as a man among men. I have gained worldly wisdom, and wisdom also that is not altogether of this world. And when I quit this earthly career where I am now buried, nothing will cling to me that ought to be left behind. Men will not perceive, I trust, by my look or the tenor of my thoughts and feelings, that I have been a Custom-house officer.

He says, writing shortly afterwards, that "When I shall be free again, I will enjoy all things with the fresh simplicity of a child of five years old. I shall grow young again, made all over anew. I will go forth and stand in a summer shower, and all the worldly dust that has collected on me shall be washed away at once, and my heart will be like a bank of fresh flowers for the weary to rest upon."

This forecast of his destiny was sufficiently exact. A year later, in April 1841, he went to take up his abode in the socialistic community of Brook Farm. Here he found himself among fields and flowers and other natural products—as well as among many products that could not very justly be called natural. He was exposed to summer showers in plenty; and his personal associations were as different as possible from those he had encountered in fiscal circles. He

made acquaintance with Transcendentalism and the Transcendentalists.

IV. Brook Farm and Concord

THE HISTORY of the little industrial and intellectual association which formed itself at this time in one of the suburbs of Boston has not, to my knowledge, been written; though it is assuredly a curious and interesting chapter in the domestic annals of New England. It would of course be easy to overrate the importance of this ingenious attempt of a few speculative persons to improve the outlook of mankind. The experiment came and went very rapidly and quietly, leaving very few traces behind it. It became simply a charming personal reminiscence for the small number of amiable enthusiasts who had had a hand in it. There were degrees of enthusiasm, and I suppose there were degrees of amiability; but a certain generous brightness of hope and freshness of conviction pervaded the whole undertaking and rendered it, morally speaking, important to an extent of which any heed that the world in general ever gave to it is an insufficient measure. Of course it would be a great mistake to represent the episode of Brook Farm as directly related to the manners and morals of the New England world in general—and in especial to those of the prosperous, opulent, comfortable part of it. The thing was the experiment of a coterie—it was unusual, unfashionable, unsuccessful. It was, as would then have been said, an amusement of the Transcendentalists—a harmless effusion of Radicalism. The Transcendentalists were not, after all, very numerous; and the Radicals were by no means of the vivid tinge of those of our own day. I have said that the Brook Farm community left no traces behind it that the world in general can appreciate; I should rather say that the only trace is a short novel, of which the principal merits reside in its qualities of difference from the affair itself. *The Blithedale Romance* is the main result of Brook Farm; but *The Blithedale Romance* was very properly never recognized by the Brook Farmers as an accurate portrait of their little colony.

Nevertheless, in a society as to which the more frequent complaint is that it is monotonous, that it lacks variety of incident and of type, the episode, our own business with which is simply that it was the cause of Hawthorne's writing an admirable tale, might be welcomed as a picturesque variation. At the same time, if we do not exaggerate its proportions, it may seem to contain a fund of illustration as to that phase of human life with which our author's own history mingled itself. The most graceful account of the origin of Brook Farm is probably to be found in these words of one of the biographers of Margaret Fuller: "In Boston and its vicinity, several friends, for whose character Margaret felt the highest honor, were earnestly considering the possibility of making such industrial, social, and educational arrangements as would simplify economies, combine leisure for study with healthful and honest toil, avert unjust collisions of caste, equalize refinements, awaken generous affections, diffuse courtesy, and sweeten and sanctify life as a whole." The reader will perceive that this was a liberal scheme, and that if the experiment failed, the greater was the pity. The writer goes on to say that a gentleman, who afterwards distinguished himself in literature (he had begun by being a clergyman), "convinced by his experience in a faithful ministry that the need was urgent for a thorough application of the professed principles of Fraternity to actual relations, was about staking his all of fortune, reputation, and influence, in an attempt to organize a joint-stock company at Brook Farm." As Margaret Fuller passes for having suggested to Hawthorne the figure of Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance,* and as she is probably, with one exception, the person connected with the affair who, after Hawthorne, offered most of what is called a personality to the world, I may venture to quote a few more passages from her Memoirs —a curious, in some points of view almost a grotesque, and yet, on the whole, as I have said, an extremely interesting book. It was a strange history and a strange destiny, that of this brilliant, restless, and unhappy woman—this ardent New Englander, this impassioned Yankee, who occupied so large a place in the thoughts, the lives, the affections, of an

intelligent and appreciative society, and yet left behind her nothing but the memory of a memory. Her function, her reputation, were singular, and not altogether reassuring: she was a talker, she was *the* talker, she was the genius of talk. She had a magnificent, though by no means an unmitigated, egotism; and in some of her utterances it is difficult to say whether pride or humility prevails—as for instance when she writes that she feels "that there is plenty of room in the Universe for my faults, and as if I could not spend time in thinking of them when so many things interest me more." She has left the same sort of reputation as a great actress. Some of her writing has extreme beauty, almost all of it has a real interest, but her value, her activity, her sway (I am not sure that one can say her charm), were personal and practical. She went to Europe, expanded to new desires and interests, and, very poor herself, married an impoverished Italian nobleman. Then, with her husband and child, she embarked to return to her own country, and was lost at sea in a terrible storm, within sight of its coasts. Her tragical death combined with many of the elements of her life to convert her memory into a sort of legend, so that the people who had known her well grew at last to be envied by later comers. Hawthorne does not appear to have been intimate with her; on the contrary, I find such an entry as this in the American *Note-Books* in 1841: "I was invited to dine at Mr. Bancroft's yesterday, with Miss Margaret Fuller; but Providence had given me some business to do; for which I was very thankful!" It is true that, later, the lady is the subject of one or two allusions of a gentler cast. One of them indeed is so pretty as to be worth quoting:

After leaving the book at Mr. Emerson's, I returned through the woods, and, entering Sleepy Hollow, I perceived a lady reclining near the path which bends along its verge. It was Margaret herself. She had been there the whole afternoon, meditating or reading, for she had a book in her hand with some strange title which I did not understand and have forgotten. She said that nobody had broken her solitude, and was just giving utterance to a theory that no inhabitant of Concord ever visited Sleepy Hollow, when we saw a group of people entering

the sacred precincts. Most of them followed a path which led them away from us; but an old man passed near us, and smiled to see Margaret reclining on the ground and me standing by her side. He made some remark upon the beauty of the afternoon, and withdrew himself into the shadow of the wood. Then we talked about autumn, and about the pleasures of being lost in the woods, and about the crows, whose voices Margaret had heard; and about the experiences of early childhood, whose influence remains upon the character after the recollection of them has passed away; and about the sight of mountains from a distance, and the view from their summits; and about other matters of high and low philosophy.

It is safe to assume that Hawthorne could not on the whole have had a high relish for the very positive personality of this accomplished and argumentative woman, in whose intellect high noon seemed ever to reign, as twilight did in his own. He must have been struck with the glare of her understanding, and, mentally speaking, have scowled and blinked a good deal in conversation with her. But it is tolerably manifest, nevertheless, that she was, in his imagination, the starting-point of the figure of Zenobia; and Zenobia is, to my sense, his only very definite attempt at the representation of a character. The portrait is full of alteration and embellishment; but it has a greater reality, a greater abundance of detail, than any of his other figures, and the reality was a memory of the lady whom he had encountered in the Roxbury pastoral or among the wood-walks of Concord, with strange books in her hand and eloquent discourse on her lips. *The Blithedale Romance* was written just after her unhappy death, when the reverberation of her talk would lose much of its harshness. In fact, however, very much the same qualities that made Hawthorne a Democrat in politics—his contemplative turn and absence of a keen perception of abuses, his taste for old ideals, and loitering paces, and muffled tones—would operate to keep him out of active sympathy with a woman of the so-called progressive type. We may be sure that in women his taste was conservative.

It seems odd, as his biographer says, "that the least gregari-

ous of men should have been drawn into a socialistic community"; but although it is apparent that Hawthorne went to Brook Farm without any great Transcendental fervor, yet he had various good reasons for casting his lot in this would-be happy family. He was as yet unable to marry, but he naturally wished to do so as speedily as possible, and there was a prospect that Brook Farm would prove an economical residence. And then it is only fair to believe that Hawthorne was interested in the experiment, and that though he was not a Transcendentalist, an Abolitionist, or a Fourierite, as his companions were in some degree or other likely to be, he was willing, as a generous and unoccupied young man, to lend a hand in any reasonable scheme for helping people to live together on better terms than the common. The Brook Farm scheme was, as such things go, a reasonable one; it was devised and carried out by shrewd and sober-minded New Englanders, who were careful to place economy first and idealism afterwards, and who were not afflicted with a Gallic passion for completeness of theory. There were no formulas, doctrines, dogmas; there was no interference whatever with private life or individual habits, and not the faintest adumbration of a rearrangement of that difficult business known as the relations of the sexes. The relations of the sexes were neither more nor less than what they usually are in American life, excellent; and in such particulars the scheme was thoroughly conservative and irreproachable. Its main characteristic was that each individual concerned in it should do a part of the work necessary for keeping the whole machine going. He could choose his work and he could live as he liked; it was hoped, but it was by no means demanded, that he would make himself agreeable, like a gentleman invited to a dinner-party. Allowing, however, for everything that was a concession to worldly traditions and to the laxity of man's nature, there must have been in the enterprise a good deal of a certain freshness and purity of spirit, of a certain noble credulity and faith in the perfectibility of man, which it would have been easier to find in Boston in the year 1840, than in London five-and-thirty years later. If that was the era of Transcendentalism,

Transcendentalism could only have sprouted in the soil peculiar to the general locality of which I speak—the soil of the old New England morality, gently raked and refreshed by an imported culture. The Transcendentalists read a great deal of French and German, made themselves intimate with George Sand and Goethe, and many other writers; but the strong and deep New England conscience accompanied them on all their intellectual excursions, and there never was a so-called "movement" that embodied itself, on the whole, in fewer eccentricities of conduct, or that borrowed a smaller license in private deportment. Henry Thoreau, a delightful writer, went to live in the woods; but Henry Thoreau was essentially a sylvan personage and would not have been, however the fashion of his time might have turned, a man about town. The brothers and sisters at Brook Farm plowed the fields and milked the cows; but I think that an observer from another clime and society would have been much more struck with their spirit of conformity than with their *dérèglements*. Their ardor was a moral ardor, and the lightest breath of scandal never rested upon them, or upon any phase of Transcendentalism.

A biographer of Hawthorne might well regret that his hero had not been more mixed up with the reforming and free-thinking class, so that he might find a pretext for writing a chapter upon the state of Boston society forty years ago. A needful warrant for such regret should be, properly, that the biographer's own personal reminiscences should stretch back to that period and to the persons who animated it. This would be a guarantee of fulness of knowledge and, presumably, of kindness of tone. It is difficult to see, indeed, how the generation of which Hawthorne has given us, in *Blithedale,* a few portraits, should not at this time of day be spoken of very tenderly and sympathetically. If irony enter into the allusion, it should be of the lightest and gentlest. Certainly, for a brief and imperfect chronicler of these things, a writer just touching them as he passes, and who has not the advantage of having been a contemporary, there is only one possible tone. The compiler of these pages, though his recollections date only from a later period, has a memory

of a certain number of persons who had been intimately connected, as Hawthorne was not, with the agitations of that interesting time. Something of its interest adhered to them still—something of its aroma clung to their garments; there was something about them which seemed to say that when they were young and enthusiastic, they had been initiated into moral mysteries, they had played at a wonderful game. Their usual mark (it is true I can think of exceptions) was that they seemed excellently good. They appeared unstained by the world, unfamiliar with worldly desires and standards, and with those various forms of human depravity which flourish in some high phases of civilization; inclined to simple and democratic ways, destitute of pretensions and affectations, of jealousies, of cynicism, of snobbishness. This little epoch of fermentation has three or four drawbacks for the critic—drawbacks, however, that may be overlooked by a person for whom it has an interest of association. It bore, intellectually, the stamp of provincialism; it was a beginning without a fruition, a dawn without a noon; and it produced, with a single exception, no great talents. It produced a great deal of writing, but (always putting Hawthorne aside, as a contemporary but not a sharer) only one writer in whom the world at large has interested itself. The situation was summed up and transfigured in the admirable and exquisite Emerson. He expressed all that it contained, and a good deal more, doubtless, besides; he was the man of genius of the moment; he was the Transcendentalist *par excellence*. Emerson expressed, before all things, as was extremely natural at the hour and in the place, the value and importance of the individual, the duty of making the most of one's self, of living by one's own personal light and carrying out one's own disposition. He reflected with beautiful irony upon the exquisite impudence of those institutions which claim to have appropriated the truth, and to dole it out in proportionate morsels, in exchange for a subscription. He talked about the beauty and dignity of life, and about everyone who is born into the world being born to the whole, having an interest and a stake in the whole. He said "all that *is* clearly due today is not to lie," and a great many other

things which it would be still easier to present in a ridiculous light. He insisted upon sincerity and independence and spontaneity, upon acting in harmony with one's nature, and not conforming and compromising for the sake of being more comfortable. He urged that a man should await his call, his finding the thing to do which he should really believe in doing, and not be urged by the world's opinion to do simply the world's work. "If no call should come for years, for centuries, then I know that the want of the Universe is the attestation of faith by my abstinence. . . . If I cannot work, at least I need not lie." The doctrine of the supremacy of the individual to himself, of his originality and, as regards his own character, *unique* quality, must have had a great charm for people living in a society in which introspection, thanks to the want of other entertainment, played almost the part of a social resource.

In the United States, in those days, there were no great things to look out at (save forests and rivers); life was not in the least spectacular; society was not brilliant; the country was given up to a great material prosperity, a homely *bourgeois* activity, a diffusion of primary education and the common luxuries. There was therefore, among the cultivated classes, much relish for the utterances of a writer who would help one to take a picturesque view of one's internal possibilities, and to find in the landscape of the soul all sorts of fine sunrise and moonlight effects. "Meantime, while the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely—it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction but provocation that I can receive from another soul." To make one's self so much more interesting would help to make life interesting, and life was probably, to many of this aspiring congregation, a dream of freedom and fortitude. There were faulty parts in the Emersonian philosophy; but the general tone was magnificent; and I can easily believe that, coming when it did and where it did, it should have been drunk in by a great many fine moral appetites with a sense of intoxication. One envies, even, I will not

say the illusions, of that keenly sentient period, but the convictions and interests—the moral passion. One certainly envies the privilege of having heard the finest of Emerson's orations poured forth in their early newness. They were the most poetical, the most beautiful productions of the American mind, and they were thoroughly local and national. They had a music and a magic, and when one remembers the remarkable charm of the speaker, the beautiful modulation of his utterance, one regrets in especial that one might not have been present on a certain occasion which made a sensation, an era—the delivery of an address to the Divinity School of Harvard University, on a summer evening in 1838. In the light, fresh American air, unthickened and undarkened by customs and institutions established, these things, as the phrase is, told.

Hawthorne appears, like his own Miles Coverdale, to have arrived at Brook Farm in the midst of one of those April snow-storms which, during the New England spring, occasionally diversify the inaction of the vernal process. Miles Coverdale, in *The Blithedale Romance,* is evidently as much Hawthorne as he is anyone else in particular. He is indeed not very markedly anyone, unless it be the spectator, the observer; his chief identity lies in his success in looking at things objectively and spinning uncommunicated fancies about them. This indeed was the part that Hawthorne played socially in the little community at West Roxbury. His biographer describes him as sitting "silently, hour after hour, in the broad old-fashioned hall of the house, where he could listen almost unseen to the chat and merriment of the young people, himself almost always holding a book before him, but seldom turning the leaves." He put his hand to the plow and supported himself and the community, as they were all supposed to do, by his labor; but he contributed little to the hum of voices. Some of his companions, either then or afterwards, took, I believe, rather a gruesome view of his want of articulate enthusiasm, and accused him of coming to the place as a sort of intellectual vampire, for purely psychological purposes. He sat in a corner, they declared, and watched the inmates when they were off their

guard, analyzing their characters, and dissecting the amiable ardor, the magnanimous illusions, which he was too cold-blooded to share. In so far as this account of Hawthorne's attitude was a complaint, it was a singularly childish one. If he was at Brook Farm without being of it, this is a very fortunate circumstance from the point of view of posterity, who would have preserved but a slender memory of the affair if our author's fine novel had not kept the topic open. The complaint is indeed almost so ungrateful a one as to make us regret that the author's fellow-communists came off so easily. They certainly would not have done so if the author of *Blithedale* had been more of a satirist. Certainly, if Hawthorne was an observer, he was a very harmless one; and when one thinks of the queer specimens of the reforming genus with which he must have been surrounded, one almost wishes that, for our entertainment, he had given his old companions something to complain of in earnest. There is no satire whatever in the *Romance;* the quality is almost conspicuous by its absence. Of portraits there are only two; there is no sketching of odd figures—no reproduction of strange types of radicalism; the human background is left vague. Hawthorne was not a satirist, and if at Brook Farm he was, according to his habit, a good deal of a mild skeptic, his skepticism was exercised much more in the interest of fancy than in that of reality.

There must have been something pleasantly bucolic and pastoral in the habits of the place during the fine New England summer; but we have no retrospective envy of the denizens of Brook Farm in that other season which, as Hawthorne somewhere says, leaves in those regions "so large a blank—so melancholy a deathspot—in lives so brief that they ought to be all summertime." "Of a summer night, when the moon was full," says Mr. Lathrop, "they lit no lamps, but sat grouped in the light and shadow, while sundry of the younger men sang old ballads, or joined Tom Moore's songs to operatic airs. On other nights there would be an original essay or poem read aloud, or else a play of Shakespeare, with the parts distributed to different members; and these amusements failing, some interesting discussion was

likely to take their place. Occasionally, in the dramatic season, large delegations from the farm would drive into Boston, in carriages and wagons, to the opera or the play. Sometimes, too, the young women sang as they washed the dishes in the Hive; and the youthful yeomen of the society came in and helped them with their work. The men wore blouses of a checked or plaided stuff, belted at the waist, with a broad collar folding down about the throat, and rough straw hats; the women, usually, simple calico gowns and hats." All this sounds delightfully Arcadian and innocent, and it is certain that there was something peculiar to the clime and race in some of the features of such a life; in the free, frank, and stainless companionship of young men and maidens, in the mixture of manual labor and intellectual flights—dish-washing and aesthetics, wood-chopping and philosophy. Wordsworth's "plain living and high thinking" were made actual. Some passages in Margaret Fuller's journals throw plenty of light on this. (It must be premised that she was at Brook Farm as an occasional visitor; not as a laborer in the Hive.)

All Saturday I was off in the woods. In the evening we had a general conversation, opened by me, upon Education, in its largest sense, and on what we can do for ourselves and others. I took my usual ground: The aim is perfection; patience the road. Our lives should be considered as a tendency, an approximation only. . . . Mr. R. spoke admirably on the nature of loyalty. The people showed a good deal of the *sans-culotte* tendency in their manners, throwing themselves on the floor, yawning, and going out when they had heard enough. Yet as the majority differ with me, to begin with—that being the reason this subject was chosen—they showed on the whole more interest and deference than I had expected. As I am accustomed to deference, however, and need it for the boldness and animation which my part requires, I did not speak with as much force as usual. . . . Sunday.—A glorious day; the woods full of perfume; I was out all the morning. In the afternoon Mrs. R. and I had a talk. I said my position would be too uncertain here, as I could not work. —— said "they would all like to work for a person of genius." . . . "Yes," I told her; "but where would be my repose when they were always to be judging whether I

was worth it or not? . . . Each day you must prove yourself anew." . . . We talked of the principles of the community. I said I had not a right to come, because all the confidence I had in it was as an *experiment* worth trying, and that it was part of the great wave of inspired thought. . . . We had valuable discussion on these points. All Monday morning in the woods again. Afternoon, out with the drawing party; I felt the evils of the want of conventional refinement, in the impudence with which one of the girls treated me. She has since thought of it with regret, I notice; and by every day's observation of me will see that she ought not to have done it. In the evening a husking in the barn . . . a most picturesque scene . . . I stayed and helped about half an hour, and then took a long walk beneath the stars. Wednesday. . . . In the evening a conversation on Impulse . . . I defended nature, as I always do—the spirit ascending through, not superseding, nature. But in the scale of Sense, Intellect, Spirit, I advocated the claims of Intellect, because those present were rather disposed to postpone them. On the nature of Beauty we had good talk. —— seemed in a much more reverent humor than the other night, and enjoyed the large plans of the universe which were unrolled. . . . Saturday.—Well, good-by, Brook Farm. I know more about this place than I did when I came; but the only way to be qualified for a judge of such an experiment would be to become an active, though unimpassioned, associate in trying it. . . . The girl who was so rude to me stood waiting, with a timid air, to bid me good-by.

The young girl in question cannot have been Hawthorne's charming Priscilla; nor yet another young lady, of a most humble spirit, who communicated to Margaret's biographers her recollections of this remarkable woman's visits to Brook Farm; concluding with the assurance that "after a while she seemed to lose sight of my more prominent and disagreeable peculiarities, and treated me with affectionate regard."

Hawthorne's farewell to the place appears to have been accompanied with some reflections of a cast similar to those indicated by Miss Fuller; insofar at least as we may attribute to Hawthorne himself some of the observations that he fathers upon Miles Coverdale. His biographer justly quotes two or three sentences from *The Blithedale Romance,* as striking the note of the author's feeling about the place.

"No sagacious man," says Coverdale, "will long retain his sagacity if he live exclusively among reformers and progressive people, without periodically returning to the settled system of things, to correct himself by a new observation from that old standpoint." And he remarks elsewhere that "it struck me as rather odd that one of the first questions raised, after our separation from the greedy, struggling, self-seeking world, should relate to the possibility of getting the advantage over the outside barbarians in their own field of labor. But to tell the truth, I very soon became sensible that, as regarded society at large, we stood in a position of new hostility rather than new brotherhood." He was doubtless oppressed by the "sultry heat of society," as he calls it in one of the jottings in the *Note-Books*. "What would a man do if he were compelled to live always in the sultry heat of society, and could never bathe himself in cool solitude?" His biographer relates that one of the other Brook Farmers, wandering afield one summer's day, discovered Hawthorne stretched at his length upon a grassy hillside, with his hat pulled over his face, and every appearance, in his attitude, of the desire to escape detection. On his asking him whether he had any particular reason for this shyness of posture—"Too much of a party up there!" Hawthorne contented himself with replying, with a nod in the direction of the Hive. He had nevertheless for a time looked forward to remaining indefinitely in the community; he meant to marry as soon as possible and bring his wife there to live. Some sixty pages of the second volume of the American *Note-Books* are occupied with extracts from his letters to his future wife and from his journal (which appears however at this time to have been only intermittent), consisting almost exclusively of descriptions of the simple scenery of the neighborhood, and of the state of the woods and fields and weather. Hawthorne's fondness for all the common things of nature was deep and constant, and there is always something charming in his verbal touch, as we may call it, when he talks to himself about them. "Oh," he breaks out, of an October afternoon, "the beauty of grassy slopes, and the hollow ways of paths winding between hills, and the intervals between

the road and wood-lots, where Summer lingers and sits down, strewing dandelions of gold and blue asters as her parting gifts and memorials!" He was but a single summer at Brook Farm; the rest of his residence had the winter quality.

But if he returned to solitude, it was henceforth to be as the French say, a *solitude à deux*. He was married in July 1842, and betook himself immediately to the ancient village of Concord, near Boston, where he occupied the so-called Manse which has given the title to one of his collections of tales, and upon which this work, in turn, has conferred a permanent distinction. I use the epithets "ancient" and "near" in the foregoing sentence, according to the American measurement of time and distance. Concord is some twenty miles from Boston, and even today, upwards of forty years after the date of Hawthorne's removal thither, it is a very fresh and well-preserved looking town. It had already a local history when, a hundred years ago, the larger current of human affairs flowed for a moment around it. Concord has the honor of being the first spot in which blood was shed in the war of the Revolution; here occurred the first exchange of musket shots between the King's troops and the American insurgents. Here, as Emerson says in the little hymn which he contributed in 1836 to the dedication of a small monument commemorating this circumstance—

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

The battle was a small one, and the farmers were not destined individually to emerge from obscurity; but the memory of these things has kept the reputation of Concord green, and it has been watered, moreover, so to speak, by the lifelong presence there of one of the most honored of American men of letters—the poet from whom I just quoted two lines. Concord is indeed in itself decidedly verdant, and is an excellent specimen of a New England village of the riper sort. At the time of Hawthorne's first going there it must have been an even better specimen than today—more homogeneous, more indigenous, more absolutely democratic. Forty years ago the tide of foreign immigration had scarcely

begun to break upon the rural strongholds of the New England race; it had at most begun to splash them with the salt Hibernian spray. It is very possible, however, that at this period there was not an Irishman in Concord; the place would have been a village community operating in excellent conditions. Such a village community was not the least honorable item in the sum of New England civilization. Its spreading elms and plain white houses, its generous summers and ponderous winters, its immediate background of promiscuous field and forest, would have been part of the composition. For the rest, there were the selectmen and the town-meetings, the town-schools and the self-governing spirit, the rigid morality, the friendly and familiar manners, the perfect competence of the little society to manage its affairs itself. In the delightful introduction to the *Mosses*, Hawthorne has given an account of his dwelling, of his simple occupations and recreations, and of some of the characteristics of the place. The Manse is a large, square wooden house, to the surface of which—even in the dry New England air, so unfriendly to mosses and lichens and weather-stains, and the other elements of a picturesque complexion—a hundred and fifty years of exposure have imparted a kind of tone, standing just above the slow-flowing Concord River, and approached by a short avenue of overarching trees. It had been the dwelling-place of generations of Presbyterian ministers, ancestors of the celebrated Emerson, who had himself spent his early manhood and written some of his most beautiful essays there. "He used," as Hawthorne says, "to watch the Assyrian dawn, and Paphian sunset and moonrise, from the summit of our eastern hill." From its clerical occupants the place had inherited a mild mustiness of theological association—a vague reverberation of old Calvinistic sermons, which served to deepen its extramundane and somnolent quality. The three years that Hawthorne passed here were, I should suppose, among the happiest of his life. The future was indeed not in any special manner assured; but the present was sufficiently genial. In the American *Note-Books* there is a charming passage (too long to quote) descriptive of the entertainment the new couple

found in renovating and refurnishing the old parsonage, which, at the time of their going into it, was given up to ghosts and cobwebs. Of the little drawing room, which had been most completely reclaimed, he writes that "the shade of our departed host will never haunt it; for its aspect has been as completely changed as the scenery of a theater. Probably the ghost gave one peep into it, uttered a groan, and vanished forever." This departed host was a certain Doctor Ripley, a venerable scholar, who left behind him a reputation of learning and sanctity which was reproduced in one of the ladies of his family, long the most distinguished woman in the little Concord circle. Doctor Ripley's predecessor had been, I believe, the last of the line of the Emerson ministers—an old gentleman who, in the earlier years of his pastorate, stood at the window of his study (the same in which Hawthorne handled a more irresponsible quill) watching, with his hands under his long coat-tails, the progress of the Concord fight. It is not by any means related, however, I should add, that he waited for the conclusion to make up his mind which was the righteous cause.

Hawthorne had a little society (as much, we may infer, as he desired), and it was excellent in quality. But the pages in the *Note-Books* which relate to his life at the Manse, and the introduction to the *Mosses*, make more of his relations with vegetable nature, and of his customary contemplation of the incidents of wood-path and wayside than of the human elements of the scene; though these also are gracefully touched upon. These pages treat largely of the pleasures of a kitchen-garden, of the beauty of summer-squashes, and of the mysteries of apple-raising. With the wholesome aroma of apples (as is indeed almost necessarily the case in any realistic record of New England rural life) they are especially pervaded; and with many other homely and domestic emanations; all of which derive a sweetness from the medium of our author's colloquial style. Hawthorne was silent with his lips; but he talked with his pen. The tone of his writing is often that of charming talk—ingenious, fanciful, slow-flowing, with all the lightness of gossip and none of its vulgarity. In the preface to the tales written

at the Manse he talks of many things, and just touches upon some of the members of his circle—especially upon that odd genius, his fellow-villager, Henry Thoreau. I said a little way back that the New England Transcendental movement had suffered in the estimation of the world at large from not having (putting Emerson aside) produced any superior talents. But any reference to it would be ungenerous which should omit to pay a tribute in passing to the author of *Walden*. Whatever question there may be of his talent, there can be none, I think, of his genius. It was a slim and crooked one; but it was eminently personal. He was imperfect, unfinished, inartistic; he was worse than provincial—he was parochial; it is only at his best that he is readable. But at his best he has an extreme natural charm, and he must always be mentioned after those Americans—Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, Motley—who have written originally. He was Emerson's independent moral man made flesh—living for the ages, and not for Saturday and Sunday; for the Universe, and not for Concord. In fact, however, Thoreau lived for Concord very effectually, and by his remarkable genius for the observation of the phenomena of woods and streams, of plants and trees, and beasts and fishes, and for flinging a kind of spiritual interest over these things, he did more than he perhaps intended toward consolidating the fame of his accidental human sojourn. He was as shy and ungregarious as Hawthorne; but he and the latter appear to have been sociably disposed towards each other, and there are some charming touches in the preface to the *Mosses* in regard to the hours they spent in boating together on the large, quiet Concord River. Thoreau was a great voyager, in a canoe which he had constructed himself, and which he eventually made over to Hawthorne, and as expert in the use of the paddle as the redmen who had once haunted the same silent stream. The most frequent of Hawthorne's companions on these excursions appears, however, to have been a local celebrity—as well as Thoreau a high Transcendentalist—Mr. Ellery Channing, whom I may mention, since he is mentioned very explicitly in the preface to the *Mosses*, and also because no account of the little Con-

cord world would be complete which should omit him. He was the son of the distinguished Unitarian moralist, and, I believe, the intimate friend of Thoreau, whom he resembled in having produced literary compositions more esteemed by the few than by the many. He and Hawthorne were both fishermen, and the two used to set themselves afloat in the summer afternoons. "Strange and happy times were those," exclaims the more distinguished of the two writers, "when we cast aside all irksome forms and strait-laced habitudes and delivered ourselves up to the free air, to live like the Indians or any less conventional race, during one bright semicircle of the sun. Rowing our boat against the current, between wide meadows, we turned aside into the Assabeth. A more lovely stream than this, for a mile above its junction with the Concord, has never flowed on earth—nowhere indeed except to lave the interior regions of a poet's imagination. . . . It comes flowing softly through the midmost privacy and deepest heart of a wood which whispers it to be quiet; while the stream whispers back again from its sedgy borders, as if river and wood were hushing one another to sleep. Yes; the river sleeps along its course and dreams of the sky and the clustering foliage. . . ." While Hawthorne was looking at these beautiful things, or, for that matter, was writing them, he was well out of the way of a certain class of visitants whom he alludes to in one of the closing passages of this long Introduction. "Never was a poor little country village infested with such a variety of queer, strangely-dressed, oddly-behaved mortals, most of whom took upon themselves to be important agents of the world's destiny, yet were simply bores of a very intense character." "These hobgoblins of flesh and blood," he says in a preceding paragraph, "were attracted thither by the wide-spreading influence of a great original thinker who had his earthly abode at the opposite extremity of our village. . . . People that had lighted on a new thought or a thought they fancied new, came to Emerson, as the finder of a glittering gem hastens to a lapidary, to ascertain its quality and value." And Hawthorne enumerates some of the categories of pilgrims to the shrine of the mystic counselor, who as a

general thing was probably far from abounding in their own sense (when this sense was perverted), but gave them a due measure of plain practical advice. The whole passage is interesting, and it suggests that little Concord had not been ill-treated by the fates—with "a great original thinker" at one end of the village, an exquisite teller of tales at the other, and the rows of New England elms between. It contains, moreover, an admirable sentence about Hawthorne's pilgrim-haunted neighbor, with whom, "being happy," as he says, and feeling therefore "as if there were no question to be put," he was not in metaphysical communion. "It was good nevertheless to meet him in the wood-paths, or sometimes in our avenue, with that pure intellectual gleam diffused about his presence, like the garment of a shining one; and he so quiet, so simple, so without pretension, encountering each man alive as if expecting to receive more than he could impart!" One may without indiscretion risk the surmise that Hawthorne's perception of the "shining" element in his distinguished friend was more intense than his friend's appreciation of whatever luminous property might reside within the somewhat dusky envelope of our hero's identity as a collector of "mosses." Emerson, as a sort of spiritual sun-worshiper, could have attached but a moderate value to Hawthorne's catlike faculty of seeing in the dark.

"As to the daily course of our life," the latter writes in the spring of 1843, "I have written with pretty commendable diligence, averaging from two to four hours a day; and the result is seen in various magazines. I might have written more if it had seemed worth while, but I was content to earn only so much gold as might suffice for our immediate wants, having prospect of official station and emolument which would do away with the necessity of writing for bread. These prospects have not yet had their fulfillment; and we are well content to wait, for an office would inevitably remove us from our present happy home—at least from an outward home; for there is an inner one that will accompany us wherever we go. Meantime, the magazine people do not pay their debts; so that we taste

some of the inconveniences of poverty. It is an annoyance, not a trouble." And he goes on to give some account of his usual habits. (The passage is from his journal, and the account is given to himself, as it were, with that odd, unfamiliar explicitness which marks the tone of this record throughout.) "Every day I trudge through snow and slosh to the village, look into the post-office, and spend an hour at the reading-room; and then return home, generally without having spoken a word to any human being. . . . In the way of exercise I saw and split wood, and physically I was never in a better condition than now." He adds a mention of an absence he had lately made. "I went alone to Salem, where I resumed all my bachelor habits for nearly a fortnight, leading the same life in which ten years of my youth flitted away like a dream. But how much changed was I! At last I had got hold of a reality which never could be taken from me. It was good thus to get apart from my happiness for the sake of contemplating it."

These compositions, which were so unpunctually paid for, appeared in the *Democratic Review*, a periodical published at Washington, and having, as our author's biographer says, "considerable pretensions to a national character." It is to be regretted that the practice of keeping its creditors waiting should, on the part of the magazine in question, have been thought compatible with these pretensions. The foregoing lines are a description of a very monotonous but a very contented life, and Mr. Lathrop justly remarks upon the dissonance of tone of the tales Hawthorne produced under these happy circumstances. It is indeed not a little of an anomaly. The episode of the Manse was one of the most agreeable he had known, and yet the best of the *Mosses* (though not the greater number of them) are singularly dismal compositions. They are redolent of M. Montégut's pessimism. "The reality of sin, the pervasiveness of evil," says Mr. Lathrop, "had been but slightly insisted upon in the earlier tales: in this series the idea bursts up like a long-buried fire, with earth-shaking strength, and the pits of hell seem yawning beneath us." This is very true (allowing for Mr. Lathrop's rather too emphatic way of putting it); but

the anomaly is, I think, on the whole, only superficial. Our writer's imagination, as has been abundantly conceded, was a gloomy one; the old Puritan sense of sin, of penalties to be paid, of the darkness and wickedness of life, had, as I have already suggested, passed into it. It had not passed into the parts of Hawthorne's nature corresponding to those occupied by the same horrible vision of things in his ancestors; but it had still been determined to claim this later comer as its own, and since his heart and his happiness were to escape, it insisted on setting its mark upon his genius—upon his most beautiful organ, his admirable fancy. It may be said that when his fancy was strongest and keenest, when it was most itself, then the dark Puritan tinge showed in it most richly; and there cannot be a better proof that he was not the man of a somber *parti-pris* whom M. Montégut describes, than the fact that these duskiest flowers of his invention sprang straight from the soil of his happiest days. This surely indicates that there was but little direct connection between the products of his fancy and the state of his affections. When he was lightest at heart, he was most creative, and when he was most creative, the moral picturesqueness of the old secret of mankind in general and of the Puritans in particular most appealed to him—the secret that we are really not by any means so good as a well-regulated society requires us to appear. It is not too much to say, even, that the very condition of production of some of these unamiable tales would be that they should be superficial, and, as it were, insincere. The magnificent little romance of *Young Goodman Brown,* for instance, evidently means nothing as regards Hawthorne's own state of mind, his conviction of human depravity and his consequent melancholy; for the simple reason that if it meant anything, it would mean too much. Mr. Lathrop speaks of it as a "terrible and lurid parable"; but this, it seems to me, is just what it is not. It is not a parable, but a picture, which is a very different thing. What does M. Montégut make, one would ask, from the point of view of Hawthorne's pessimism, of the singularly objective and unpreoccupied tone of the Introduction to the *Old Manse,* in which the author speaks from himself, and

in which the cry of metaphysical despair is not even faintly sounded?

We have seen that when he went into the village he often came home without having spoken a word to a human being. There is a touching entry made a little later, bearing upon his mild taciturnity. "A cloudy veil stretches across the abyss of my nature. I have, however, no love of secrecy and darkness. I am glad to think that God sees through my heart, and if any angel has power to penetrate into it, he is welcome to know everything that is there. Yes, and so may any mortal who is capable of full sympathy, and therefore worthy to come into my depths. But he must find his own way there; I can neither guide nor enlighten him." It must be acknowledged, however, that if he was not able to open the gate of conversation, it was sometimes because he was disposed to slide the bolt himself. "I had a purpose," he writes, shortly before the entry last quoted, "if circumstances would permit, of passing the whole term of my wife's absence without speaking a word to any human being." He beguiled these incommunicative periods by studying German, in Tieck and Bürger, without apparently making much progress; also in reading French, in Voltaire and Rabelais. "Just now," he writes, one October noon, "I heard a sharp tapping at the window of my study, and, looking up from my book (a volume of Rabelais), behold, the head of a little bird, who seemed to demand admittance." It was a quiet life, of course, in which these diminutive incidents seemed noteworthy; and what is noteworthy here to the observer of Hawthorne's contemplative simplicity, is the fact that though he finds a good deal to say about the little bird (he devotes several lines more to it) he makes no remark upon Rabelais. He had other visitors than little birds, however, and their demands were also not Rabelaisian. Thoreau comes to see him, and they talk "upon the spiritual advantages of change of place, and upon the *Dial*, and upon Mr. Alcott, and other kindred or concatenated subjects." Mr. Alcott was an arch-transcendentalist, living in Concord, and the *Dial* was a periodical to which the illuminated spirits of Boston and its neighborhood used to contribute.

Another visitor comes and talks "of Margaret Fuller, who, he says, has risen perceptibly into a higher state since their last meeting." There is probably a great deal of Concord five-and-thirty years ago in that little sentence!

V. The Three American Novels

THE prospect of official station and emolument which Hawthorne mentions in one of those paragraphs from his journals which I have just quoted, as having offered itself and then passed away, was at last, in the event, confirmed by his receiving from the administration of President Polk the gift of a place in the Custom-house of his native town. The office was a modest one, and "official station" may perhaps appear a magniloquent formula for the functions sketched in the admirable Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne's duties were those of Surveyor of the port of Salem, and they had a salary attached, which was the important part; as his biographer tells us that he had received almost nothing for the contributions to the *Democratic Review*. He bade farewell to his ex-parsonage and went back to Salem in 1846, and the immediate effect of his ameliorated fortune was to make him stop writing. None of his journals of the period from his going to Salem to 1850 have been published; from which I infer that he even ceased to journalize. *The Scarlet Letter* was not written till 1849. In the delightful prologue to that work, entitled *The Custom-house,* he embodies some of the impressions gathered during these years of comparative leisure (I say of leisure because he does not intimate in this sketch of his occupations that his duties were onerous). He intimates, however, that they were not interesting, and that it was a very good thing for him, mentally and morally, when his term of service expired—or rather when he was removed from office by the operation of that wonderful "rotatory" system which his countrymen had invented for the administration of their affairs. This sketch of the Custom-house is, as simple writing, one of the most perfect of Hawthorne's compositions, and one of the most gracefully and humorously autobiographic. It would be

interesting to examine it in detail, but I prefer to use my space for making some remarks upon the work which was the ultimate result of this period of Hawthorne's residence in his native town; and I shall, for convenience' sake, say directly afterwards what I have to say about the two companions of *The Scarlet Letter*—*The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*. I quoted some passages from the prologue to the first of these novels in the early pages of this essay. There is another passage, however, which bears particularly upon this phase of Hawthorne's career, and which is so happily expressed as to make it a pleasure to transcribe it—the passage in which he says that "for myself, during the whole of my Custom-house experience, moonlight and sunshine, and the glow of the firelight, were just alike in my regard, and neither of them was of one whit more avail than the twinkle of a tallow candle. An entire class of susceptibilities, and a gift connected with them—of no great richness or value, but the best I had—was gone from me." He goes on to say that he believes that he might have done something if he could have made up his mind to convert the very substance of the commonplace that surrounded him into matter of literature.

I might, for instance, have contented myself with writing out the narratives of a veteran shipmaster, one of the inspectors, whom I should be most ungrateful not to mention; since scarcely a day passed that he did not stir me to laughter and admiration by his marvelous gift as a story-teller. . . . Or I might readily have found a more serious task. It was a folly, with the materiality of this daily life pressing so intrusively upon me, to attempt to fling myself back into another age; or to insist on creating a semblance of a world out of airy matter. . . . The wiser effort would have been to diffuse thought and imagination through the opaque substance of today, and thus make it a bright transparency . . . to seek resolutely the true and indestructible value that lay hidden in the petty and wearisome incidents and ordinary characters with which I was now conversant. The fault was mine. The page of life that was spread out before me was dull and commonplace, only because I had not fathomed its deeper import. A better book than I shall ever write was there. . . . These perceptions came too late. . . . I

had ceased to be a writer of tolerably poor tales and essays, and had become a tolerably good Surveyor of the Customs. That was all. But, nevertheless, it is anything but agreeable to be haunted by a suspicion that one's intellect is dwindling away, or exhaling, without your consciousness, like ether out of a phial; so that at every glance you find a smaller and less volatile residuum.

As, however, it was with what was left of his intellect after three years' evaporation, that Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter,* there is little reason to complain of the injury he suffered in his surveyorship.

His publisher, Mr. Fields, in a volume entitled *Yesterdays with Authors,* has related the circumstances in which Hawthorne's masterpiece came into the world. "In the winter of 1849, after he had been ejected from the custom house, I went down to Salem to see him and inquire after his health, for we heard he had been suffering from illness. He was then living in a modest wooden house. . . . I found him alone in a chamber over the sitting-room of the dwelling, and as the day was cold he was hovering near a stove. We fell into talk about his future prospects, and he was, as I feared I should find him, in a very desponding mood." His visitor urged him to bethink himself of publishing something, and Hawthorne replied by calling his attention to the small popularity his published productions had yet acquired, and declaring that he had done nothing and had no spirit for doing anything. The narrator of the incident urged upon him the necessity of a more hopeful view of his situation, and proceeded to take leave. He had not reached the street, however, when Hawthorne hurried to overtake him, and, placing a roll of MS. in his hand, bade him to take it to Boston, read it, and pronounce upon it. "It is either very good or very bad," said the author; "I don't know which." "On my way back to Boston," says Mr. Fields, "I read the germ of *The Scarlet Letter;* before I slept that night I wrote him a note all aglow with admiration of the marvelous story he had put into my hands, and told him that I would come again to Salem the next day and arrange for its publication. I went on in such an amazing

state of excitement, when we met again in the little house, that he would not believe I was really in earnest. He seemed to think I was beside myself, and laughed sadly at my enthusiasm." Hawthorne, however, went on with the book and finished it, but it appeared only a year later. His biographer quotes a passage from a letter which he wrote in February 1850 to his friend Horatio Bridge. "I finished my book only yesterday; one end being in the press at Boston, while the other was in my head here at Salem, so that, as you see, my story is at least fourteen miles long. . . . My book, the publisher tells me, will not be out before April. He speaks of it in tremendous terms of approbation, so does Mrs. Hawthorne, to whom I read the conclusion last night. It broke her heart, and sent her to bed with a grievous headache—which I look upon as a triumphant success. Judging from the effect upon her and the publisher, I may calculate on what bowlers call a ten-strike. But I don't make any such calculation." And Mr. Lathrop calls attention, in regard to this passage, to an allusion in the English *Note-Books* (September 14, 1855). "Speaking of Thackeray, I cannot but wonder at his coolness in respect to his own pathos, and compare it to my emotions when I read the last scene of *The Scarlet Letter* to my wife, just after writing it—tried to read it rather, for my voice swelled and heaved as if I were tossed up and down on an ocean as it subsides after a storm. But I was in a very nervous state then, having gone through a great diversity of emotion while writing it, for many months."

The work has the tone of the circumstances in which it was produced. If Hawthorne was in a somber mood, and if his future was painfully vague, *The Scarlet Letter* contains little enough of gaiety or of hopefulness. It is densely dark, with a single spot of vivid color in it; and it will probably long remain the most consistently gloomy of English novels of the first order. But I just now called it the author's masterpiece, and I imagine it will continue to be, for other generations than ours, his most substantial title to fame. The subject had probably lain a long time in his mind, as his subjects were apt to do; so that he appears completely to possess it,

to know it and feel it. It is simpler and more complete than his other novels; it achieves more perfectly what it attempts, and it has about it that charm, very hard to express, which we find in an artist's work the first time he has touched his highest mark—a sort of straightness and naturalness of execution, an unconsciousness of his public, and freshness of interest in his theme. It was a great success, and he immediately found himself famous. The writer of these lines, who was a child at the time, remembers dimly the sensation the book produced, and the little shudder with which people alluded to it, as if a peculiar horror were mixed with its attractions. He was too young to read it himself, but its title, upon which he fixed his eyes as the book lay upon the table, had a mysterious charm. He had a vague belief indeed that the "letter" in question was one of the documents that come by the post, and it was a source of perpetual wonderment to him that it should be of such an unaccustomed hue. Of course it was difficult to explain to a child the significance of poor Hester Prynne's blood-colored *A*. But the mystery was at last partly dispelled by his being taken to see a collection of pictures (the annual exhibition of the National Academy), where he encountered a representation of a pale, handsome woman, in a quaint black dress and a white coif, holding between her knees an elfish-looking little girl, fantastically dressed and crowned with flowers. Embroidered on the woman's breast was a great crimson *A*, over which the child's fingers, as she glanced strangely out of the picture, were maliciously playing. I was told that this was Hester Prynne and little Pearl, and that when I grew older I might read their interesting history. But the picture remained vividly imprinted on my mind; I had been vaguely frightened and made uneasy by it; and when, years afterwards, I first read the novel, I seemed to myself to have read it before, and to be familiar with its two strange heroines. I mention this incident simply as an indication of the degree to which the success of *The Scarlet Letter* had made the book what is called an actuality. Hawthorne himself was very modest about it; he wrote to his publisher, when there was a question of his undertaking another novel,

that what had given the history of Hester Prynne its "vogue" was simply the introductory chapter. In fact, the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* was in the United States a literary event of the first importance. The book was the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country. There was a consciousness of this in the welcome that was given it—a satisfaction in the idea of America having produced a novel that belonged to literature, and to the forefront of it. Something might at last be sent to Europe as exquisite in quality as anything that had been received, and the best of it was that the thing was absolutely American; it belonged to the soil, to the air; it came out of the very heart of New England.

It is beautiful, admirable, extraordinary; it has in the highest degree that merit which I have spoken of as the mark of Hawthorne's best things—an indefinable purity and lightness of conception, a quality which in a work of art affects one in the same way as the absence of grossness does in a human being. His fancy, as I just now said, had evidently brooded over the subject for a long time; the situation to be represented had disclosed itself to him in all its phases. When I say in all its phases, the sentence demands modification; for it is to be remembered that if Hawthorne laid his hand upon the well-worn theme, upon the familiar combination of the wife, the lover, and the husband, it was after all but to one period of the history of these three persons that he attached himself. The situation is the situation after the woman's fault has been committed, and the current of expiation and repentance has set in. In spite of the relation between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, no story of love was surely ever less of a "love story." To Hawthorne's imagination the fact that these two persons had loved each other too well was of an interest comparatively vulgar; what appealed to him was the idea of their moral situation in the long years that were to follow. The story indeed is in a secondary degree that of Hester Prynne; she becomes, really, after the first scene, an accessory figure; it is not upon her the *dénouement* depends. It is upon her guilty lover that the author projects most frequently the cold, thin rays of his

fitfully-moving lantern, which makes here and there a little luminous circle, on the edge of which hovers the livid and sinister figure of the injured and retributive husband. The story goes on for the most part between the lover and the husband—the tormented young Puritan minister, who carries the secret of his own lapse from pastoral purity locked up beneath an exterior that commends itself to the reverence of his flock, while he sees the softer partner of his guilt standing in the full glare of exposure and humbling herself to the misery of atonement—between this more wretched and pitiable culprit, to whom dishonor would come as a comfort and the pillory as a relief, and the older, keener, wiser man, who, to obtain satisfaction for the wrong he has suffered, devises the infernally ingenious plan of conjoining himself with his wronger, living with him, living upon him, and while he pretends to minister to his hidden ailment and to sympathize with his pain, revels in his unsuspected knowledge of these things and stimulates them by malignant arts. The attitude of Roger Chillingworth, and the means he takes to compensate himself—these are the highly original elements in the situation that Hawthorne so ingeniously treats. None of his works are so impregnated with that after-sense of the old Puritan consciousness of life to which allusion has so often been made. If, as M. Montégut says, the qualities of his ancestors *filtered* down through generations into his composition, *The Scarlet Letter* was, as it were, the vessel that gathered up the last of the precious drops. And I say this not because the story happens to be of so-called historical cast, to be told of the early days of Massachusetts and of people in steeple-crowned hats and sad-colored garments. The historical coloring is rather weak than otherwise; there is little elaboration of detail, of the modern realism of research; and the author has made no great point of causing his figures to speak the English of their period. Nevertheless, the book is full of the moral presence of the race that invented Hester's penance—diluted and complicated with other things, but still perfectly recognizable. Puritanism, in a word, is there, not only objectively, as Hawthorne tried to place it there, but subjectively as well. Not, I mean,

in his judgment of his characters, in any harshness of prejudice, or in the obtrusion of a moral lesson; but in the very quality of his own vision, in the tone of the picture, in a certain coldness and exclusiveness of treatment.

The faults of the book are, to my sense, a want of reality and an abuse of the fanciful element—of a certain superficial symbolism. The people strike me not as characters, but as representatives, very picturesquely arranged, of a single state of mind; and the interest of the story lies, not in them, but in the situation, which is insistently kept before us, with little progression, though with a great deal, as I have said, of a certain stable variation; and to which they, out of their reality, contribute little that helps it to live and move. I was made to feel this want of reality, this over-ingenuity, of *The Scarlet Letter,* by chancing not long since upon a novel which was read fifty years ago much more than today, but which is still worth reading—the story of *Adam Blair,* by John Gibson Lockhart. This interesting and powerful little tale has a great deal of analogy with Hawthorne's novel —quite enough, at least, to suggest a comparison between them; and the comparison is a very interesting one to make, for it speedily leads us to larger considerations than simple resemblances and divergences of plot.

Adam Blair, like Arthur Dimmesdale, is a Calvinistic minister who becomes the lover of a married woman, is overwhelmed with remorse at his misdeed, and makes a public confession of it; then expiates it by resigning his pastoral office and becoming a humble tiller of the soil, as his father had been. The two stories are of about the same length, and each is the masterpiece (putting aside, of course, as far as Lockhart is concerned, the *Life of Scott*) of the author. They deal alike with the manners of a rigidly theological society, and even in certain details they correspond. In each of them, between the guilty pair, there is a charming little girl; though I hasten to say that Sarah Blair (who is not the daughter of the heroine but the legitimate offspring of the hero, a widower) is far from being as brilliant and graceful an apparition as the admirable little Pearl of *The Scarlet Letter.* The main difference be-

tween the two tales is the fact that in the American story the husband plays an all-important part, and in the Scottish plays almost none at all. *Adam Blair* is the history of the passion, and *The Scarlet Letter* the history of its sequel; but nevertheless, if one has read the two books at a short interval, it is impossible to avoid confronting them. I confess that a large portion of the interest of *Adam Blair,* to my mind, when once I had perceived that it would repeat in a great measure the situation of *The Scarlet Letter,* lay in noting its difference of tone. It threw into relief the passionless quality of Hawthorne's novel, its element of cold and ingenious fantasy, its elaborate imaginative delicacy. These things do not precisely constitute a weakness in *The Scarlet Letter;* indeed, in a certain way they constitute a great strength; but the absence of a certain something warm and straightforward, a trifle more grossly human and vulgarly natural, which one finds in *Adam Blair,* will always make Hawthorne's tale less touching to a large number of even very intelligent readers, than a love story told with the robust, synthetic pathos which served Lockhart so well. His novel is not of the first rank (I should call it an excellent second-rate one), but it borrows a charm from the fact that his vigorous, but not strongly imaginative, mind was impregnated with the reality of his subject. He did not always succeed in rendering this reality; the expression is sometimes awkward and poor. But the reader feels that his vision was clear, and his feeling about the matter very strong and rich. Hawthorne's imagination, on the other hand, plays with his theme so incessantly, leads it such a dance through the moon-lighted air of his intellect, that the thing cools off, as it were, hardens and stiffens, and, producing effects much more exquisite, leaves the reader with a sense of having handled a splendid piece of silversmith's work. Lockhart, by means much more vulgar, produces at moments a greater illusion, and satisfies our inevitable desire for something, in the people in whom it is sought to interest us, that shall be of the same pitch and the same continuity with ourselves. Above all, it is interesting to see how the same subject appears to two men of a thoroughly different cast of mind and

of a different race. Lockhart was struck with the warmth of the subject that offered itself to him, and Hawthorne with its coldness; the one with its glow, its sentimental interest—the other with its shadow, its moral interest. Lockhart's story is as decent, as severely draped, as *The Scarlet Letter;* but the author has a more vivid sense than appears to have imposed itself upon Hawthorne, of some of the incidents of the situation he describes; his tempted man and tempting woman are more actual and personal; his heroine in especial, though not in the least a delicate or a subtle conception, has a sort of credible, visible, palpable property, a vulgar roundness and relief, which are lacking to the dim and chastened image of Hester Prynne. But I am going too far; I am comparing simplicity with subtlety, the usual with the refined. Each man wrote as his turn of mind impelled him, but each expressed something more than himself. Lockhart was a dense, substantial Briton, with a taste for the concrete, and Hawthorne was a thin New Englander, with a miasmatic conscience.

In *The Scarlet Letter* there is a great deal of symbolism; there is, I think, too much. It is overdone at times, and becomes mechanical; it ceases to be impressive, and grazes triviality. The idea of the mystic *A* which the young minister finds imprinted upon his breast and eating into his flesh, in sympathy with the embroidered badge that Hester is condemned to wear, appears to me to be a case in point. This suggestion should, I think, have been just made and dropped; to insist upon it and return to it is to exaggerate the weak side of the subject. Hawthorne returns to it constantly, plays with it, and seems charmed by it; until at last the reader feels tempted to declare that his enjoyment of it is puerile. In the admirable scene, so superbly conceived and beautifully executed, in which Mr. Dimmesdale, in the stillness of the night, in the middle of the sleeping town, feels impelled to go and stand upon the scaffold where his mistress had formerly enacted her dreadful penance, and then, seeing Hester pass along the street, from watching at a sick-bed, with little Pearl at her side, calls them both to come and stand there beside him—in this masterly episode the effect is almost spoiled by the introduction of one of these superficial con-

ceits. What leads up to it is very fine—so fine that I cannot do better than quote it as a specimen of one of the striking pages of the book.

But before Mr. Dimmesdale had done speaking, a light gleamed far and wide over all the muffled sky. It was doubtless caused by one of those meteors which the night watcher may so often observe burning out to waste in the vacant regions of the atmosphere. So powerful was its radiance that it thoroughly illuminated the dense medium of cloud, betwixt the sky and earth. The great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp. It showed the familiar scene of the street with the distinctness of midday, but also with the awfulness that is always imparted to familiar objects by an unaccustomed light. The wooden houses, with their jutting stories and quaint gable-peaks; the doorsteps and thresholds, with the early grass springing up about them; the garden-plots, black with freshly-turned earth; the wheel track, little worn, and, even in the market place, margined with green on either side,—all were visible, but with a singularity of aspect that seemed to give another moral interpretation to the things of this world than they had ever borne before. And there stood the minister, with his hand over his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting-link between these two. They stood in the noon of that strange and solemn splendor, as if it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all that belong to one another.

That is imaginative, impressive, poetic; but when, almost immediately afterwards, the author goes on to say that "the minister looking upward to the zenith, beheld there the appearance of an immense letter—the letter *A*—marked out in lines of dull red light," we feel that he goes too far and is in danger of crossing the line that separates the sublime from its intimate neighbor. We are tempted to say that this is not moral tragedy, but physical comedy. In the same way, too much is made of the intimation that Hester's badge had a scorching property, and that if one touched it one would immediately withdraw one's hand. Hawthorne is perpetually looking for images which shall place themselves in picturesque correspondence with the spiritual facts with which

he is concerned, and of course the search is of the very essence of poetry. But in such a process discretion is everything, and when the image becomes importunate it is in danger of seeming to stand for nothing more serious than itself. When Hester meets the minister by appointment in the forest, and sits talking with him while little Pearl wanders away and plays by the edge of the brook, the child is represented as at last making her way over to the other side of the woodland stream, and disporting herself there in a manner which makes her mother feel herself, "in some indistinct and tantalizing manner, estranged from Pearl; as if the child, in her lonely ramble through the forest, had strayed out of the sphere in which she and her mother dwelt together, and was now vainly seeking to return to it." And Hawthorne devotes a chapter to this idea of the child's having, by putting the brook between Hester and herself, established a kind of spiritual gulf, on the verge of which her little fantastic person innocently mocks at her mother's sense of bereavement. This conception belongs, one would say, quite to the lighter order of a story-teller's devices, and the reader hardly goes with Hawthorne in the large development he gives to it. He hardly goes with him either, I think, in his extreme predilection for a small number of vague ideas which are represented by such terms as "sphere" and "sympathies." Hawthorne makes too liberal a use of these two substantives; it is the solitary defect of his style, and it counts as a defect partly because the words in question are a sort of specialty with certain writers immeasurably inferior to himself.

I had not meant, however, to expatiate upon his defects, which are of the slenderest and most venial kind. *The Scarlet Letter* has the beauty and harmony of all original and complete conceptions, and its weaker spots, whatever they are, are not of its essence; they are mere light flaws and inequalities of surface. One can often return to it; it supports familiarity and has the inexhaustible charm and mystery of great works of art. It is admirably written. Hawthorne afterwards polished his style to a still higher degree, but in his later productions—it is almost always the case in a writer's later

productions—there is a touch of mannerism. In *The Scarlet Letter* there is a high degree of polish, and at the same time a charming freshness; his phrase is less conscious of itself. His biographer very justly calls attention to the fact that his style was excellent from the beginning; that he appeared to have passed through no phase of learning how to write, but was in possession of his means from the first of his handling a pen. His early tales, perhaps, were not of a character to subject his faculty of expression to a very severe test, but a man who had not Hawthorne's natural sense of language would certainly have contrived to write them less well. This natural sense of language—this turn for saying things lightly and yet touchingly, picturesquely yet simply, and for infusing a gently colloquial tone into matter of the most unfamiliar import, he had evidently cultivated with great assiduity. I have spoken of the anomalous character of his *Note-Books*—of his going to such pains often to make a record of incidents which either were not worth remembering or could be easily remembered without its aid. But it helps us to understand the *Note-Books* if we regard them as a literary exercise. They were compositions, as school boys say, in which the subject was only the pretext, and the main point was to write a certain amount of excellent English. Hawthorne must at least have written a great many of these things for practice, and he must often have said to himself that it was better practice to write about trifles, because it was a greater tax upon one's skill to make them interesting. And his theory was just, for he has almost always made his trifles interesting. In his novels his art of saying things well is very positively tested, for here he treats of those matters among which it is very easy for a blundering writer to go wrong—the subtleties and mysteries of life, the moral and spiritual maze. In such a passage as one I have marked for quotation from *The Scarlet Letter* there is the stamp of the genius of style.

Hester Prynne, gazing steadfastly at the clergyman, felt a dreary influence come over her, but wherefore or whence she knew not, unless that he seemed so remote from her own sphere and utterly beyond her reach. One glance of recognition she had

imagined must needs pass between them. She thought of the dim forest with its little dell of solitude, and love, and anguish, and the mossy tree-trunk, where, sitting hand in hand, they had mingled their sad and passionate talk with the melancholy murmur of the brook. How deeply had they known each other then! And was this the man? She hardly knew him now! He, moving proudly past, enveloped as it were in the rich music, with the procession of majestic and venerable fathers; he, so unattainable in his worldly position, and still more so in that far vista in his unsympathizing thoughts, through which she now beheld him! Her spirit sank with the idea that all must have been a delusion, and that vividly as she had dreamed it, there could be no real bond betwixt the clergyman and herself. And thus much of woman there was in Hester, that she could scarcely forgive him —least of all now, when the heavy footstep of their approaching fate might be heard, nearer, nearer, nearer!—for being able to withdraw himself so completely from their mutual world, while she groped darkly, and stretched forth her cold hands, and found him not!

The House of the Seven Gables was written at Lenox, among the mountains of Massachusetts, a village nestling, rather loosely, in one of the loveliest corners of New England, to which Hawthorne had betaken himself after the success of *The Scarlet Letter* became conspicuous, in the summer of 1850, and where he occupied for two years an uncomfortable little red house which is now pointed out to the inquiring stranger. The inquiring stranger is now a frequent figure at Lenox, for the place has suffered the process of lionization. It has become a prosperous watering-place, or at least (as there are no waters), as they say in America, a summer resort. It is a brilliant and generous landscape, and thirty years ago a man of fancy, desiring to apply himself, might have found both inspiration and tranquillity there. Hawthorne found so much of both that he wrote more during his two years of residence at Lenox than at any period of his career. He began with *The House of the Seven Gables,* which was finished in the early part of 1851. This is the longest of his three American novels, it is the most elaborate, and in the judgment of some persons it is the finest. It is a rich, delightful, imaginative work, larger and more various

than its companions, and full of all sorts of deep intentions, of interwoven threads of suggestion. But it is not so rounded and complete as *The Scarlet Letter;* it has always seemed to me more like a prologue to a great novel than a great novel itself. I think this is partly owing to the fact that the subject, the *donnée,* as the French say, of the story, does not quite fill it out, and that we get at the same time an impression of certain complicated purposes on the author's part, which seem to reach beyond it. I call it larger and more various than its companions, and it has indeed a greater richness of tone and density of detail. The color, so to speak, of *The House of the Seven Gables* is admirable. But the story has a sort of expansive quality which never wholly fructifies, and as I lately laid it down, after reading it for the third time, I had a sense of having interested myself in a magnificent fragment. Yet the book has a great fascination, and of all of those of its author's productions which I have read over while writing this sketch, it is perhaps the one that has gained most by re-perusal. If it be true of the others that the pure, natural quality of the imaginative strain is their great merit, this is at least as true of *The House of the Seven Gables,* the charm of which is in a peculiar degree of the kind that we fail to reduce to its grounds—like that of the sweetness of a piece of music, or the softness of fine September weather. It is vague, indefinable, ineffable; but it is the sort of thing we must always point to in justification of the high claim that we make for Hawthorne. In this case, of course, its vagueness is a drawback, for it is difficult to point to ethereal beauties; and if the reader whom we have wished to inoculate with our admiration inform us after looking a while that he perceives nothing in particular, we can only reply that, in effect, the object is a delicate one.

The House of the Seven Gables comes nearer being a picture of contemporary American life than either of its companions; but on this ground it would be a mistake to make a large claim for it. It cannot be too often repeated that Hawthorne was not a realist. He had a high sense of reality —his *Note-Books* superabundantly testify to it; and fond as he was of jotting down the items that make it up, he never at

tempted to render exactly or closely the actual facts of the society that surrounded him. I have said—I began by saying—that his pages were full of its spirit, and of a certain reflected light that springs from it; but I was careful to add that the reader must look for his local and national quality between the lines of his writing and in the *indirect* testimony of his tone, his accent, his temper, of his very omissions and suppressions. *The House of the Seven Gables* has, however, more literal actuality than the others, and if it were not too fanciful an account of it, I should say that it renders, to an initiated reader, the impression of a summer afternoon in an elm-shadowed New England town. It leaves upon the mind a vague correspondence to some such reminiscence, and in stirring up the association it renders it delightful. The comparison is to the honor of the New England town, which gains in it more than it bestows. The shadows of the elms, in *The House of the Seven Gables,* are exceptionally dense and cool; the summer afternoon is peculiarly still and beautiful; the atmosphere has a delicious warmth, and the long daylight seems to pause and rest. But the mild provincial quality is there, the mixture of shabbiness and freshness, the paucity of ingredients. The end of an old race—this is the situation that Hawthorne has depicted, and he has been admirably inspired in the choice of the figures in whom he seeks to interest us. They are all figures rather than characters—they are all pictures rather than persons. But if their reality is light and vague, it is sufficient, and it is in harmony with the low relief and dimness of outline of the objects that surround them. They are all types, to the author's mind, of something general, of something that is bound up with the history, at large, of families and individuals, and each of them is the center of a cluster of those ingenious and meditative musings, rather melancholy, as a general thing, than joyous, which melt into the current and texture of the story and give it a kind of moral richness. A grotesque old spinster, simple, childish, penniless, very humble at heart, but rigidly conscious of her pedigree; an amiable bachelor, of an epicurean temperament and an enfeebled intellect, who has passed twenty years of his life in penal confinement for a crime

of which he was unjustly pronounced guilty; a sweet-natured and bright-faced young girl from the country, a poor relation of these two ancient decrepitudes, with whose moral mustiness her modern freshness and soundness are contrasted; a young man still more modern, holding the latest opinions, who has sought his fortune up and down the world, and, though he has not found it, takes a genial and enthusiastic view of the future: these, with two or three remarkable accessory figures, are the persons concerned in the little drama. The drama is a small one, but as Hawthorne does not put it before us for its own superficial sake, for the dry facts of the case, but for something in it which he holds to be symbolic and of large application, something that points a moral and that it behooves us to remember, the scenes in the rusty wooden house whose gables give its name to the story, have something of the dignity both of history and of tragedy. Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon, dragging out a disappointed life in her paternal dwelling, finds herself obliged in her old age to open a little shop for the sale of penny toys and gingerbread. This is the central incident of the tale, and, as Hawthorne relates it, it is an incident of the most impressive magnitude and most touching interest. Her dishonored and vague-minded brother is released from prison at the same moment, and returns to the ancestral roof to deepen her perplexities. But, on the other hand, to alleviate them, and to introduce a breath of the air of the outer world into this long-unventilated interior, the little country cousin also arrives, and proves the good angel of the feebly distracted household. All this episode is exquisite—admirably conceived, and executed with a kind of humorous tenderness, an equal sense of everything in it that is picturesque, touching, ridiculous, worthy of the highest praise. Hepzibah Pyncheon, with her near-sighted scowl, her rusty joints, her antique turban, her map of a great territory to the eastward which ought to have belonged to her family, her vain terrors and scruples and resentments, the inaptitude and repugnance of an ancient gentlewoman to the vulgar little commerce which a cruel fate has compelled her to engage in—Hepzibah Pyncheon is a masterly picture. I repeat that she is a picture,

as her companions are pictures; she is a charming piece of descriptive writing, rather than a dramatic exhibition. But she is described, like her companions, too, so subtly and lovingly that we enter into her virginal old heart and stand with her behind her abominable little counter. Clifford Pyncheon is a still more remarkable conception, though he is perhaps not so vividly depicted. It was a figure needing a much more subtle touch, however, and it was of the essence of his character to be vague and unemphasized. Nothing can be more charming than the manner in which the soft, bright, active presence of Phœbe Pyncheon is indicated, or than the account of her relations with the poor dimly-sentient kinsman for whom her light-handed sisterly offices, in the evening of a melancholy life, are a revelation of lost possibilities of happiness. "In her aspect," Hawthorne says of the young girl, "there was a familiar gladness, and a holiness that you could play with, and yet reverence it as much as ever. She was like a prayer offered up in the homeliest beauty of one's mother tongue. Fresh was Phœbe, moreover, and airy, and sweet in her apparel; as if nothing that she wore—neither her gown, nor her small straw bonnet, nor her little kerchief, any more than her snowy stockings—had ever been put on before; or if worn, were all the fresher for it, and with a fragrance as if they had lain among the rosebuds." Of the influence of her maidenly salubrity upon poor Clifford, Hawthorne gives the prettiest description, and then, breaking off suddenly, renounces the attempt in language which, while pleading its inadequacy, conveys an exquisite satisfaction to the reader. I quote the passage for the sake of its extreme felicity, and of the charming image with which it concludes.

But we strive in vain to put the idea into words. No adequate expression of the beauty and profound pathos with which it impresses us is attainable. This being, made only for happiness, and heretofore so miserably failing to be happy—his tendencies so hideously thwarted that some unknown time ago, the delicate springs of his character, never morally or intellectually strong, had given way, and he was now imbecile—this poor forlorn voyager from the Islands of the Blest, in a frail bark, on a

tempestuous sea, had been flung by the last mountain-wave of his shipwreck into a quiet harbor. There, as he lay more than half lifeless on the strand, the fragrance of an earthly rose-bud had come to his nostrils, and, as odors will, had summoned up reminiscences or visions of all the living and breathing beauty amid which he should have had his home. With his native susceptibility of happy influences, he inhales the slight ethereal rapture into his soul, and expires!

I have not mentioned the personage in *The House of the Seven Gables* upon whom Hawthorne evidently bestowed most pains, and whose portrait is the most elaborate in the book; partly because he is, in spite of the space he occupies, an accessory figure, and partly because, even more than the others, he is what I have called a picture rather than a character. Judge Pyncheon is an ironical portrait, very richly and broadly executed, very sagaciously composed and rendered—the portrait of a superb, full-blown hypocrite, a large-based, full-nurtured Pharisee, bland, urbane, impressive, diffusing about him a "sultry" warmth of benevolence, as the author calls it again and again, and basking in the noontide of prosperity and the consideration of society; but in reality hard, gross, and ignoble. Judge Pyncheon is an elaborate piece of description, made up of a hundred admirable touches, in which satire is always winged with fancy, and fancy is linked with a deep sense of reality. It is difficult to say whether Hawthorne followed a model in describing Judge Pyncheon; but it is tolerably obvious that the picture is an impression—a copious impression—of an individual. It has evidently a definite starting-point in fact, and the author is able to draw, freely and confidently, after the image established in his mind. Holgrave, the modern young man, who has been a Jack-of-all-trades and is at the period of the story a daguerreotypist, is an attempt to render a kind of national type—that of the young citizen of the United States whose fortune is simply in his lively intelligence, and who stands naked, as it were, unbiased and unencumbered alike, in the center of the far-stretching level of American life. Holgrave is intended as a contrast; his lack of traditions, his democratic stamp, his condensed experience, are opposed to the desic-

cated prejudices and exhausted vitality of the race of which poor feebly-scowling, rusty-jointed Hepzibah is the most heroic representative. It is perhaps a pity that Hawthorne should not have proposed to himself to give the old Pyncheon qualities some embodiment which would help them to balance more fairly with the elastic properties of the young daguerreotypist—should not have painted a lusty conservative to match his strenuous radical. As it is, the mustiness and moldiness of the tenants of the House of the Seven Gables crumble away rather too easily. Evidently, however, what Hawthorne designed to represent was not the struggle between an old society and a new, for in this case he would have given the old one a better chance; but simply, as I have said, the shrinkage and extinction of a family. This appealed to his imagination; and the idea of long perpetuation and survival always appears to have filled him with a kind of horror and disapproval. Conservative, in a certain degree, as he was himself, and fond of retrospect and quietude and the mellowing influences of time, it is singular how often one encounters in his writings some expression of mistrust of old houses, old institutions, long lines of descent. He was disposed apparently to allow a very moderate measure in these respects, and he condemns the dwelling of the Pyncheons to disappear from the face of the earth because it has been standing a couple of hundred years. In this he was an American of Americans; or rather he was more American than many of his countrymen, who, though they are accustomed to work for the short run rather than the long, have often a lurking esteem for things that show the marks of having lasted. I will add that Holgrave is one of the few figures, among those which Hawthorne created, with regard to which the absence of the realistic mode of treatment is felt as a loss. Holgrave is not sharply enough characterized; he lacks features; he is not an individual, but a type. But my last word about this admirable novel must not be a restrictive one. It is a large and generous production, pervaded with that vague hum, that indefinable echo, of the whole multitudinous life of man, which is the real sign of a great work of fiction.

After the publication of *The House of the Seven Gables,* which brought him great honor, and, I believe, a tolerable share of a more ponderable substance, he composed a couple of little volumes for children—*The Wonder-Book,* and a small collection of stories entitled *Tanglewood Tales.* They are not among his most serious literary titles, but if I may trust my own early impression of them, they are among the most charming literary services that have been rendered to children in an age (and especially in a country) in which the exactions of the infant mind have exerted much too palpable an influence upon literature. Hawthorne's stories are the old Greek myths, made more vivid to the childish imagination by an infusion of details which both deepen and explain their marvels. I have been careful not to read them over, for I should be very sorry to risk disturbing in any degree a recollecton of them that has been at rest since the appreciative period of life to which they are addressed. They seem at that period enchanting, and the ideal of happiness of many American children is to lie upon the carpet and lose themselves in *The Wonder-Book.* It is in its pages that they first make the acquaintance of the heroes and heroines of the antique mythology, and something of the nursery fairy-tale quality of interest which Hawthorne imparts to them always remains.

I have said that Lenox was a very pretty place, and that he was able to work there Hawthorne proved by composing *The House of the Seven Gables* with a good deal of rapidity. But at the close of the year in which this novel was published he wrote to a friend (Mr. Fields, his publisher) that "to tell you a secret I am sick to death of Berkshire, and hate to think of spending another winter here. . . . The air and climate do not agree with my health at all, and for the first time since I was a boy I have felt languid and dispirited. . . . O that Providence would build me the merest little shanty, and mark me out a rood or two of garden ground, near the sea-coast!" He was at this time for a while out of health; and it is proper to remember that though the Massachusetts Berkshire, with its mountains and lakes, was charming during the ardent American summer, there was a reverse

to the medal, consisting of December snows prolonged into April and May. Providence failed to provide him with a cottage by the sea; but he betook himself for the winter of 1852 to the little town of West Newton, near Boston, where he brought into the world *The Blithedale Romance.*

This work, as I have said, would not have been written if Hawthorne had not spent a year at Brook Farm, and though it is in no sense of the word an account of the manners or the inmates of that establishment, it will preserve the memory of the ingenious community at West Roxbury for a generation unconscious of other reminders. I hardly know what to say about it save that it is very charming; this vague, unanalytic epithet is the first that comes to one's pen in treating of Hawthorne's novels, for their extreme amenity of form invariably suggests it; but if on the one hand it claims to be uttered, on the other it frankly confesses its inconclusiveness. Perhaps, however, in this case, it fills out the measure of appreciation more completely than in others, for *The Blithedale Romance* is the lightest, the brightest, the liveliest, of this company of unhumorous fictions.

The story is told from a more joyous point of view—from a point of view comparatively humorous—and a number of objects and incidents touched with the light of the profane world—the vulgar, many-colored world of actuality, as distinguished from the crepuscular realm of the writer's own reveries—are mingled with its course. The book indeed is a mixture of elements, and it leaves in the memory an impression analogous to that of an April day—an alternation of brightness and shadow, of broken sun-patches and sprinkling clouds. Its *dénouement* is tragical—there is indeed nothing so tragical in all Hawthorne, unless it be the murder of Miriam's persecutor by Donatello, in *Transformation,* as the suicide of Zenobia; and yet on the whole the effect of the novel is to make one think more agreeably of life. The standpoint of the narrator has the advantage of being a concrete one; he is no longer, as in the preceding tales, a disembodied spirit, imprisoned in the haunted chamber of his own contemplations, but a particular man, with a certain human grossness.

Of Miles Coverdale I have already spoken, and of its being natural to assume that in so far as we may measure this lightly indicated identity of his, it has a great deal in common with that of his creator. Coverdale is a picture of the contemplative, observant, analytic nature, nursing its fancies, and yet, thanks to an element of strong good sense, not bringing them up to be spoiled children; having little at stake in life, at any given moment, and yet indulging, in imagination, in a good many adventures; a portrait of a man, in a word, whose passions are slender, whose imagination is active, and whose happiness lies, not in doing, but in perceiving—half a poet, half a critic, and all a spectator. He is contrasted, excellently, with the figure of Hollingsworth, the heavily treading Reformer, whose attitude with regard to the world is that of the hammer to the anvil, and who has no patience with his friend's indifferences and neutralities. Coverdale is a gentle skeptic, a mild cynic; he would agree that life is a little worth living—or worth living a little, but would remark that, unfortunately, to live little enough, we have to live a great deal. He confesses to a want of earnestness, but in reality he is evidently an excellent fellow, to whom one might look, not for any personal performance on a great scale, but for a good deal of generosity of detail. "As Hollingsworth once told me, I lack a purpose," he writes, at the close of his story. "How strange! He was ruined, morally, by an overplus of the same ingredient the want of which, I occasionally suspect, has rendered my own life all an emptiness. I by no means wish to die. Yet were there any cause in this whole chaos of human struggle, worth a sane man's dying for, and which my death would benefit, then—provided, however, the effort did not involve an unreasonable amount of trouble—methinks I might be bold to offer up my life. If Kossuth, for example, would pitch the battle-field of Hungarian rights within an easy ride of my abode, and choose a mild sunny morning, after breakfast, for the conflict, Miles Coverdale would gladly be his man, for one brave rush upon the leveled bayonets. Further than that I should be loth to pledge myself."

The finest thing in *The Blithedale Romance* is the char-

acter of Zenobia, which I have said elsewhere strikes me as the nearest approach that Hawthorne has made to the complete creation of a *person*. She is more concrete than Hester or Miriam, or Hilda or Phœbe; she is a more definite image, produced by a greater multiplicity of touches. It is idle to inquire too closely whether Hawthorne had Margaret Fuller in his mind in constructing the figure of this brilliant specimen of the strong-minded class and endowing her with the genius of conversation; or, on the assumption that such was the case, to compare the image at all strictly with the model. There is no strictness in the representation by novelists of persons who have struck them in life, and there can in the nature of things be none. From the moment the imagination takes a hand in the game, the inevitable tendency is to divergence, to following what may be called new scents. The original gives hints, but the writer does what he likes with them, and imports new elements into the picture. If there is this amount of reason for referring the wayward heroine of Blithedale to Hawthorne's impression of the most distinguished woman of her day in Boston, that Margaret Fuller was the only literary lady of eminence whom there is any sign of his having known, that she was proud, passionate, and eloquent, that she was much connected with the little world of Transcendentalism out of which the experiment of Brook Farm sprung, and that she had a miserable end and a watery grave—if these are facts to be noted on one side, I say; on the other, the beautiful and sumptuous Zenobia, with her rich and picturesque temperament and physical aspects, offers many points of divergence from the plain and strenuous invalid who represented feminine culture in the suburbs of the New England metropolis. This picturesqueness of Zenobia is very happily indicated and maintained; she is a woman, in all the force of the term, and there is something very vivid and powerful in her large expression of womanly gifts and weaknesses. Hollingsworth is, I think, less successful, though there is much reality in the conception of the type to which he belongs—the strong-willed, narrow-hearted apostle of a special form of redemption for society. There is nothing better in all Hawthorne than the scene between him

and Coverdale, when the two men are at work together in the field (piling stones on a dyke), and he gives it to his companion to choose whether he will be with him or against him. It is a pity, perhaps, to have represented him as having begun life as a blacksmith, for one grudges him the advantage of so logical a reason for his roughness and hardness.

Hollingsworth scarcely said a word, unless when repeatedly and pertinaciously addressed. Then indeed he would glare upon us from the thick shrubbery of his meditations, like a tiger out of a jungle, make the briefest reply possible, and betake himself back into the solitude of his heart and mind . . . His heart, I imagine, was never really interested in our socialist scheme, but was forever busy with his strange, and as most people thought, impracticable plan for the reformation of criminals through an appeal to their higher instincts. Much as I liked Hollingsworth, it cost me many a groan to tolerate him on this point. He ought to have commenced his investigation of the subject by committing some huge sin in his proper person, and examining the condition of his higher instincts afterwards.

The most touching element in the novel is the history of the grasp that this barbarous fanatic has laid upon the fastidious and high-tempered Zenobia, who, disliking him and shrinking from him at a hundred points, is drawn into the gulf of his omnivorous egotism. The portion of the story that strikes me as least felicitous is that which deals with Priscilla and with her mysterious relation to Zenobia—with her mesmeric gifts, her clairvoyance, her identity with the Veiled Lady, her divided subjection to Hollingsworth and Westervelt, and her numerous other graceful but fantastic properties—her Sibylline attributes, as the author calls them. Hawthorne is rather too fond of Sibylline attributes—a taste of the same order as his disposition, to which I have already alluded, to talk about spheres and sympathies. As the action advances, in *The Blithedale Romance,* we get too much out of reality, and cease to feel beneath our feet the firm ground of an appeal to our own vision of the world, our observation. I should have liked to see the story concern itself more with the little community in which its earlier scenes are laid, and avail itself of so excellent an opportunity for describing un-

hackneyed specimens of human nature. I have already spoken of the absence of satire in the novel, of its not aiming in the least at satire, and of its offering no grounds for complaint as an invidious picture. Indeed the brethren of Brook Farm should have held themselves slighted rather than misrepresented, and have regretted that the admirable genius who for a while was numbered among them should have treated their institution mainly as a perch for starting upon an imaginative flight. But when all is said about a certain want of substance and cohesion in the latter portions of *The Blithedale Romance,* the book is still a delightful and beautiful one. Zenobia and Hollingsworth live in the memory, and even Priscilla and Coverdale, who linger there less importunately, have a great deal that touches us and that we believe in. I said just now that Priscilla was infelicitous; but immediately afterwards I open the volume at a page in which the author describes some of the out-of-door amusements at Blithedale, and speaks of a foot-race across the grass, in which some of the slim young girls of the society joined. "Priscilla's peculiar charm in a foot-race was the weakness and irregularity with which she ran. Growing up without exercise, except to her poor little fingers, she had never yet acquired the perfect use of her legs. Setting buoyantly forth therefore, as if no rival less swift than Atalanta could compete with her, she ran falteringly, and often tumbled on the grass. Such an incident—though it seems too slight to think of—was a thing to laugh at, but which brought the water into one's eyes, and lingered in the memory after far greater joys and sorrows were wept out of it, as antiquated trash. Priscilla's life, as I beheld it, was full of trifles that affected me in just this way." That seems to me exquisite, and the book is full of touches as deep and delicate.

After writing it, Hawthorne went back to live in Concord, where he had bought a small house in which, apparently, he expected to spend a large portion of his future. This was in fact the dwelling in which he passed that part of the rest of his days that he spent in his own country. He established himself there before going to Europe, in 1853, and he re-

turned to the Wayside, as he called his house, on coming back to the United States seven years later. Though he actually occupied the place no long time, he had made it his property, and it was more his own home than any of his numerous provisional abodes. I may therefore quote a little account of the house which he wrote to a distinguished friend, Mr. George Curtis.

As for my old house, you will understand it better after spending a day or two in it. Before Mr. Alcott took it in hand, it was a mean-looking affair, with two peaked gables; no suggestiveness about it, and no venerableness, although from the style of its construction it seems to have survived beyond its first century. He added a porch in front, and a central peak, and a piazza at each end, and painted it a rusty olive hue, and invested the whole with a modest picturesqueness; all which improvements, together with its situation at the foot of a wooded hill, make it a place that one notices and remembers for a few moments after passing. Mr. Alcott expended a good deal of taste and some money (to no great purpose) in forming the hillside behind the house into terraces, and building arbors and summer-houses of rough stems and branches and trees, on a system of his own. They must have been very pretty in their day, and are so still, although much decayed, and shattered more and more by every breeze that blows. The hillside is covered chiefly with locust trees, which come into luxuriant blossom in the month of June, and look and smell very sweetly, intermixed with a few young elms, and white pines and infant oaks—the whole forming rather a thicket than a wood. Nevertheless, there is some very good shade to be found there. I spend delectable hours there in the hottest part of the day, stretched out at my lazy length, with a book in my hand, or some unwritten book in my thoughts. There is almost always a breeze stirring along the sides or brow of the hill. From the hill-top there is a good view along the extensive level surfaces and gentle hilly outlines, covered with wood, that characterize the scenery of Concord. . . . I know nothing of the history of the house except Thoreau's telling me that it was inhabited, a generation or two ago, by a man who believed he should never die. I believe, however, he is dead; at least, I hope so; else he may probably reappear and dispute my title to his residence.

As Mr. Lathrop points out, this allusion to a man who believed he should never die is "the first intimation of the story of *Septimius Felton.*" The scenery of that romance, he adds, "was evidently taken from the Wayside and its hill." *Septimius Felton* is in fact a young man who, at the time of the war of the Revolution, lives in the village of Concord, on the Boston road, at the base of a woody hill which rises abruptly behind his house, and of which the level summit supplies him with a promenade continually mentioned in the course of the tale. Hawthorne used to exercise himself upon this picturesque eminence, and, as he conceived the brooding Septimius to have done before him, to betake himself thither when he found the limits of his dwelling too narrow. But he had an advantage which his imaginary hero lacked; he erected a tower as an adjunct to the house, and it was a jocular tradition among his neighbors, in allusion to his attributive tendency to evade rather than hasten the coming guest, that he used to ascend this structure and scan the road for provocations to retreat.

Insofar, however, as Hawthorne suffered the penalties of celebrity at the hands of intrusive fellow-citizens, he was soon to escape from this honorable incommodity. On the fourth of March, 1853, his old college-mate and intimate friend, Franklin Pierce, was installed as President of the United States. He had been the candidate of the Democratic party, and all good Democrats, accordingly, in conformity to the beautiful and rational system under which the affairs of the great Republic were carried on, began to open their windows to the golden sunshine of Presidential patronage. When General Pierce was put forward by the Democrats, Hawthorne felt a perfectly loyal and natural desire that his good friend should be exalted to so brilliant a position, and he did what was in him to further the good cause, by writing a little book about its hero. His *Life of Franklin Pierce* belongs to that class of literature which is known as the "campaign biography," and which consists of an attempt, more or less successful, to persuade the many-headed monster of universal suffrage that the gentleman on whose behalf it is

addressed is a paragon of wisdom and virtue. Of Hawthorne's little book there is nothing particular to say, save that it is in very good taste, that he is a very fairly ingenious advocate, and that if he claimed for the future President qualities which rather faded in the bright light of a high office, this defect of proportion was essential to his undertaking. He dwelt chiefly upon General Pierce's exploits in the war with Mexico (before that, his record, as they say in America, had been mainly that of a successful country lawyer), and exercised his descriptive powers so far as was possible in describing the advance of the United States troops from Vera Cruz to the city of the Montezumas. The mouthpieces of the Whig party spared him, I believe, no reprobation for "prostituting" his exquisite genius; but I fail to see anything reprehensible in Hawthorne's lending his old friend the assistance of his graceful quill. He wished him to be President—he held afterwards that he filled the office with admirable dignity and wisdom—and as the only thing he could do was to write, he fell to work and wrote for him. Hawthorne was a good lover and a very sufficient partisan, and I suspect that if Franklin Pierce had been made even less of the stuff of a statesman, he would still have found in the force of old associations an injunction to hail him as a ruler. Our hero was an American of the earlier and simpler type—the type of which it is doubtless premature to say that it has wholly passed away, but of which it may at least be said that the circumstances that produced it have been greatly modified. The generation to which he belonged, that generation which grew up with the century, witnessed during a period of fifty years the immense, uninterrupted material development of the young Republic; and when one thinks of the scale on which it took place, of the prosperity that walked in its train and waited on its course, of the hopes it fostered and the blessings it conferred, of the broad morning sunshine, in a word, in which it all went forward, there seems to be little room for surprise that it should have implanted a kind of superstitious faith in the grandeur of the country, its duration, its immunity from the usual troubles of earthly empires. This faith was a simple and uncritical one, en-

livened with an element of genial optimism, in the light of which it appeared that the great American state was not as other human institutions are, that a special Providence watched over it, that it would go on joyously forever, and that a country whose vast and blooming bosom offered a refuge to the strugglers and seekers of all the rest of the world, must come off easily, in the battle of the ages. From this conception of the American future the sense of its having problems to solve was blissfully absent; there were no difficulties in the program, no looming complications, no rocks ahead. The indefinite multiplication of the population, and its enjoyment of the benefits of a common-school education and of unusual facilities for making an income—this was the form in which, on the whole, the future most vividly presented itself, and in which the greatness of the country was to be recognized of men. There was indeed a faint shadow in the picture—the shadow projected by the "peculiar institution" of the Southern states; but it was far from sufficient to darken the rosy vision of most good Americans, and, above all, of most good Democrats. Hawthorne alludes to it in a passage of his life of Pierce, which I will quote not only as a hint of the trouble that was in store for a cheerful race of men, but as an example of his own easy-going political attitude.

It was while in the lower house of Congress that Franklin Pierce took that stand on the Slavery question from which he has never since swerved by a hair's-breadth. He fully recognized by his votes and his voice the rights pledged to the South by the Constitution. This, at the period when he declared himself, was an easy thing to do. But when it became more difficult, when the first imperceptible murmur of agitation had grown almost to a convulsion, his course was still the same. Nor did he ever shun the obloquy that sometimes threatened to pursue the Northern man who dared to love that great and sacred reality —his whole united country—better than the mistiness of a philanthropic theory.

This last invidious allusion is to the disposition, not infrequent at the North, but by no means general, to set a decisive limit to further legislation in favor of the cherished

idiosyncrasy of the other half of the country. Hawthorne takes the license of a sympathetic biographer in speaking of his hero's having incurred obloquy by his conservative attitude on the question of Slavery. The only class in the American world that suffered in the smallest degree, at this time, from social persecution, was the little band of Northern Abolitionists, who were as unfashionable as they were indiscreet—which is saying much. Like most of his fellow-countrymen, Hawthorne had no idea that the respectable institution which he contemplated in impressive contrast to humanitarian "mistiness" was presently to cost the nation four long years of bloodshed and misery, and a social revolution as complete as any the world has seen. When this event occurred, he was therefore proportionately horrified and depressed by it; it cut from beneath his feet the familiar ground which had long felt so firm, substituting a heaving and quaking medium in which his spirit found no rest. Such was the bewildered sensation of that earlier and simpler generation of which I have spoken; their illusions were rudely dispelled, and they saw the best of all possible republics given over to fratricidal carnage. This affair had no place in their scheme, and nothing was left for them but to hang their heads and close their eyes. The subsidence of that great convulsion has left a different tone from the tone it found, and one may say that the Civil War marks an era in the history of the American mind. It introduced into the national consciousness a certain sense of proportion and relation, of the world being a more complicated place than it had hitherto seemed, the future more treacherous, success more difficult. At the rate at which things are going, it is obvious that good Americans will be more numerous than ever; but the good American, in days to come, will be a more critical person than his complacent and confident grandfather. He has eaten of the tree of knowledge. He will not, I think, be a skeptic, and still less, of course, a cynic; but he will be, without discredit to his well-known capacity for action, an observer. He will remember that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable, and that this is a world in which everything happens; and eventualities, as the late Emperor of the French used to say,

will not find him intellectually unprepared. The good American of which Hawthorne was so admirable a specimen was not critical, and it was perhaps for this reason that Franklin Pierce seemed to him a very proper President.

The least that General Pierce could do in exchange for so liberal a confidence was to offer his old friend one of the numerous places in his gift. Hawthorne had a great desire to go abroad and see something of the world, so that a consulate seemed the proper thing. He never stirred in the matter himself, but his friends strongly urged that something should be done; and when he accepted the post of consul at Liverpool there was not a word of reasonable criticism to be offered on the matter. If General Pierce, who was before all things good-natured and obliging, had been guilty of no greater indiscretion than to confer this modest distinction upon the most honorable and discreet of men of letters, he would have made a more brilliant mark in the annals of American statesmanship. Liverpool had not been immediately selected, and Hawthorne had written to his friend and publisher, Mr. Fields, with some humorous vagueness of allusion to his probable expatriation.

> Do make some inquiries about Portugal; as, for instance, in what part of the world it lies, and whether it is an empire, a kingdom, or a republic. Also, and more particularly, the expenses of living there, and whether the Minister would be likely to be much pestered with his own countrymen. Also, any other information about foreign countries would be acceptable to an inquiring mind.

It would seem from this that there had been a question of offering him a small diplomatic post; but the emoluments of the place were justly taken into account, and it is to be supposed that those of the consulate at Liverpool were at least as great as the salary of the American representative at Lisbon. Unfortunately, just after Hawthorne had taken possession of the former post, the salary attached to it was reduced by Congress, in an economical hour, to less than half the sum enjoyed by his predecessors. It was fixed at $7,500 (£1,500); but the consular fees, which were often

copious, were an added resource. At midsummer then, in 1853, Hawthorne was established in England.

VI. England and Italy

HAWTHORNE was close upon fifty years of age when he came to Europe—a fact that should be remembered when those impressions which he recorded in five substantial volumes (exclusive of the novel written in Italy) occasionally affect us by the rigidity of their point of view. His *Note-Books,* kept during his residence in England, his two winters in Rome, his summer in Florence, were published after his death; his impressions of England, sifted, revised, and addressed directly to the public, he gave to the world shortly before this event. The tone of his European diaries is often so fresh and unsophisticated that we find ourselves thinking of the writer as a young man, and it is only a certain final sense of something reflective and a trifle melancholy that reminds us that the simplicity which is on the whole the leading characteristic of their pages is, though the simplicity of inexperience, not that of youth. When I say inexperience, I mean that Hawthorne's experience had been narrow. His fifty years had been spent, for much the larger part, in small American towns—Salem, the Boston of forty years ago, Concord, Lenox, West Newton—and he had led exclusively what one may call a village life. This is evident, not at all directly and superficially, but by implication and between the lines, in his desultory history of his foreign years. In other words, and to call things by their names, he was exquisitely and consistently provincial. I suggest this fact not in the least in condemnation, but, on the contrary, in support of an appreciative view of him. I know nothing more remarkable, more touching, than the sight of this odd, youthful-elderly mind, contending so late in the day with new opportunities for learning old things, and on the whole profiting by them so freely and gracefully. The *Note-Books* are provincial, and so, in a greatly modified degree, are the sketches of England, in *Our Old Home;* but the beauty and delicacy of this latter work are so interwoven with the

author's air of being remotely outside of everything he describes that they count for more, seem more themselves, and finally give the whole thing the appearance of a triumph, not of initiation, but of the provincial point of view itself.

I shall not attempt to relate in detail the incidents of his residence in England. He appears to have enjoyed it greatly, in spite of the deficiency of charm in the place to which his duties chiefly confined him. His confinement, however, was not unbroken, and his published journals consist largely of minute accounts of little journeys and wanderings, with his wife and his three children, through the rest of the country; together with much mention of numerous visits to London, a city for whose dusky immensity and multitudinous interest he professed the highest relish. His *Note-Books* are of the same cast as the two volumes of his American diaries, of which I have given some account—chiefly occupied with external matters, with the accidents of daily life, with observations made during the long walks (often with his son), which formed his most valued pastime. His office, moreover, though Liverpool was not a delectable home, furnished him with entertainment as well as occupation, and it may almost be said that during these years he saw more of his fellow countrymen, in the shape of odd wanderers, petitioners, and inquirers of every kind, than he had ever done in his native land. The paper entitled *Consular Experiences*, in *Our Old Home*, is an admirable recital of these observations, and a proof that the novelist might have found much material in the opportunities of the consul. On his return to America, in 1860, he drew from his journal a number of pages relating to his observations in England, rewrote them (with, I should suppose, a good deal of care), and converted them into articles which he published in a magazine. These chapters were afterwards collected, and *Our Old Home* (a rather infelicitous title) was issued in 1863. I prefer to speak of the book now, however, rather than in touching upon the closing years of his life, for it is a kind of deliberate *résumé* of his impressions of the land of his ancestors. "It is not a good or a weighty book," he wrote to his publisher, who had sent him some reviews of it, "nor does it deserve any great amount

of praise or censure. I don't care about seeing any more notices of it." Hawthorne's appreciation of his own productions was always extremely just; he had a sense of the relations of things, which some of his admirers have not thought it well to cultivate; and he never exaggerated his own importance as a writer. *Our Old Home* is not a weighty book; it is decidedly a light one. But when he says it is not a good one, I hardly know what he means, and his modesty at this point is in excess of his discretion. Whether good or not, *Our Old Home* is charming—it is most delectable reading. The execution is singularly perfect and ripe; of all his productions it seems to be the best written. The touch, as musicians say, is admirable; the lightness, the fineness, the felicity of characterization and description, belong to a man who has the advantage of feeling delicately. His judgment is by no means always sound; it often rests on too narrow an observation. But his perception is of the keenest, and though it is frequently partial, incomplete, it is excellent as far as it goes. The book gave but limited satisfaction, I believe, in England, and I am not sure that the failure to enjoy certain manifestations of its sportive irony has not chilled the appreciation of its singular grace. That English readers, on the whole, should have felt that Hawthorne did the national mind and manners but partial justice is, I think, conceivable; at the same time that it seems to me remarkable that the tender side of the book, as I may call it, should not have carried it off better. It abounds in passages more delicately appreciative than can easily be found elsewhere, and it contains more charming and affectionate things than, I should suppose, had ever before been written about a country not the writer's own. To say that it is an immeasurably more exquisite and sympathetic work than any of the numerous persons who have related their misadventures in the United States have seen fit to devote to that country, is to say but little, and I imagine that Hawthorne had in mind the array of English voyagers—Mrs. Trollope, Dickens, Marryat, Basil Hall, Miss Martineau, Mr. Grattan—when he reflected that everything is relative and that, as such books go, his own little volume observed the amenities of criticism.

He certainly had it in mind when he wrote the phrase in his preface relating to the impression the book might make in England. "Not an Englishman of them all ever spared America for courtesy's sake or kindness; nor, in my opinion, would it contribute in the least to any mutual advantage and comfort if we were to besmear each other all over with butter and honey." I am far from intending to intimate that the vulgar instinct of recrimination had anything to do with the restrictive passages of *Our Old Home;* I mean simply that the author had a prevision that his collection of sketches would in some particulars fail to please his English friends. He professed, after the event, to have discovered that the English are sensitive, and as they say of the Americans, for whose advantage I believe the term was invented, thin-skinned. "The English critics," he wrote to his publisher, "seem to think me very bitter against their countrymen, and it is perhaps natural that they should, because their self-conceit can accept nothing short of indiscriminate adulation; but I really think that Americans have much more cause than they to complain of me. Looking over the volume I am rather surprised to find that whenever I draw a comparison between the two people, I almost invariably cast the balance against ourselves." And he writes at another time: "I received several private letters and printed notices of *Our Old Home* from England. It is laughable to see the innocent wonder with which they regard my criticisms, accounting for them by jaundice, insanity, jealousy, hatred, on my part, and never admitting the least suspicion that there may be a particle of truth in them. The monstrosity of their self-conceit is such that anything short of unlimited admiration impresses them as malicious caricature. But they do me great injustice in supposing that I hate them. I would as soon hate my own people." The idea of his hating the English was of course too puerile for discussion; and the book, as I have said, is full of a rich appreciation of the finest characteristics of the country. But it has a serious defect—a defect which impairs its value, though it helps to give consistency to such an image of Hawthorne's personal nature as we may by this time have been able to form. It is the work of an outsider, of

a stranger, of a man who remains to the end a mere spectator (something less even than an observer), and always lacks the final initiation into the manners and nature of a people of whom it may most be said, among all the people of the earth, that to know them is to make discoveries. Hawthorne freely confesses to this constant exteriority, and appears to have been perfectly conscious of it. "I remember," he writes in the sketch of *A London Suburb*, in *Our Old Home*, "I remember to this day the dreary feeling with which I sat by our first English fireside and watched the chill and rainy twilight of an autumn day darkening down upon the garden, while the preceding occupant of the house (evidently a most unamiable personage in his lifetime) scowled inhospitably from above the mantelpiece, as if indignant that an American should try to make himself at home there. Possibly it may appease his sulky shade to know that I quitted his abode as much a stranger as I entered it." The same note is struck in an entry in his journal, of the date of October 6, 1854.

> The people, for several days, have been in the utmost anxiety, and latterly in the highest exultation, about Sebastopol—and all England, and Europe to boot, have been fooled by the belief that it had fallen. This, however, now turns out to be incorrect; and the public visage is somewhat grim in consequence. I am glad of it. In spite of his actual sympathies, it is impossible for an American to be otherwise than glad. Success makes an Englishman intolerable, and already, on the mistaken idea that the way was open to a prosperous conclusion of the war, the *Times* had begun to throw out menaces against America. I shall never love England till she sues to us for help, and, in the meantime, the fewer triumphs she obtains, the better for all parties. An Englishman in adversity is a very respectable character; he does not lose his dignity, but merely comes to a proper conception of himself. . . . I seem to myself like a spy or traitor when I meet their eyes, and am conscious that I neither hope nor fear in sympathy with them, although they look at me in full confidence of sympathy. Their heart "knoweth its own bitterness," and as for me, being a stranger and an alien, I "intermeddle not with their joy."

This seems to me to express very well the weak side of Hawthorne's work—his constant mistrust and suspicion of

the society that surrounded him, his exaggerated, painful, morbid national consciousness. It is, I think, an indisputable fact that Americans are, as Americans, the most self-conscious people in the world, and the most addicted to the belief that the other nations of the earth are in a conspiracy to undervalue them. They are conscious of being the youngest of the great nations, of not being of the European family, of being placed on the circumference of the circle of civilization rather than at the center, of the experimental element not having as yet entirely dropped out of their great political undertaking. The sense of this relativity, in a word, replaces that quiet and comfortable sense of the absolute, as regards its own position in the world, which reigns supreme in the British and in the Gallic genius. Few persons, I think, can have mingled much with Americans in Europe without having made this reflection, and it is in England that their habit of looking askance at foreign institutions—of keeping one eye, as it were, on the American personality, while with the other they contemplate these objects—is most to be observed. Add to this that Hawthorne came to England late in life, when his habits, his tastes, his opinions, were already formed, that he was inclined to look at things in silence and brood over them gently, rather than talk about them, discuss them, grow acquainted with them by action; and it will be possible to form an idea of our writer's detached and critical attitude in the country in which it is easiest, thanks to its aristocratic constitution, to the absence of any considerable public fund of entertainment and diversion, to the degree in which the inexhaustible beauty and interest of the place are private property, demanding constantly a special introduction—in the country in which, I say, it is easiest for a stranger to remain a stranger. For a stranger to cease to be a stranger he must stand ready, as the French say, to pay with his person; and this was an obligation that Hawthorne was indisposed to incur. Our sense, as we read, that his reflections are those of a shy and susceptible man, with nothing at stake, mentally, in his appreciation of the country, is therefore a drawback to our confidence; but it is not a drawback sufficient to make it of no importance that he is at the

same time singularly intelligent and discriminating, with a faculty of feeling delicately and justly, which constitutes in itself an illumination. There is a passage in the sketch entitled *About Warwick* which is a very good instance of what was probably his usual state of mind. He is speaking of the aspect of the High Street of the town.

> The street is an emblem of England itself. What seems new in it is chiefly a skillful and fortunate adaptation of what such a people as ourselves would destroy. The new things are based and supported on sturdy old things, and derive a massive strength from their deep and immemorial foundations, though with such limitations and impediments as only an Englishman could endure. But he likes to feel the weight of all the past upon his back; and moreover the antiquity that overburdens him has taken root in his being, and has grown to be rather a hump than a pack, so that there is no getting rid of it without tearing his whole structure to pieces. In my judgment, as he appears to be sufficiently comfortable under the moldy accretion, he had better stumble on with it as long as he can. He presents a spectacle which is by no means without its charm for a disinterested and unincumbered observer.

There is all Hawthorne, with his enjoyment of the picturesque, his relish of chiaroscuro, of local color, of the deposit of time, and his still greater enjoyment of his own dissociation from these things, his "disinterested and unincumbered" condition. His want of incumbrances may seem at times to give him a somewhat naked and attenuated appearance, but on the whole he carries it off very well. I have said that *Our Old Home* contains much of his best writing, and on turning over the book at hazard, I am struck with his frequent felicity of phrase. At every step there is something one would like to quote—something excellently well said. These things are often of the lighter sort, but Hawthorne's charming diction lingers in the memory—almost in the ear. I have always remembered a certain admirable characterization of Doctor Johnson, in the account of the writer's visit to Lichfield—and I will preface it by a paragraph almost as good, commemorating the charms of the hotel in that interesting town.

At any rate I had the great, dull, dingy, and dreary coffee-room, with its heavy old mahogany chairs and tables, all to myself, and not a soul to exchange a word with except the waiter, who, like most of his class in England, had evidently left his conversational abilities uncultivated. No former practice of solitary living, nor habits of reticence, nor well-tested self-dependence for occupation of mind and amusement, can quite avail, as I now proved, to dissipate the ponderous gloom of an English coffee-room under such circumstances as these, with no book at hand save the county directory, nor any newspaper but a torn local journal of five days ago. So I buried myself, betimes, in a huge heap of ancient feathers (there is no other kind of bed in these old inns), let my head sink into an unsubstantial pillow, and slept a stifled sleep, compounded of the night-troubles of all my predecessors in that same unrestful couch. And when I awoke, the odor of a bygone century was in my nostrils—a faint, elusive smell, of which I never had any conception before crossing the Atlantic.

The whole chapter entitled "Lichfield and Uttoxeter" is a sort of graceful tribute to Samuel Johnson, who certainly has nowhere else been more tenderly spoken of.

Beyond all question I might. have had a wiser friend than he. The atmosphere in which alone he breathed was dense; his awful dread of death showed how much muddy imperfection was to be cleansed out of him before he could be capable of spiritual existence; he meddled only with the surface of life, and never cared to penetrate further than to ploughshare depth; his very sense and sagacity were but a one-eyed clear-sightedness. I laughed at him, sometimes standing beside his knee. And yet, considering that my native propensities were toward Fairy Land, and also how much yeast is generally mixed up with the mental sustenance of a New Englander, it may not have been altogether amiss, in those childish and boyish days, to keep pace with this heavy-footed traveler and feed on the gross diet that he carried in his knapsack. It is wholesome food even now! And then, how English! Many of the latent sympathies that enabled me to enjoy the Old Country so well, and that so readily amalgamated themselves with the American ideas that seemed most adverse to them, may have been derived from, or fostered and kept alive by, the great English moralist. Never was a descriptive epithet more nicely appropriate than that! Doctor Johnson's morality was as English an article as a beef-steak.

And for mere beauty of expression I cannot forbear quoting this passage about the days in a fine English summer:

> For each day seemed endless, though never wearisome. As far as your actual experience is concerned, the English summer day has positively no beginning and no end. When you awake, at any reasonable hour, the sun is already shining through the curtains; you live through unnumbered hours of Sabbath quietude, with a calm variety of incident softly etched upon their tranquil lapse; and at length you become conscious that it is bedtime again, while there is still enough daylight in the sky to make the pages of your book distinctly legible. Night, if there be any such season, hangs down a transparent veil through which the bygone day beholds its successor; or if not quite true of the latitude of London, it may be soberly affirmed of the more northern parts of the island that Tomorrow is born before its Yesterday is dead. They exist together in the golden twilight, where the decrepit old day dimly discerns the face of the ominous infant; and you, though a mere mortal, may simultaneously touch them both, with one finger of recollection and another of prophecy.

The *Note-Books*, as I have said, deal chiefly with the superficial aspect of English life, and describe the material objects with which the author was surrounded. They often describe them admirably, and the rural beauty of the country has never been more happily expressed. But there are inevitably a great many reflections and incidental judgments, characterizations of people he met, fragments of psychology and social criticism, and it is here that Hawthorne's mixture of subtlety and simplicity, his interfusion of genius with what I have ventured to call the provincial quality, is most apparent. To an American reader this later quality, which is never grossly manifested, but pervades the journals like a vague natural perfume, an odor of purity and kindness and integrity, must always, for a reason that I will touch upon, have a considerable charm; and such a reader will accordingly take an even greater satisfaction in the diaries kept during the two years Hawthorne spent in Italy; for in these volumes the element I speak of is especially striking. He resigned his consulate at Liverpool towards the close of 1857

—whether because he was weary of his manner of life there and of the place itself, as may well have been, or because he wished to anticipate supersession by the new government (Mr. Buchanan's) which was just establishing itself at Washington, is not apparent from the slender sources of information from which these pages have been compiled. In the month of January of the following year he betook himself with his family to the Continent, and, as promptly as possible, made the best of his way to Rome. He spent the remainder of the winter and the spring there, and then went to Florence for the summer and autumn; after which he returned to Rome and passed a second season. His Italian *Note-Books* are very pleasant reading, but they are of less interest than the others, for his contact with the life of the country, its people and its manners, was simply that of the ordinary tourist—which amounts to saying that it was extremely superficial. He appears to have suffered a great deal of discomfort and depression in Rome, and not to have been on the whole in the best mood for enjoying the place and its resources. That he did, at one time and another, enjoy these things keenly is proved by his beautiful romance, *Transformation,* which could never have been written by a man who had not had many hours of exquisite appreciation of the lovely land of Italy. But he took it hard, as it were, and suffered himself to be painfully discomposed by the usual accidents of Italian life, as foreigners learn to know it. His future was again uncertain, and during his second winter in Rome he was in danger of losing his elder daughter by a malady which he speaks of as a trouble "that pierced to my very vitals." I may mention, with regard to this painful episode, that Franklin Pierce, whose presidential days were over, and who, like other ex-presidents, was traveling in Europe, came to Rome at the time, and that the *Note-Books* contain some singularly beautiful and touching allusions to his old friend's gratitude for his sympathy, and enjoyment of his society. The sentiment of friendship has on the whole been so much less commemorated in literature than might have been expected from the place it is supposed to hold in life, that there is always something striking in

any frank and ardent expression of it. It occupied, in so far as Pierce was the object of it, a large place in Hawthorne's mind, and it is impossible not to feel the manly tenderness of such lines as these:

I have found him here in Rome, the whole of my early friend, and even better than I used to know him; a heart as true and affectionate, a mind much widened and deepened by the experience of life. We hold just the same relation to one another as of yore, and we have passed all the turning-off places, and may hope to go on together, still the same dear friends, as long as we live. I do not love him one whit the less for having been President, nor for having done me the greatest good in his power; a fact that speaks eloquently in his favor, and perhaps says a little for myself. If he had been merely a benefactor, perhaps I might not have borne it so well; but each did his best for the other, as friend for friend.

The *Note-Books* are chiefly taken up with descriptions of the regular sights and "objects of interest," which we often feel to be rather perfunctory and a little in the style of the traditional tourist's diary. They abound in charming touches, and every reader of *Transformation* will remember the delightful coloring of the numerous pages in that novel which are devoted to the pictorial aspects of Rome. But we are unable to rid ourselves of the impression that Hawthorne was a good deal bored by the importunity of Italian art, for which his taste, naturally not keen, had never been cultivated. Occasionally, indeed, he breaks out into explicit sighs and groans, and frankly declares that he washes his hands of it. Already, in England, he had made the discovery that he could easily feel overdosed with such things. "Yesterday," he wrote in 1856, "I went out at about twelve and visited the British Museum; an exceedingly tiresome affair. It quite crushes a person to see so much at once, and I wandered from hall to hall with a weary and heavy heart, wishing (Heaven forgive me!) that the Elgin marbles and the frieze of the Parthenon were all burnt into lime, and that the granite Egyptian statues were hewn and squared into building stones."

The plastic sense was not strong in Hawthorne; there

can be no better proof of it than his curious aversion to the representation of the nude in sculpture. This aversion was deep-seated; he constantly returns to it, exclaiming upon the incongruity of modern artists making naked figures. He apparently quite failed to see that nudity is not an incident, or accident, of sculpture, but its very essense and principle; and his jealousy of undressed images strikes the reader as a strange, vague, long-dormant heritage of his straitlaced Puritan ancestry. Whenever he talks of statues he makes a great point of the smoothness and whiteness of the marble —speaks of the surface of the marble as if it were half the beauty of the image; and when he discourses of pictures, one feels that the brightness or dinginess of the frame is an essential part of his impression of the work—as he indeed somewhere distinctly affirms. Like a good American, he took more pleasure in the productions of Mr. Thompson and Mr. Brown, Mr. Powers and Mr. Hart, American artists who were plying their trade in Italy, than in the works which adorned the ancient museums of the country. He suffered greatly from the cold, and found little charm in the climate, and during the weeks of winter that followed his arrival in Rome, he sat shivering by his fire and wondering why he had come to such a land of misery. Before he left Italy he wrote to his publisher—"I bitterly detest Rome, and shall rejoice to bid it farewell forever; and I fully acquiesce in all the mischief and ruin that has happened to it, from Nero's conflagration downward. In fact, I wish the very site had been obliterated before I ever saw it." Hawthorne presents himself to the reader of these pages as the last of the old-fashioned Americans—and this is the interest which I just now said that his compatriots would find in his very limitations. I do not mean by this that there are not still many of his fellow-countrymen (as there are many natives of every land under the sun) who are more susceptible of being irritated than of being soothed by the influences of the Eternal City. What I mean is that an American of equal value with Hawthorne, an American of equal genius, imagination, and, as our forefathers said, sensibility, would at present inevitably accommodate himself more easily to the

idiosyncrasies of foreign lands. An American as cultivated as Hawthorne is now almost inevitably more cultivated, and, as a matter of course, more Europeanized in advance, more cosmopolitan. It is very possible that in becoming so, he has lost something of his occidental savor, the quality which excites the good will of the American reader of our author's journals for the dislocated, depressed, even slightly bewildered diarist. Absolutely the last of the earlier race of Americans Hawthorne was, fortunately, probably far from being. But I think of him as the last specimen of the more primitive type of men of letters; and when it comes to measuring what he succeeded in being, in his unadulterated form, against what he failed of being, the positive side of the image quite extinguishes the negative. I must be on my guard, however, against incurring the charge of cherishing a national consciousness as acute as I have ventured to pronounce his own.

Out of his mingled sensations, his pleasure and his weariness, his discomforts and his reveries, there sprang another beautiful work. During the summer of 1858, he hired a picturesque old villa on the hill of Bellosguardo, near Florence, a curious structure with a crenelated tower, which, after having in the course of its career suffered many vicissitudes and played many parts, now finds its most vivid identity in being pointed out to strangers as the sometime residence of the celebrated American romancer. Hawthorne took a fancy to the place, as well he might, for it is one of the loveliest spots on earth, and the great view that stretched itself before him contains every element of beauty. Florence lay at his feet with her memories and treasures; the olive-covered hills bloomed around him, studded with villas as picturesque as his own; the Apennines, perfect in form and color, disposed themselves opposite, and in the distance, along its fertile valley, the Arno wandered to Pisa and the sea. Soon after coming hither he wrote to a friend in a strain of high satisfaction:

It is pleasant to feel at last that I am really away from America—a satisfaction that I never really enjoyed as long as I stayed in Liverpool, where it seemed to me that the quintessence of

nasal and hand-shaking Yankeedom was gradually filtered and sublimated through my consulate, on the way outward and homeward. I first got acquainted with my own countrymen there. At Rome too it was not much better. But here in Florence, and in the summer-time, and in this secluded villa, I have escaped out of all my old tracks, and am really remote. I like my present residence immensely. The house stands on a hill, overlooking Florence, and is big enough to quarter a regiment, insomuch that each member of the family, including servants, has a separate suite of apartments, and there are vast wildernesses of upper rooms into which we have never yet sent exploring expeditions. At one end of the house there is a moss-grown tower, haunted by owls and by the ghost of a monk who was confined there in the thirteenth century, previous to being burnt at the stake in the principal square of Florence. I hire this villa, tower and all, at twenty-eight dollars a month; but I mean to take it away bodily and clap it into a romance, which I have in my head, ready to be written out.

This romance was *Transformation,* which he wrote out during the following winter in Rome, and rewrote during the several months that he spent in England, chiefly at Leamington, before returning to America. The Villa Montauto figures, in fact, in this tale as the castle of Monte-Beni, the patrimonial dwelling of the hero. "I take some credit to myself," he wrote to the same friend, on returning to Rome, "for having sternly shut myself up for an hour or two every day, and come to close grips with a romance which I have been trying to tear out of my mind." And later in the same winter he says—"I shall go home, I fear, with a heavy heart, not expecting to be very well contented there. . . . If I were but a hundred times richer than I am, how very comfortable I could be! I consider it a great piece of good fortune that I have had experience of the discomforts and miseries of Italy, and did not go directly home from England. Anything will seem like a Paradise after a Roman winter." But he got away at last, late in the spring, carrying his novel with him, and the book was published, after, as I say, he had worked it over, mainly during some weeks that he passed at the little watering place of Redcar, on the Yorkshire coast, in February of the following year. It was

issued primarily in England; the American edition immediately followed. It is an odd fact that in the two countries the book came out under different titles. The title that the author had bestowed upon it did not satisfy the English publishers, who requested him to provide it with another; so that it is only in America that the work bears the name of *The Marble Faun.* Hawthorne's choice of this appellation is, by the way, rather singular, for it completely fails to characterize the story, the subject of which is the living faun, the faun of flesh and blood, the unfortunate Donatello. His marble counterpart is mentioned only in the opening chapter. On the other hand, Hawthorne complained that *Transformation* "gives one the idea of Harlequin in a pantomime." Under either name, however, the book was a great success, and it has probably become the most popular of Hawthorne's four novels. It is part of the intellectual equipment of the Anglo-Saxon visitor to Rome, and is read by every English-speaking traveler who arrives there, who has been there, or who expects to go.

It has a great deal of beauty, of interest and grace; but it has to my sense a slighter value than its companions, and I am far from regarding it as the masterpiece of the author, a position to which we sometimes hear it assigned. The subject is admirable, and so are many of the details; but the whole thing is less simple and complete than either of the three tales of American life, and Hawthorne forfeited a precious advantage in ceasing to tread his native soil. Half the virtue of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* is in their local quality; they are impregnated with the New England air. It is very true that Hawthorne had no pretension to portray actualities and to cultivate that literal exactitude which is now the fashion. Had this been the case, he would probably have made a still graver mistake in transporting the scene of his story to a country which he knew only superficially. His tales all go on more or less "in the vague," as the French say, and of course the vague may as well be placed in Tuscany as in Massachusetts. It may also very well be urged in Hawthorne's favor here that in *Transformation* he has attempted to deal with actualities

more than he did in either of his earlier novels. He has described the streets and monuments of Rome with a closeness which forms no part of his reference to those of Boston and Salem. But for all this he incurs that penalty of seeming factitious and unauthoritative, which is always the result of an artist's attempt to project himself into an atmosphere in which he has not a transmitted and inherited property. An English or a German writer (I put poets aside) may love Italy well enough, and know her well enough, to write delightful fictions about her; the thing has often been done. But the productions in question will, as novels, always have about them something second-rate and imperfect. There is in *Transformation* enough beautiful perception of the interesting character of Rome, enough rich and eloquent expression of it, to save the book, if the book could be saved; but the style, what the French call the *genre,* is an inferior one, and the thing remains a charming romance with intrinsic weaknesses.

Allowing for this, however, some of the finest pages in all Hawthorne are to be found in it. The subject, as I have said, is a particularly happy one, and there is a great deal of interest in the simple combination and opposition of the four actors. It is noticeable that in spite of the considerable length of the story, there are no accessory figures; Donatello and Miriam, Kenyon and Hilda, exclusively occupy the scene. This is the more noticeable as the scene is very large, and the great Roman background is constantly presented to us. The relations of these four people are full of that moral picturesqueness which Hawthorne was always looking for; he found it in perfection in the history of Donatello. As I have said, the novel is the most popular of his works, and everyone will remember the figure of the simple, joyous, sensuous young Italian, who is not so much a man as a child, and not so much a child as a charming, innocent animal, and how he is brought to self-knowledge and to a miserable conscious manhood by the commission of a crime. Donatello is rather vague and impalpable; he says too little in the book, shows himself too little, and falls short, I think, of being a creation. But he is enough of a creation to make

us enter into the situation, and the whole history of his rise, or fall, whichever one chooses to call it—his tasting of the tree of knowledge and finding existence complicated with a regret—is unfolded with a thousand ingenious and exquisite touches. Of course, to make the interest complete, there is a woman in the affair, and Hawthorne has done few things more beautiful than the picture of the unequal complicity of guilt between his immature and dimly-puzzled hero, with his clinging, unquestioning, unexacting devotion, and the dark, powerful, more widely-seeing feminine nature of Miriam. Deeply touching is the representation of the manner in which these two essentially different persons—the woman intelligent, passionate, acquainted with life, and with a tragic element in her own career; the youth ignorant, gentle, unworldly, brightly and harmlessly natural—are equalized and bound together by their common secret, which insulates them, morally, from the rest of mankind. The character of Hilda has always struck me as an admirable invention—one of those things that mark the man of genius. It needed a man of genius and of Hawthorne's imaginative delicacy to feel the propriety of such a figure as Hilda's and to perceive the relief it would both give and borrow. This pure and somewhat rigid New England girl, following the vocation of a copyist of pictures in Rome, unacquainted with evil and untouched by impurity, has been accidentally the witness, unknown and unsuspected, of the dark deed by which her friends, Miriam and Donatello, are knit together. This is *her* revelation of evil, her loss of perfect innocence. She has done no wrong, and yet wrongdoing has become a part of her experience, and she carries the weight of her detested knowledge upon her heart. She carries it a long time, saddened and oppressed by it, till at last she can bear it no longer. If I have called the whole idea of the presence and effect of Hilda in the story a trait of genius, the purest touch of inspiration is the episode in which the poor girl deposits her burden. She has passed the whole lonely summer in Rome, and one day, at the end of it, finding herself in St. Peter's, she enters a confessional, strenuous daughter of the Puritans as she is, and pours out her dark knowledge

into the bosom of the Church—then comes away with her conscience lightened, not a whit the less a Puritan than before. If the book contained nothing else noteworthy but this admirable scene, and the pages describing the murder committed by Donatello under Miriam's eyes, and the ecstatic wandering, afterwards, of the guilty couple, through the "blood-stained streets of Rome," it would still deserve to rank high among the imaginative productions of our day.

Like all of Hawthorne's things, it contains a great many light threads of symbolism, which shimmer in the texture of the tale, but which are apt to break and remain in our fingers if we attempt to handle them. These things are part of Hawthorne's very manner—almost, as one might say, of his vocabulary; they belong much more to the surface of his work than to its stronger interest. The fault of *Transformation* is that the element of the unreal is pushed too far, and that the book is neither positively of one category nor of another. His "moonshiny romance," he calls it in a letter; and, in truth, the lunar element is a little too pervasive. The action wavers between the streets of Rome, whose literal features the author perpetually sketches, and a vague realm of fancy, in which quite a different verisimilitude prevails. This is the trouble with Donatello himself. His companions are intended to be real—if they fail to be so, it is not for want of intention; whereas he is intended to be real or not, as you please. He is of a different substance from them; it is as if a painter, in composing a picture, should try to give you an impression of one of his figures by a strain of music. The idea of the modern faun was a charming one; but I think it a pity that the author should not have made him more definitely modern, without reverting so much to his mythological properties and antecedents, which are very gracefully touched upon, but which belong to the region of picturesque conceits, much more than to that of real psychology. Among the young Italians of today there are still plenty of models for such an image as Hawthorne appears to have wished to present in the easy and natural Donatello. And since I am speaking critically, I may go on to say that the art of narration, in *Transformation,* seems to

me more at fault than in the author's other novels. The story straggles and wanders, is dropped and taken up again, and towards the close lapses into an almost fatal vagueness.

VII. Last Years

OF THE FOUR LAST YEARS of Hawthorne's life there is not much to tell that I have not already told. He returned to America in the summer of 1860, and took up his abode in the house he had bought at Concord before going to Europe, and of which his occupancy had as yet been brief. He was to occupy it only four years. I have insisted upon the fact of his being an intense American, and of his looking at all things, during his residence in Europe, from the standpoint of that little clod of western earth which he carried about with him as the good Mohammedan carries the strip of carpet on which he kneels down to face towards Mecca. But it does not appear, nevertheless, that he found himself treading with any great exhilaration the larger section of his native soil upon which, on his return, he disembarked. Indeed, the closing part of his life was a period of dejection, the more acute that it followed directly upon seven years of the happiest opportunities he was to have known. And his European residence had been brightest at the last; he had broken almost completely with those habits of extreme seclusion into which he was to relapse on his return to Concord. "You would be stricken dumb," he wrote from London, shortly before leaving it for the last time, "to see how quietly I accept a whole string of invitations, and, what is more, perform my engagements without a murmur. . . . The stir of this London life, somehow or other," he adds in the same letter, "has done me a wonderful deal of good, and I feel better than for months past. This is strange, for if I had my choice I should leave undone almost all the things I do." "When he found himself once more on the old ground," writes Mr. Lathrop, "with the old struggle for subsistence staring him in the face again, it is not difficult to conceive how a certain degree of depression would follow." There is indeed not a little sadness in the thought of Hawthorne's

literary gift, light, delicate, exquisite, capricious, never too abundant, being charged with the heavy burden of the maintenance of a family. We feel that it was not intended for such grossness, and that in a world ideally constituted he would have enjoyed a liberal pension, an assured subsistence, and have been able to produce his charming prose only when the fancy took him.

The brightness of the outlook at home was not made greater by the explosion of the Civil War in the spring of 1861. These months, and the three years that followed them, were not a cheerful time for any persons but army contractors; but over Hawthorne the war-cloud appears to have dropped a permanent shadow. The whole affair was a bitter disappointment to him, and a fatal blow to that happy faith in the uninterruptedness of American prosperity which I have spoken of as the religion of the old-fashioned American in general, and the old-fashioned Democrat in particular. It was not a propitious time for cultivating the Muse; when history herself is so hard at work, fiction has little left to say. To fiction, directly, Hawthorne did not address himself; he composed first, chiefly during the year 1862, the chapters of which *Our Old Home* was afterwards made up. I have said that, though this work has less value than his purely imaginative things, the writing is singularly good, and it is well to remember, to its greater honor, that it was produced at a time when it was painfully hard for a man of Hawthorne's cast of mind to fix his attention. The air was full of battle-smoke, and the poet's vision was not easily clear. Hawthorne was irritated, too, by the sense of being to a certain extent, politically considered, in a false position. A large section of the Democratic party was not in good odor at the North; its loyalty was not perceived to be of that clear strain which public opinion required. To this wing of the party Franklin Pierce had, with reason or without, the credit of belonging; and our author was conscious of some sharpness of responsibility in defending the illustrious friend of whom he had already made himself the advocate. He defended him manfully, without a grain of concession, and described the ex-president to the public (and to him-

self), if not as he was, then as he ought to be. *Our Old Home* is dedicated to him, and about this dedication there was some little difficulty. It was represented to Hawthorne that as General Pierce was rather out of fashion, it might injure the success, and, in plain terms, the sale of his book. His answer (to his publisher) was much to the point.

> I find that it would be a piece of poltroonery in me to withdraw either the dedication or the dedicatory letter. My long and intimate personal relations with Pierce render the dedication altogether proper, especially as regards this book, which would have had no existence without his kindness; and if he is so exceedingly unpopular that his name ought to sink the volume, there is so much the more need that an old friend should stand by him. I cannot, merely on account of pecuniary profit or literary reputation, go back from what I have deliberately felt and thought it right to do; and if I were to tear out the dedication I should never look at the volume again without remorse and shame. As for the literary public, it must accept my book precisely as I think fit to give it, or let it alone. Nevertheless, I have no fancy for making myself a martyr when it is honorably and conscientiously possible to avoid it; and I always measure out heroism very accurately according to the exigencies of the occasion, and should be the last man in the world to throw away a bit of it needlessly. So I have looked over the concluding paragraph and have amended it in such a way that, while doing what I know to be justice to my friend, it contains not a word that ought to be objectionable to any set of readers. If the public of the North see fit to ostracize me for this, I can only say that I would gladly sacrifice a thousand or two dollars, rather than retain the good will of such a herd of dolts and mean-spirited scoundrels.

The dedication was published, the book was eminently successful, and Hawthorne was not ostracized. The paragraph under discussion stands as follow: "Only this let me say that, with the record of your life in my memory, and with a sense of your character in my deeper consciousness, as among the few things that time has left as it found them, I need no assurance that you continue faithful forever to that grand idea of an irrevocable Union which, as you once told me, was the earliest that your brave father taught you.

For other men there may be a choice of paths—for you but one; and it rests among my certainties that no man's loyalty is more steadfast, no man's hopes or apprehensions on behalf of our national existence more deeply heartfelt, or more closely intertwined with his possibilities of personal happiness, than those of Franklin Pierce." I know not how well the ex-president liked these lines, but the public thought them admirable, for they served as a kind of formal profession of faith, on the question of the hour, by a loved and honored writer. That some of his friends thought such a profession needed is apparent from the numerous editorial ejaculations and protests appended to an article describing a visit he had just paid to Washington, which Hawthorne contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly* for July 1862, and which, singularly enough, has not been reprinted. The article has all the usual merit of such sketches on Hawthorne's part—the merit of delicate, sportive feeling, expressed with consummate grace—but the editor of the periodical appears to have thought that he must give the antidote with the poison, and the paper is accompanied with several little notes disclaiming all sympathy with the writer's political heresies. The heresies strike the reader of today as extremely mild, and what excites his emotion, rather, is the questionable taste of the editorial commentary, with which it is strange that Hawthorne should have allowed his article to be encumbered. He had not been an Abolitionist before the War, and that he should not pretend to be one at the eleventh hour was, for instance, surely a piece of consistency that might have been allowed to pass. "I shall not pretend to be an admirer of old John Brown," he says, in a page worth quoting, "any further than sympathy with Whittier's excellent ballad about him may go; nor did I expect ever to shrink so unutterably from any apothegm of a sage whose happy lips have uttered a hundred golden sentences"—the allusion here, I suppose, is to Mr. Emerson—"as from that saying (perhaps falsely attributed to so honored a name) that the death of this blood-stained fanatic has 'made the Gallows as venerable as the Cross!' Nobody was ever more justly hanged. He won his martyrdom fairly, and took it

fairly. He himself, I am persuaded (such was his natural integrity), would have acknowledged that Virginia had a right to take the life which he had staked and lost; although it would have been better for her, in the hour that is fast coming, if she could generously have forgotten the criminality of his attempt in its enormous folly. On the other hand, any common-sensible man, looking at the matter unsentimentally, must have felt a certain intellectual satisfaction in seeing him hanged, if it were only in requital of his preposterous miscalculation of possibilities." Now that the heat of that great conflict has passed away, this is a capital expression of the saner estimate, in the United States, of the dauntless and deluded old man who proposed to solve a complex political problem by stirring up a servile insurrection. There is much of the same sound sense, interfused with light, just appreciable irony, in such a passage as the following:

I tried to imagine how very disagreeable the presence of a Southern army would be in a sober town of Massachusetts; and the thought considerably lessened my wonder at the cold and shy regards that are cast upon our troops, the gloom, the sullen demeanor, the declared, or scarcely hidden, sympathy with rebellion, which are so frequent here. It is a strange thing in human life that the greatest errors both of men and women often spring from their sweetest and most generous qualities; and so, undoubtedly, thousands of warm-hearted, generous, and impulsive persons have joined the Rebels, not from any real zeal for the cause, but because, between two conflicting loyalties, they chose that which necessarily lay nearest the heart. There never existed any other Government against which treason was so easy, and could defend itself by such plausible arguments, as against that of the United States. The anomaly of two allegiances (of which that of the State comes nearest home to a man's feelings, and includes the altar and the hearth, while the General Government claims his devotion only to an airy mode of law, and has no symbol but a flag) is exceedingly mischievous in this point of view; for it has converted crowds of honest people into traitors, who seem to themselves not merely innocent but patriotic, and who die for a bad cause with a quiet conscience as if it were the best. In the vast extent of our country—too vast by far to be taken into one small human heart

—we inevitably limit to our own State, or at farthest, to our own little section, that sentiment of physical love for the soil which renders an Englishman, for example, so intensely sensitive to the dignity and well-being of his little island, that one hostile foot, treading anywhere upon it, would make a bruise on each individual breast. If a man loves his own State, therefore, and is content to be ruined with her, let us shoot him, if we can, but allow him an honorable burial in the soil he fights for.

To this paragraph a line of deprecation from the editor is attached; and indeed from the point of view of a vigorous prosecution of the war it was doubtless not particularly pertinent. But it is interesting as an example of the way an imaginative man judges current events—trying to see the other side as well as his own, to feel what his adversary feels, and present his view of the case.

But he had other occupations for his imagination than putting himself into the shoes of unappreciative Southerners. He began at this time two novels, neither of which he lived to finish, but both of which were published, as fragments, after his death. The shorter of these fragments, to which he had given the name of *The Dolliver Romance,* is so very brief that little can be said of it. The author strikes, with all his usual sweetness, the opening notes of a story of New England life, and the few pages which have been given to the world contain a charming picture of an old man and a child.

The other rough sketch—it is hardly more—is in a manner complete; it was unfortunately deemed complete enough to be brought out in a magazine as a serial novel. This was to do it a great wrong, and I do not go too far in saying that poor Hawthorne would probably not have enjoyed the very bright light that has been projected upon this essentially crude piece of work. I am at a loss to know how to speak of *Septimius Felton, or the Elixir of Life;* I have purposely reserved but a small space for doing so, for the part of discretion seems to be to pass it by lightly. I differ therefore widely from the author's biographer and son-in-law in thinking it a work of the greatest weight and value, offering striking analogies with Goethe's *Faust;* and still more widely

from a critic whom Mr. Lathrop quotes, who regards a certain portion of it as "one of the very greatest triumphs in all literature." It seems to me almost cruel to pitch in this exalted key one's estimate of the rough first draught of a tale in regard to which the author's premature death operates, virtually, as a complete renunciation of pretensions. It is plain to any reader that *Septimius Felton,* as it stands, with its roughness, its gaps, its mere allusiveness and slightness of treatment, gives us but a very partial measure of Hawthorne's full intention; and it is equally easy to believe that this intention was much finer than anything we find in the book. Even if we possessed the novel in its complete form, however, I incline to think that we should regard it as very much the weakest of Hawthorne's productions. The idea itself seems a failure, and the best that might have come of it would have been very much below *The Scarlet Letter* or *The House of the Seven Gables.* The appeal to our interest is not felicitously made, and the fancy of a potion, to assure eternity of existence, being made from the flowers which spring from the grave of a man whom the distiller of the potion has deprived of life, though it might figure with advantage in a short story of the pattern of the *Twice-Told Tales,* appears too slender to carry the weight of a novel. Indeed, this whole matter of elixirs and potions belongs to the fairy-tale period of taste, and the idea of a young man enabling himself to live forever by concocting and imbibing a magic draught has the misfortune of not appealing to our sense of reality or even to our sympathy. The weakness of *Septimius Felton* is that the reader cannot take the hero seriously—a fact of which there can be no better proof than the element of the ridiculous which inevitably mingles itself in the scene in which he entertains his lady-love with a prophetic sketch of his occupations during the successive centuries of his earthly immortality. I suppose the answer to my criticism is that this is allegorical, symbolic, ideal; but we feel that it symbolizes nothing substantial, and that the truth—whatever it may be—that it illustrates, is as moonshiny, to use Hawthorne's own expression, as the allegory itself. Another fault of the story is that a great historical

event—the war of the Revolution—is introduced in the first few pages, in order to supply the hero with a pretext for killing the young man from whose grave the flower of immortality is to sprout, and then drops out of the narrative altogether, not even forming a background to the sequel. It seems to me that Hawthorne should either have invented some other occasion for the death of his young officer, or else, having struck the note of the great public agitation which overhung his little group of characters, have been careful to sound it through the rest of his tale. I do wrong, however, to insist upon these things, for I fall thereby into the error of treating the work as if it had been cast into its ultimate form and acknowledged by the author. To avoid this error I shall make no other criticism of details, but content myself with saying that the idea and intention of the book appear, relatively speaking, feeble, and that even had it been finished it would have occupied a very different place in the public esteem from the writer's masterpieces.

The year 1864 brought with it for Hawthorne a sense of weakness and depression from which he had little relief during the four or five months that were left him of life. He had his engagement to produce *The Dolliver Romance,* which had been promised to the subscribers of the *Atlantic Monthly* (it was the first time he had undertaken to publish a work of fiction in monthly parts), but he was unable to write, and his consciousness of an unperformed task weighed upon him, and did little to dissipate his physical inertness. "I have not yet had courage to read the Dolliver proof sheet," he wrote to his publisher in December 1863; "but will set about it soon, though with terrible reluctance, such as I never felt before. I am most grateful to you," he went on, "for protecting me from that visitation of the elephant and his cub. If you happen to see Mr. ——, of L——, a young man who was here last summer, pray tell him anything that your conscience will let you, to induce him to spare me another visit, which I know he intended. I really am not well, and cannot be disturbed by strangers, without more suffering than it is worth-while to endure." A month later he was obliged to ask for a further postponement. "I am not

quite up to writing yet, but shall make an effort as soon as I see any hope of success. You ought to be thankful that (like most other brokendown authors) I do not pester you with decrepit pages, and insist upon your accepting them as full of the old spirit and vigor. That trouble perhaps still awaits you, after I shall have reached a further stage of decay. Seriously, my mind has, for the time, lost its temper and its fine edge, and I have an instinct that I had better keep quiet. Perhaps I shall have a new spirit of vigor if I wait quietly for it; perhaps not." The winter passed away, but the "new spirit of vigor" remained absent, and at the end of February he wrote to Mr. Fields that his novel had simply broken down, and that he should never finish it. "I hardly know what to say to the public about this abortive romance, though I know pretty well what the case will be. I shall never finish it. Yet it is not quite pleasant for an author to announce himself, or to be announced, as finally broken down as to his literary faculty. . . . I cannot finish it unless a great change comes over me; and if I make too great an effort to do so, it will be my death; not that I should care much for that, if I could fight the battle through and win it, thus ending a life of much smolder and a scanty fire in a blaze of glory. But I should smother myself in mud of my own making. . . . I am not low-spirited, nor fanciful, nor freakish, but look what seem to me realities in the face, and am ready to take whatever may come. If I could but go to England now, I think that the sea-voyage and the 'old Home' might set me all right."

But he was not to go to England; he started three months later upon a briefer journey, from which he never returned. His health was seriously disordered, and in April, according to a letter from Mrs. Hawthorne, printed by Mr. Fields, he had been "miserably ill." His feebleness was complete; he appears to have had no definite malady, but he was, according to the common phrase, failing. General Pierce proposed to him that they should make a little tour together among the mountains of New Hampshire, and Hawthorne consented, in the hope of getting some profit from the change of air. The northern New England spring is not the most

genial season in the world, and this was an indifferent substitute for the resource for which his wife had, on his behalf, expressed a wish—a visit to "some island in the Gulf Stream." He was not to go far; he only reached a little place called Plymouth, one of the stations of approach to the beautiful mountain scenery of New Hampshire, when, on the eighteenth of May, 1864, death overtook him. His companion, General Pierce, going into his room in the early morning, found that he had breathed his last during the night—had passed away, tranquilly, comfortably, without a sign or a sound, in his sleep. This happened at the hotel of the place—a vast white edifice, adjacent to the railway station, and entitled the Pemigiwasset House. He was buried at Concord, and many of the most distinguished men in the country stood by his grave.

He was a beautiful, natural, original genius, and his life had been singularly exempt from worldly preoccupations and vulgar efforts. It had been as pure, as simple, as unsophisticated, as his work. He had lived primarily in his domestic affections, which were of the tenderest kind; and then—without eagerness, without pretension, but with a great deal of quiet devotion—in his charming art. His work will remain; it is too original and exquisite to pass away; among the men of imagination he will always have his niche. No one has had just that vision of life, and no one has had a literary form that more successfully expressed his vision. He was not a moralist, and he was not simply a poet. The moralists are weightier, denser, richer, in a sense; the poets are more purely inconclusive and irresponsible. He combined in a singular degree the spontaneity of the imagination with a haunting care for moral problems. Man's conscience was his theme, but he saw it in the light of a creative fancy which added, out of its own substance, an interest, and, I may almost say, an importance.

THIS ARTICLE by Henry James on Howells was published in *Harper's Weekly* of June 19, 1886, and was never reprinted by James in any of his volumes of criticism. It is interesting particularly because it was written precisely at the moment when James, having gone to live in England, had definitely abandoned the United States as a subject or background for his fiction. He had just used up, apparently, the last remnants of his American material in *Impressions of a Cousin, A New England Winter,* and *The Bostonians;* and the third of these—the last long novel (till *The Ivory Tower* at the end of his life) of which the scene was to be laid in the United States—had just been coming out serially in *The Century.* His next two novels, *The Princess Casamassima* and *The Tragic Muse,* were exclusively concerned with the English and French; and in the fiction he was later to write after his unsuccessful experiment with the theater, he was to depart more and more from that field of simple realistic observation which he and Howells had worked together. This little appreciation of Howells turns out to have been a kind of farewell—as if he were handing over to Howells a department in which he had formerly worked.

The nice young American girl, so "innocent," so "extraordinarily good," with her suitors, her engagements, and her moral dilemmas—Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer—is being committed to the protection of his friend, who is comfortably established at home and whom he perfectly trusts to take care of her.

Howells and James remained friends all their lives. They had both—though Howells was seven years the older—made their debuts in the sixties, and Howells as editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* had published Henry James's first stories. They had been up against the same provincial audience. "Harry James has written another story, which I think admirable," Howells had written Charles Eliot Norton in 1867; "but I do not feel sure of the public any longer, since the *Nation* could not see the merit of *Poor Richard*. . . . I cannot doubt that James has every element of success in fiction. But I suspect that he must in a great degree create his audience. In the meantime I rather despise existing readers." He and James had used to talk about fiction together and read one another their stories when the Howellses had lived in Cambridge, on Sunday evenings "after our simple family supper . . . by the light of our kerosene globe-lamp"; and they had taken long walks through the streets, on one of which Henry James had talked at length about his Albany family as possible subjects for fiction. Howells watched James with solicitude for his interest in American material: "I am glad you like *The American*," he wrote John Hay in 1877. "The fact that Harry James could write likingly of such a fellow-countryman as Newman is the most hopeful thing in his literary history since *Gabrielle de Bergerac*." But he did not resent James's going abroad, and did not blame him for it. "The climate was kinder to him than ours," he wrote after James's death, in connection with the latter's ill-health, "and the life was kinder than his native life and his native land. In fact America was never kind to James. It was rude and harsh, unworthily and stupidly so, as we must more and more own, if we would be true to ourselves. We ought to be ashamed of our part in this; the nearest of his friends in Boston would say they liked him,

but they could not bear his fiction; and from the people, conscious of culture, throughout New England, especially the women, he had sometimes outright insult."

James, on his side, is always warm and admiring toward Howells. He will declare to his old friend in a letter of 1890 that *A Hazard of New Fortunes* is "simply prodigious, and I should think it would make you as happy as poor happiness will let us be, to turn off from one year to the other, and from a reservoir in daily domestic use, such a free, full, rich flood. . . . I seem to myself, in comparison, to fill mine with a teaspoon and obtain a trickle." This was written in Henry James's leanest period. He may well in such moments have envied Howells his easy command of his American material. But there was a kind of balance between them. If Howells had now the position of accredited social historian at home, Henry James had something else and must have known it. He probes the shallows of Howells' work when he mentions, in this little eassay, his "small perception of evil." James himself, after 1890, when he had recovered from his theatrical disappointments, went on to create a new kind of fiction in which he tended to disregard that social surface of life where Howells was always safest, and where even the personalities of the characters, always so solidly conceived by James, are seen through the equivocal medium of a rhythmic ruminative prose so much of the substance of emotion and dream that it has some of the qualities of poetry; and, equivocal or not, these later stories have a deeper psychological truth than Howells'.

In America through all this period James's novels were little read. The publication in 1901 of *The Sacred Fount,* which nobody understood, seems to have set off a protest against him: he was ridiculed, parodied, denounced. Howells went on praising his friend; he even defended *The Sacred Fount* and asserted that he understood it. The last literary act of his life, when he was dying in 1920 and had, as his daughter says, "to be kept under drugs to deaden his pain," was to work at an article on James *à propos* of the publication of his letters. This article was called *The American James,* and it went back to the days in Cambridge when

he and his friend had walked to Fresh Pond and "from whatever strangeness of his French past we now joined in the American present around the airtight stove which no doubt overheated our little parlor." The paper was "an effort," says Miss Howells, "to say that Howells had always felt that James was deeply and entirely American."

HENRY JAMES

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

As THE EXISTENCE of a man of letters (so far as the public is concerned with it) may be said to begin with his first appearance in literature, that of Mr. Howells, who was born at Martinsville, Ohio, in 1837, and spent his entire youth in his native state, dates properly from the publication of his delightful volume on *Venetian Life*—than which he has produced nothing since of a literary quality more pure—which he put forth in 1865, after his return from the consular post in the city of St. Mark which he had filled for four years. He had, indeed, before going to live in Venice, and during the autumn of 1860, published, in conjunction with his friend Mr. Piatt, a so-called "campaign" biography of Abraham Lincoln; but as this composition, which I have never seen, emanated probably more from a good Republican than from a suitor of the Muse, I mention it simply for the sake of exactitude, adding, however, that I have never heard of the Muse having taken it ill. When a man is a born artist, everything that happens to him confirms his perverse tendency; and it may be considered that the happiest thing that could have been invented on Mr. Howells' behalf was his residence in Venice at the most sensitive and responsive period of life; for

Venice, bewritten and bepainted as she has ever been, does nothing to you unless to persuade you that you also can paint, that you also can write. Her only fault is that she sometimes too flatteringly—for she is shameless in the exercise of such arts—addresses the remark to those who cannot. Mr. Howells could, fortunately, for his writing was painting as well in those days. The papers on Venice prove it, equally with the artistic whimsical chapters of the *Italian Journeys,* made up in 1867 from his notes and memories (the latter as tender as most glances shot eastward in working hours across the Atlantic) of the holidays and excursions which carried him occasionally away from his consulate.

The mingled freshness and irony of these things gave them an originality which has not been superseded, to my knowledge, by any impressions of European life from an American standpoint. At Venice Mr. Howells married a lady of artistic accomplishment and association, passed through the sharp alternations of anxiety and hope to which those who spent the long years of the civil war in foreign lands were inevitably condemned, and of which the effect was not rendered less wearing by the perusal of the London *Times* and the conversation of the British tourist. The irritation, so far as it proceeded from the latter source, may even yet be perceived in Mr. Howells' pages. He wrote poetry at Venice, as he had done of old in Ohio, and his poems were subsequently collected into two thin volumes, the fruit, evidently, of a rigorous selection. They have left more traces in the mind of many persons who read and enjoyed them than they appear to have done in the author's own. It is not nowadays as a cultivator of rhythmic periods that Mr. Howells most willingly presents himself. Everything in the evolution, as we must all learn to call it today, of a talent of this order is interesting, but one of the things that are most so is the separation that has taken place, in Mr. Howells' case, between its early and its later manner. There is nothing in *Silas Lapham,* or in *Doctor Breen's Practice,* or in *A Modern Instance,* or in *The Undiscovered Country,* to suggest that its author had at one time either wooed the lyric Muse or surrendered himself to those Italian initiations without which

we of other countries remain always, after all, more or less barbarians. It is often a good, as it is sometimes an evil, that one cannot disestablish one's past, and Mr. Howells cannot help having rhymed and romanced in deluded hours, nor would he, no doubt, if he could. The repudiation of the weakness which leads to such aberrations is more apparent than real, and the spirit which made him care a little for the poor factitious Old World and the superstition of "form" is only latent in pages which express a marked preference for the novelties of civilization and a perceptible mistrust of the purist. I hasten to add that Mr. Howells has had moments of reappreciation of Italy in later years, and has even taken the trouble to write a book (the magnificent volume on *Tuscan Cities*) to show it. Moreover, the exquisite tale *A Foregone Conclusion,* and many touches in the recent novel of *Indian Summer* (both this and the *Cities* the fruit of a second visit to Italy), sound the note of a charming inconsistency.

On his return from Venice he settled in the vicinity of Boston, and began to edit the *Atlantic Monthly,* accommodating himself to this grave complication with infinite tact and industry. He conferred further distinction upon the magazine; he wrote the fine series of *Suburban Sketches,* one of the least known of his productions, but one of the most perfect, and on Sunday afternoons he took a suburban walk —perfect also, no doubt, in its way. I know not exactly how long this phase of his career lasted, but I imagine that if he were asked, he would reply, "Oh, a hundred years." He was meant for better things than this—things better, I mean, than superintending the private life of even the most eminent periodical—but I am not sure that I would speak of this experience as a series of wasted years. They were years rather of economized talent, of observation and accumulation. They laid the foundation of what is most remarkable, or most, at least, the peculiar sign, in his effort as a novelist—his unerring sentiment of the American character. Mr. Howells knows more about it than anyone, and it was during this period of what we may suppose to have been rather perfunctory administration that he must have gathered many

of his impressions of it. An editor is in the nature of the case much exposed, so exposed as not to be protected even by the seclusion (the security to a superficial eye so complete) of a Boston suburb. His manner of contact with the world is almost violent, and whatever bruises he may confer, those he receives are the most telling, inasmuch as the former are distributed among many, and the latter all to be endured by one. Mr. Howells' accessibilities and sufferings were destined to fructify. Other persons have considered and discoursed upon American life, but no one, surely, has *felt* it so completely as he. I will not say that Mr. Howells feels it all equally, for are we not perpetually conscious how vast and deep it is?—but he is an authority upon many of those parts of it which are most representative.

He was still under the shadow of his editorship when, in the intervals of his letter writing and reviewing, he made his first cautious attempts in the walk of fiction. I say cautious, for in looking back nothing is more clear than that he had determined to advance only step by step. In his first story, *Their Wedding Journey,* there are only two persons, and in his next, *A Chance Acquaintance,* which contains one of his very happiest studies of a girl's character, the number is not lavishly increased.

In *A Foregone Conclusion,* where the girl again is admirable, as well as the young Italian priest, also a kind of maidenly figure, the actors are but four. Today Mr. Howells doesn't count, and confers life with a generous and unerring hand. If the profusion of forms in which it presents itself to him is remarkable, this is perhaps partly because he had the good fortune of not approaching the novel until he had lived considerably, until his inclination for it had ripened. His attitude was as little as possible that of the gifted young person who, at twenty, puts forth a work of imagination of which the merit is mainly in its establishing the presumption that the next one will be better. It is my impression that long after he was twenty he still cultivated the belief that the faculty of the novelist was not in him, and was even capable of producing certain unfinished chapters (in the candor of his good faith he would sometimes communicate them to

a listener) in triumphant support of this contention. He believed, in particular, that he could not make people talk, and such have been the revenges of time that a cynical critic might almost say of him today that he cannot make them keep silent. It was life itself that finally dissipated his doubts, life that reasoned with him and persuaded him. The feeling of life is strong in all his tales, and any one of them has this rare (always rarer) and indispensable sign of a happy origin, that it is an impression at firsthand. Mr. Howells is literary, on certain sides exquisitely so, though with a singular and not unamiable perversity he sometimes endeavors not to be; but his vision of the human scene is never a literary reminiscence, a reflection of books and pictures, of tradition and fashion and hearsay. I know of no English novelist of our hour whose work is so exclusively a matter of painting what he sees, and who is so sure of what he sees. People are always wanting a writer of Mr. Howells' temperament to see certain things that he doesn't (that he doesn't sometimes even want to), but I must content myself with congratulating the author of *A Modern Instance* and *Silas Lapham* on the admirable quality of his vision. The American life which he for the most part depicts is certainly neither very rich nor very fair, but it is tremendously positive, and as his manner of presenting it is as little as possible conventional, the reader can have no doubt about it. This is an immense luxury; the ingenuous character of the witness (I can give it no higher praise) deepens the value of the report.

Mr. Howells has gone from one success to another, has taken possession of the field, and has become copious without detriment to his freshness. I need not enumerate his works in their order, for, both in America and in England (where it is a marked feature of the growing curiosity felt about American life that they are constantly referred to for information and verification), they have long been in everybody's hands. Quietly and steadily they have become better and better; one may like some of them more than others, but it is noticeable that from effort to effort the author has constantly enlarged his scope. His work is of a kind of which

it is good that there should be much today—work of observation, of patient and definite notation. Neither in theory nor in practice is Mr. Howells a romancer; but the romancers can spare him; there will always be plenty of people to do their work. He has definite and downright convictions on the subject of the work that calls out to be done in opposition to theirs, and this fact is a source of much of the interest that he excites.

It is a singular circumstance that to know what one wishes to do should be, in the field of art, a rare distinction; but it is incontestable that, as one looks about in our English and American fiction, one does not perceive any very striking examples of a vivifying faith. There is no discussion of the great question of how best to write, no exchange of ideas, no vivacity nor variety of experiment. A vivifying faith Mr. Howells may distinctly be said to possess, and he conceals it so little as to afford every facility to those people who are anxious to prove that it is the wrong one. He is animated by a love of the common, the immediate, the familiar and vulgar elements of life, and holds that in proportion as we move into the rare and strange we become vague and arbitrary; that truth of representation, in a word, can be achieved only so long as it is in our power to test and measure it. He thinks scarcely anything too paltry to be interesting, that the small and the vulgar have been terribly neglected, and would rather see an exact account of a sentiment or a character he stumbles against every day than a brilliant evocation of a passion or a type he has never seen and does not even particularly believe in. He adores the real, the natural, the colloquial, the moderate, the optimistic, the domestic, and the democratic; looking askance at exceptions and perversities and superiorities, at surprising and incongruous phenomena in general. One must have seen a great deal before one concludes; the world is very large, and life is a mixture of many things; she by no means eschews the strange, and often risks combinations and effects that make one rub one's eyes. Nevertheless, Mr. Howells' standpoint is an excellent one for seeing a large part of the truth, and even if it were less advantageous, there would be a great deal

to admire in the firmness with which he has planted himself. He hates a "story," and (this private feat is not impossible) has probably made up his mind very definitely as to what the pestilent thing consists of. In this respect he is more logical than M. Émile Zola, who partakes of the same aversion, but has greater lapses as well as greater audacities. Mr. Howells hates an artificial fable and a *dénouement* that is pressed into the service; he likes things to occur as they occur in life, where the manner of a great many of them is not to occur at all. He has observed that heroic emotion and brilliant opportunity are not particularly interwoven with our days, and indeed, in the way of omission, he *has* often practiced in his pages a very considerable boldness. It has not, however, made what we find there any less interesting and less human.

The picture of American life on Mr. Howells' canvas is not of a dazzling brightness, and many readers have probably wondered why it is that (among a sensitive people) he has so successfully escaped the imputation of a want of patriotism. The manners he describes—the desolation of the whole social prospect in *A Modern Instance* is perhaps the strongest expression of those influences—are eminently of a nature to discourage the intending visitor, and yet the westward pilgrim continues to arrive, in spite of the Bartley Hubbards and the Laphams, and the terrible practices at the country hotel in *Doctor Breen,* and at the Boston boarding-house in *A Woman's Reason.* This tolerance of depressing revelations is explained partly, no doubt, by the fact that Mr. Howells' truthfulness imposes itself—the representation is so vivid that the reader accepts it as he accepts, in his own affairs, the mystery of fate—and partly by a very different consideration, which is simply that if many of his characters are disagreeable, almost all of them are extraordinarily good, and with a goodness which is a ground for national complacency. If American life is on the whole, as I make no doubt whatever, more innocent than that of any other country, nowhere is the fact more patent than in Mr. Howells' novels, which exhibit so constant a study of the actual and so small a perception of evil. His women, in particular,

are of the best—except, indeed, in the sense of being the best to live with. Purity of life, fineness of conscience, benevolence of motive, decency of speech, good nature, kindness, charity, tolerance (though, indeed, there is little but each other's manners for the people to tolerate), govern all the scene; the only immoralities are aberrations of thought, like that of Silas Lapham, or excesses of beer, like that of Bartley Hubbard. In the gallery of Mr. Howells' portraits there are none more living than the admirable, humorous images of those two ineffectual sinners. Lapham, in particular, is magnificent, understood down to the ground, inside and out—a creation which does Mr. Howells the highest honor. I do not say that the figure of his wife is as good as his own, only because I wish to say that it is as good as that of the minister's wife in the history of *Lemuel Barker,* which is unfolding itself from month to month at the moment I write. These two ladies are exhaustive renderings of the type of virtue that worries. But everything in *Silas Lapham* is superior—nothing more so than the whole picture of casual female youth and contemporaneous "engaging" one's self, in the daughters of the proprietor of the mineral paint.

This production had struck me as the author's high-water mark, until I opened the monthly sheets of *Lemuel Barker,* in which the art of imparting a palpitating interest to common things and unheroic lives is pursued (or is destined, apparently, to be pursued) to an even higher point. The four (or is it eight?) repeated "good mornings" between the liberated Lemuel and the shop-girl who has crudely been the cause of his being locked up by the police all night are a poem, an idyl, a trait of genius, and a compendium of American good nature. The whole episode is inimitable, and I know fellow-novelists of Mr. Howells' who would have given their eyes to produce that interchange of salutations, which only an American reader, I think, can understand.[1] Indeed, the only limitation, in general, to his extreme truthfulness is, I will not say his constant sense of the

[1]The title of this novel was *The Minister's Charge; or the Apprenticeship of Lemuel Barker.* Lemuel Barker is a country boy, who has just come to Boston and gets arrested by mistake as a purse-

comedy of life, for that is irresistible, but the verbal drollery of many of his people. It is extreme and perpetual, but I fear the reader will find it a venial sin. Theodore Colville, in *Indian Summer,* is so irrepressibly and happily facetious as to make one wonder whether the author is not prompting him a little, and whether he could be quite so amusing without help from outside. This criticism, however, is the only one I find it urgent to make, and Mr. Howells doubtless will not suffer from my saying that, being a humorist himself, he is strong in the representation of humorists. There are other reflections that I might indulge in if I had more space. I should like, for instance, to allude in passing, for purposes of respectful remonstrance, to a phrase that he suffered the other day to fall from his pen (in a periodical, but not in a novel), to the effect that the style of a work of fiction is a thing that matters less and less all the while. Why less and less? It seems to me as great a mistake to say so as it would be to say that it matters more and more. It is difficult to see how it can matter either less or more. The style of a novel is a part of the execution of a work of art; the execution

snatcher. He spends a night in jail, but the case against him is dismissed the next morning. The girl who has brought the charge is embarrassed at having got him into trouble. The dialogue that James speaks of follows. It is interesting to learn that it was the kind of thing that Henry James felt he could not do. E. W.

"She ha'n't got any call to feel bad about it," said Lemuel clumsily. "It was just a mistake." Then, not knowing what more to say, he said, being come to the outer door by this time, "Well, I wish you good morning."

"Well, good morning," said 'Manda Grier, and she thrust her elbow sharply into Statira Dudley's side, so that she also said faintly—

"Well, good morning!" She was fluent enough on the witness stand and in the police station, but now she could not find a word to say.

The three stood together on the threshold of the courthouse, not knowing how to get away from one another.

'Manda Grier put out her hand to Lemuel. He took it, and, "Well, good morning," he said again.

"Well, good morning," repeated 'Manda Grier.

Then Statira put out her hand, and she and Lemuel shook hands, and said together, "Well, good morning," and on these terms of high civility they parted. . . .

of a work of art is a part of its very essence, and that, it seems to me, must have mattered in all ages in exactly the same degree, and be destined always to do so. I can conceive of no state of civilization in which it shall not be deemed important, though of course there are states in which executants are clumsy. I should also venture to express a certain regret that Mr. Howells (whose style, in practice, after all, as I have intimated, treats itself to felicities which his theory perhaps would condemn) should appear increasingly to hold composition too cheap—by which I mean, should neglect the effect that comes from alternation, distribution, relief. He has an increasing tendency to tell his story altogether in conversations, so that a critical reader sometimes wishes, not that the dialogue might be suppressed (it is too good for that), but that it might be distributed, interspaced with narrative and pictorial matter. The author forgets sometimes to paint, to evoke the conditions and appearances, to build in the subject. He is doubtless afraid of doing these things in excess, having seen in other hands what disastrous effects that error may have; but all the same I cannot help thinking that the divinest thing in a valid novel is the compendious, descriptive, pictorial touch, *à la Daudet.*

It would be absurd to speak of Mr. Howells today in the encouraging tone that one would apply to a young writer who had given fine pledges, and one feels half guilty of that mistake if one makes a cheerful remark about his future. And yet we cannot pretend not to take a still more lively interest in his future than we have done in his past. It is hard to see how it can help being more and more fruitful, for his face is turned in the right direction, and his work is fed from sources which play us no tricks.

THIS LITTLE ESSAY by Mark Twain on Cooper, one of his rare pieces of writing on literary subjects, first appeared in the *North American Review* of July 1895. It has a certain importance as a landmark. What Mark Twain particularly disliked in Cooper was the wooliness of his style—an example of a kind of bad writing, pretentious, verbose, and slovenly, which has especially flourished in this country. Mark Twain himself had perfected a linear and limpid prose, which made use of the simplest words and a syntax consisting mainly of a series of simple declarative statements. This style had come primarily out of the vocabulary and rhythm of Mark Twain's own Western speech. He was substituting for the bad bookish styles of America a good colloquial one; and, though it was at first thought too homely for serious writing, it had eventually a distinguished development. We will meet it again in Sherwood Anderson, and Hemingway was to make it into an instrument of emotions and implications quite out of the range of Mark Twain. We see it today in its decadence in the hands of Hemingway's imitators.

It may be interesting to quote here an opinion on Cooper

from *The Responsibilities of a Novelist,* by Frank Norris, published in 1903. Frank Norris, a follower of Zola, was one of several Americans who were working at the beginning of the century against the taboos of the Howells era for a presentation in fiction of the hard and crude realities of American life. The passage occurs in an essay called *An American School of Fiction?*

"Cooper, you will say, was certainly American in attitude and choice of subject; none more so. None less so, none less American. As a novelist he is saturated with the romance of the contemporary English story-tellers. It is true that his background is American. But his heroes and heroines talk like the characters out of Bulwer in their most vehement moods, while his Indians stalk through all the melodramatic tableaux of Byron, and declaim in the periods of the border nobleman in the pages of Walter Scott."

Both Mark Twain and Norris, however, rather miss the point about Cooper. *The Leatherstocking Tales* have nothing to do with either Mark Twain's or Norris' kind of realism. D. H. Lawrence, in an essay which will be found further on, understands Cooper better. *The Deerslayer* is not a picture of actual life, but a kind of romantic myth like the stories of Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne. And though Cooper wrote clumsily, though he exasperates us by his faulty sense of movement and proportion—his conversations that go on for pages and seem to end exactly where they began—there is always a poet present who redeems the abominable craftsman. The description, at the beginning of *The Deerslayer,* for example, of Glimmerglass Lake, "as limpid as pure air," and of the solitary "castle" in the middle of it owes its power, like Melville's description of the Pacific or one of Poe's pieces on landscape-gardening, to an emotional content which has charged the object and transformed it into a symbol. And the action does have a reality which we recognize and accept as we read: the reality of a dream full of danger.

MARK TWAIN

FENIMORE COOPER'S LITERARY OFFENSES

The Pathfinder and *The Deerslayer* stand at the head of Cooper's novels as artistic creations. There are others of his works which contain parts as perfect as are to be found in these, and scenes even more thrilling. Not one can be compared with either of them as a finished whole.

The defects in both of these tales are comparatively slight. They were pure works of art.—PROF. LOUNSBURY.

The five tales reveal an extraordinary fullness of invention. . . . One of the very greatest characters in fiction, Natty Bumppo. . . .

The craft of the woodsman, the tricks of the trapper, all the delicate art of the forest, were familiar to Cooper from his youth up.—PROF. BRANDER MATTHEWS.

Cooper is the greatest artist in the domain of romantic fiction yet produced by America.—WILKIE COLLINS.

IT SEEMS TO ME that it was far from right for the Professor of English Literature in Yale, the Professor of English Literature in Columbia, and Wilkie Collins to deliver opinions on Cooper's literature without having read some of it. It would have been much more decorous to keep silent and let persons talk who have read Cooper.

Cooper's art has some defects. In one place in *Deerslayer*, and in the restricted space of two thirds of a page, Cooper has scored 114 offenses against literary art out of a possible 115. It breaks the record.

There are nineteen rules governing literary art in the domain of romantic fiction—some say twenty-two. In *Deerslayer* Cooper violated eighteen of them. These eighteen require:

1. That a tale shall accomplish something and arrive somewhere. But the *Deerslayer* tale accomplishes nothing and arrives in air.

2. They require that the episodes of a tale shall be necessary parts of the tale, and shall help to develop it. But as the *Deerslayer* tale is not a tale, and accomplishes nothing and arrives nowhere, the episodes have no rightful place in the work, since there was nothing for them to develop.

3. They require that the personages in a tale shall be alive, except in the case of corpses, and that always the reader shall be able to tell the corpses from the others. But this detail has often been overlooked in the *Deerslayer* tale.

4. They require that the personages in a tale, both dead and alive, shall exhibit a sufficient excuse for being there. But this detail has also been overlooked in the *Deerslayer* tale.

5. They require that when the personages of a tale deal in conversation, the talk shall sound like human talk, and be talk such as human beings would be likely to talk in the given circumstances, and have a discoverable meaning, also a discoverable purpose, and a show of relevancy, and remain in the neighborhood of the subject in hand, and be interesting to the reader, and help out the tale, and stop when the people cannot think of anything more to say. But this requirement has been ignored from the beginning of the *Deerslayer* to the end of it.

6. They require that when the author describes the character of a personage in his tale, the conduct and conversation of that personage shall justify said description. But this law gets little or no attention in the *Deerslayer* tale, as Natty Bumppo's case will amply prove.

7. They require that when a personage talks like an illustrated, gilt-edged, tree-calf, hand-tooled, seven-dollar Friendship's Offering in the beginning of a paragraph, he shall not talk like a negro minstrel in the end of it. But this rule is flung down and danced upon in the *Deerslayer* tale.

8. They require that crass stupidities shall not be played upon the reader as "the craft of the woodsman, the delicate art of the forest," by either the author or the people in the tale. But this rule is persistently violated in the *Deerslayer* tale.

9. They require that the personages of a tale shall confine themselves to possibilities and let miracles alone; or, if they venture a miracle, the author must so plausibly set it forth as to make it look possible and reasonable. But these rules are not respected in the *Deerslayer* tale.

10. They require that the author shall make the reader feel a deep interest in the personages of his tale and in their fate; and that he shall make the reader love the good people in the tale and hate the bad ones. But the reader of the *Deerslayer* tale dislikes the good people in it, is indifferent to the others, and wishes they would all get drowned together.

11. They require that the characters in a tale shall be so clearly defined that the reader can tell beforehand what each will do in a given emergency. But in the *Deerslayer* tale this rule is vacated.

In addition to these large rules there are some little ones. These require that the author shall

12. *Say* what he is proposing to say, not merely come near it.
13. Use the right word, not its second cousin.
14. Eschew surplusage.
15. Not omit necessary details.
16. Avoid slovenliness of form.
17. Use good grammar.
18. Employ a simple and straightforward style.

Even these seven are coldly and persistently violated in the *Deerslayer* tale.

Cooper's gift in the way of invention was not a rich endowment; but such as it was he liked to work it, he was pleased with the effects, and indeed he did some quite sweet things with it. In his little box of stage properties he kept six or eight cunning devices, tricks, artifices for his savages and woodsmen to deceive and circumvent each other with, and he was never so happy as when he was working these innocent things and seeing them go. A favorite one was to make a moccasined person tread in the tracks of the moc-

casined enemy, and thus hide his own trail. Cooper wore out barrels and barrels of moccasins in working that trick. Another stage property that he pulled out of his box pretty frequently was his broken twig. He prized his broken twig above all the rest of his effects, and worked it the hardest. It is a restful chapter in any book of his when somebody doesn't step on a dry twig and alarm all the reds and whites for two hundred yards around. Every time a Cooper person is in peril, and absolute silence is worth four dollars a minute, he is sure to step on a dry twig. There may be a hundred handier things to step on, but that wouldn't satisfy Cooper. Cooper requires him to turn out and find a dry twig; and if he can't do it, go and borrow one. In fact, the Leatherstocking Series ought to have been called the Broken Twig Series.

I am sorry there is not room to put in a few dozen instances of the delicate art of the forest, as practiced by Natty Bumppo and some of the other Cooperian experts. Perhaps we may venture two or three samples. Cooper was a sailor—a naval officer; yet he gravely tells us how a vessel, driving towards a lee shore in a gale, is steered for a particular spot by her skipper because he knows of an *undertow* there which will hold her back against the gale and save her. For just pure woodcraft, or sailorcraft, or whatever it is, isn't that neat? For several years Cooper was daily in the society of artillery, and he ought to have noticed that when a cannon-ball strikes the ground it either buries itself or skips a hundred feet or so; skips again a hundred feet or so—and so on, till finally it gets tired and rolls. Now in one place he loses some "females"—as he always calls women—in the edge of a wood near a plain at night in a fog, on purpose to give Bumppo a chance to show off the delicate art of the forest before the reader. These mislaid people are hunting for a fort. They hear a cannon-blast, and a cannon-ball presently comes rolling into the wood and stops at their feet. To the females this suggests nothing. The case is very different with the admirable Bumppo. I wish I may never know peace again if he doesn't strike out promptly and *follow the track* of that cannon-ball across the plain through

the dense fog and find the fort. Isn't it a daisy? If Cooper had any real knowledge of Nature's ways of doing things, he had a most delicate art in concealing the fact. For instance: one of his acute Indian experts, Chingachgook (pronounced Chicago, I think) has lost the trail of a person he is tracking through the forest. Apparently that trail is hopelessly lost. Neither you nor I could ever have guessed out the way to find it. It was very different with Chicago. Chicago was not stumped for long. He turned a running stream out of its course, and there, in the slush in its old bed, were that person's moccasin-tracks. The current did not wash them away, as it would have done in all other like cases—no, even the eternal laws of Nature have to vacate when Cooper wants to put up a delicate job of woodcraft on the reader.

We must be a little wary when Brander Matthews tells us that Cooper's books "reveal an extraordinary fulness of invention." As a rule, I am quite willing to accept Brander Matthews' literary judgments and applaud his lucid and graceful phrasing of them; but that particular statement needs to be taken with a few tons of salt. Bless your heart, Cooper hadn't any more invention than a horse; and I don't mean a high-class horse, either; I mean a clothes-horse. It would be very difficult to find a really clever "situation" in Cooper's books, and still more difficult to find one of any kind which he has failed to render absurd by his handling of it. Look at the episodes of "the caves"; and at the celebrated scuffle between Maqua and those others on the tableland a few days later; and at Hurry Harry's queer water transit from the castle to the ark; and at Deerslayer's half-hour with his first corpse, and at the quarrel between Hurry Harry and Deerslayer later; and at—— But choose for yourself; you can't go amiss.

If Cooper had been an observer his inventive faculty would have worked better; not more interestingly, but more rationally, more plausibly. Cooper's proudest creations in the way of "situations" suffer noticeably from the absence of the observer's protecting gift. Cooper's eye was splendidly inaccurate. Cooper seldom saw anything correctly. He saw

nearly all things as through a glass eye, darkly. Of course a man who cannot see the commonest little every-day matters accurately is working at a disadvantage when he is constructing a "situation." In the *Deerslayer* tale Cooper has a stream which is fifty feet wide where it flows out of a lake; it presently narrows to twenty as it meanders along for no given reason, and yet when a stream acts like that it ought to be required to explain itself. Fourteen pages later the width of the brook's outlet from the lake has suddenly shrunk thirty feet, and become "the narrowest part of the stream." This shrinkage is not accounted for. The stream has bends in it, a sure indication that it has alluvial banks and cuts them; yet these bends are only thirty and fifty feet long. If Cooper had been a nice and punctilious observer he would have noticed that the bends were oftener nine hundred feet long than short of it.

Cooper made the exit of that stream fifty feet wide, in the first place, for no particular reason; in the second place, he narrowed it to less than twenty to accommodate some Indians. He bends a "sapling" to the form of an arch over this narrow passage, and conceals six Indians in its foliage. They are "laying" for a settler's scow or ark which is coming up the stream on its way to the lake; it is being hauled against the stiff current by a rope whose stationary end is anchored in the lake; its rate of progress cannot be more than a mile an hour. Cooper describes the ark, but pretty obscurely. In the matter of dimensions "it was little more than a modern canal boat." Let us guess, then, that it was about one hundred and forty feet long. It was of "greater breadth than common." Let us guess, then, that it was about sixteen feet wide. This leviathan had been prowling down bends which were but a third as long as itself, and scraping between banks where it had only two feet of space to spare on each side. We cannot too much admire this miracle. A low-roofed log dwelling occupies "two-thirds of the ark's length"—a dwelling ninety feet long and sixteen feet wide, let us say—a kind of vestibule train. The dwelling has two rooms—each forty-five feet long and sixteen feet wide, let us guess. One of them is the bedroom of the Hutter girls,

Judith and Hetty; the other is the parlor in the daytime, at night it is papa's bedchamber. The ark is arriving at the stream's exit now, whose width has been reduced to less than twenty feet to accommodate the Indians—say to eighteen. There is a foot to spare on each side of the boat. Did the Indians notice that there was going to be a tight squeeze there? Did they notice that they could make money by climbing down out of that arched sapling and just stepping aboard when the ark scraped by? No, other Indians would have noticed these things, but Cooper's Indians never notice anything. Cooper thinks they are marvelous creatures for noticing, but he was almost always in error about his Indians. There was seldom a sane one among them.

The ark is one hundred and forty feet long; the dwelling is ninety feet long. The idea of the Indians is to drop softly and secretly from the arched sapling to the dwelling as the ark creeps along under it at the rate of a mile an hour, and butcher the family. It will take the ark a minute and a half to pass under. It will take the ninety-foot dwelling a minute to pass under. Now, then, what did the six Indians do? It would take you thirty years to guess, and even then you would have to give it up, I believe. Therefore, I will tell you what the Indians did. Their chief, a person of quite extraordinary intellect for a Cooper Indian, warily watched the canal-boat as it squeezed along under him, and when he had got his calculations fined down to exactly the right shade, as he judged, he let go and dropped. And *missed the house!* That is actually what he did. He missed the house, and landed in the stern of the scow. It was not much of a fall, yet it knocked him silly. He lay there unconscious. If the house had been ninety-seven feet long he would have made the trip. The fault was Cooper's, not his. The error lay in the construction of the house. Cooper was no architect.

There still remained in the roost five Indians. The boat has passed under and is now out of their reach. Let me explain what the five did—you would not be able to reason it out for yourself. No. 1 jumped for the boat, but fell in the water astern of it. Then No. 2 jumped for the boat, but fell in the water still farther astern of it. Then No. 3 jumped for

the boat, and fell a good way astern of it. Then No. 4 jumped for the boat, and fell in the water *away* astern. Then even No. 5 made a jump for the boat—for he was a Cooper Indian. In the matter of intellect, the difference between a Cooper Indian and the Indian that stands in front of the cigar-shop is not spacious. The scow episode is really a sublime burst of invention; but it does not thrill, because the inaccuracy of the details throws a sort of air of fictitiousness and general improbability over it. This comes of Cooper's inadequacy as an observer.

The reader will find some examples of Cooper's high talent for inaccurate observation in the account of the shooting-match in *The Pathfinder.*

"A common wrought nail was driven lightly into the target, its head having been first touched with paint."

The color of the paint is not stated—an important omission, but Cooper deals freely in important omissions. No, after all, it was not an important omission; for this nail-head is *a hundred yards from* the marksmen, and could not be seen by them at that distance, no matter what its color might be. How far can the best eyes see a common house-fly? A hundred yards? It is quite impossible. Very well; eyes that cannot see a house-fly that is a hundred yards away cannot see an ordinary nail-head at that distance, for the size of the two objects is the same. It takes a keen eye to see a fly or a nailhead at fifty yards—one hundred and fifty feet. Can the reader do it?

The nail was lightly driven, its head painted, and game called. Then the Cooper miracles began. The bullet of the first marksman chipped an edge of the nail-head; the next man's bullet drove the nail a little way into the target—and removed all the paint. Haven't the miracles gone far enough now? Not to suit Cooper; for the purpose of this whole scheme is to show off his prodigy, Deerslayer-Hawk-eye-Long-Rifle-Leather-Stocking-Pathfinder-Bumppo before the ladies.

"'Be all ready to clench it, boys!' cried out Pathfinder, stepping into his friend's tracks the instant they were vacant. 'Never mind a new nail; I can see that, though the paint

is gone, and what I can see I can hit at a hundred yards, though it were only a mosquito's eye. Be ready to clench!'

"The rifle cracked, the bullet sped its way, and the head of the nail was buried in the wood, covered by the pieces of flattened lead."

There, you see, is a man who could hunt flies with a rifle, and command a ducal salary in a Wild West show today if we had him back with us.

The recorded feat is certainly surprising just as it stands; but it is not surprising enough for Cooper. Cooper adds a touch. He has made Pathfinder do this miracle with another man's rifle; and not only that, but Pathfinder did not even have the advantage of loading it himself. He had everything against him, and yet he made the impossible shot; and not only made it, but did it with absolute confidence, saying, "Be ready to clench." Now a person like that would have undertaken that same feat with a brickbat, and with Cooper to help he would have achieved it, too.

Pathfinder showed off handsomely that day before the ladies. His very first feat was a thing which no Wild West show can touch. He was standing with the group of marksmen, observing—a hundred yards from the target, mind; one Jasper raised his rifle and drove the center of the bull's-eye. Then the Quartermaster fired. The target exhibited no result this time. There was a laugh. "It's a dead miss," said Major Lundie. Pathfinder waited an impressive moment or two; then said, in that calm, indifferent, know-it-all way of his, "No, Major, he has covered Jasper's bullet, as will be seen if anyone will take the trouble to examine the target."

Wasn't it remarkable! How *could* he see that little pellet fly through the air and enter that distant bullet-hole? Yet that is what he did; for nothing is impossible to a Cooper person. Did any of those people have any deep-seated doubts about this thing? No; for that would imply sanity, and these were all Cooper people.

"The respect for Pathfinder's skill and for his *quickness and accuracy of sight* [the italics are mine] was so profound and general, that the instant he made this declaration the spectators began to distrust their own opinions, and a dozen

rushed to the target in order to ascertain the fact. There, sure enough, it was found that the Quartermaster's bullet had gone through the hole made by Jasper's, and that, too, so accurately as to require a minute examination to be certain of the circumstance, which, however, was soon clearly established by discovering one bullet over the other in the stump against which the target was placed."

They made a "minute" examination; but never mind, how could they know that there were two bullets in that hole without digging the latest one out? For neither probe nor eyesight could prove the presence of any more than one bullet. Did they dig? No; as we shall see. It is the Pathfinder's turn now; he steps out before the ladies, takes aim, and fires.

But, alas! here is a disappointment; an incredible, an unimaginable disappointment—for the target's aspect is unchanged; there is nothing there but that same old bullet hole!

"'If one dared to hint at such a thing,' cried Major Duncan, 'I should say that the Pathfinder has also missed the target!'"

As nobody had missed it yet, the "also" was not necessary; but never mind about that, for the Pathfinder is going to speak.

"'No, no, Major,' said he, confidently, 'that *would* be a risky declaration. I didn't load the piece, and can't say what was in it; but if it was lead, you will find the bullet driving down those of the Quartermaster and Jasper, else is not my name Pathfinder.'

"A shout from the target announced the truth of this assertion."

Is the miracle sufficient as it stands? Not for Cooper. The Pathfinder speaks again, as he "now slowly advances towards the stage occupied by the females":

"'That's not all, boys, that's not all; if you find the target touched at all, I'll own to a miss. The Quartermaster cut the wood, but you'll find no wood cut by that last messenger.'"

The miracle is at last complete. He knew—doubtless *saw*—at the distance of a hundred yards—that his bullet had passed into the hole *without fraying the edges*. There were

now three bullets in that one hole—three bullets embedded processionally in the body of the stump back of the target. Everybody knew this—somehow or other—and yet nobody had dug any of them out to make sure. Cooper is not a close observer, but he is interesting. He is certainly always that, no matter what happens. And he is more interesting when he is not noticing what he is about than when he is. This is a considerable merit.

The conversations in the Cooper books have a curious sound in our modern ears. To believe that such talk really ever came out of people's mouths would be to believe that there was a time when time was of no value to a person who thought he had something to say; when it was the custom to spread a two-minute remark out to ten; when a man's mouth was a rolling-mill, and busied itself all day long in turning four-foot pigs of thought into thirty-foot bars of conversational railroad iron by attenuation; when subjects were seldom faithfully stuck to, but the talk wandered all around and arrived nowhere; when conversations consisted mainly of irrelevancies, with here and there a relevancy, a relevancy with an embarrassed look, as not being able to explain how it got there.

Cooper was certainly not a master in the construction of dialogue. Inaccurate observation defeated him here as it defeated him in so many other enterprises of his. He even failed to notice that the man who talks corrupt English six days in the week must and will talk it on the seventh, and can't help himself. In the *Deerslayer* story he lets Deerslayer talk the showiest kind of book-talk sometimes, and at other times the basest of base dialects. For instance, when someone asks him if he has a sweetheart, and if so, where she abides, this is his majestic answer:

"'She's in the forest—hanging from the boughs of the trees, in a soft rain—in the dew on the open grass—the clouds that float about in the blue heavens—the birds that sing in the woods—the sweet springs where I slake my thirst—and in all the other glorious gifts that come from God's Providence!'"

And he preceded that, a little before, with this:

"'It consarns me as all things that touches a fri'nd consarns a fri'nd.'"

And this is another of his remarks:

"'If I was Injin born, now, I might tell of this, or carry in the scalp and boast of the expl'ite afore the whole tribe; or if my inimy had only been a bear'"—and so on.

We cannot imagine such a thing as a veteran Scotch commander-in-chief comporting himself in the field like a windy, melodramatic actor, but Cooper could. On one occasion Alice and Cora were being chased by the French through a fog in the neighborhood of their father's fort:

"'*Point de quartier aux coquins!*' cried an eager pursuer, who seemed to direct the operations of the enemy.

"'Stand firm and be ready, my gallant 60ths!' suddenly exclaimed a voice above them; 'wait to see the enemy; fire low, and sweep the glacis.'

"'Father! father!' exclaimed a piercing cry from out the mist; 'it is I! Alice! thy own Elsie! Spare, O! save your daughters!'

"'Hold!' shouted the former speaker, in the awful tones of parental agony, the sound reaching even to the woods, and rolling back in solemn echo. ''Tis she! God has restored me my children! Throw open the sally-port; to the field, 60ths, to the field! Pull not a trigger, lest ye kill my lambs! Drive off these dogs of France with your steel!'"

Cooper's word-sense was singularly dull. When a person has a poor ear for music he will flat and sharp right along without knowing it. He keeps near the tune, but it is *not* the tune. When a person has a poor ear for words, the result is a literary flatting and sharping; you perceive what he is intending to say, but you also perceive that he doesn't *say* it. This is Cooper. He was not a word-musician. His ear was satisfied with the *approximate* word. I will furnish some circumstantial evidence in support of this charge. My instances are gathered from half-a-dozen pages of the tale called *Deerslayer*. He uses *verbal*, for *oral; precision*, for *facility; phenomena*, for *marvels; necessary*, for *predetermined; unsophisticated*, for *primitive; preparation*, for *expectancy; rebuked*, for *subdued; dependent on*, for *resulting*

from; fact, for *condition; fact,* for *conjecture; precaution,* for *caution; explain,* for *determine; mortified,* for *disappointed; meretricious,* for *factitious; materially,* for *considerably; decreasing,* for *deepening; increasing,* for *disappearing; embedded,* for *enclosed; treacherous,* for *hostile; stood,* for *stooped; softened,* for *replaced; rejoined,* for *remarked; situation,* for *condition; different,* for *differing; insensible,* for *insentient; brevity,* for *celerity; distrusted,* for *suspicious; mental imbecility,* for *imbecility; eyes,* for *sight; counteracting,* for *opposing; funeral obsequies,* for *obsequies.*

There have been daring people in the world who claimed that Cooper could write English, but they are all dead now—all dead but Lounsbury. I don't remember that Lounsbury makes the claim in so many words, still he makes it, for he says that *Deerslayer* is a "pure work of art." Pure, in that connection, means faultless—faultless in all details—and language is a detail. If Mr. Lounsbury had only compared Cooper's English with the English which he writes himself—but it is plain that he didn't; and so it is likely that he imagines until this day that Cooper's is as clean and compact as his own. Now I feel sure, deep down in my heart, that Cooper wrote about the poorest English that exists in our language, and that the English of *Deerslayer* is the very worst that even Cooper ever wrote.

I may be mistaken, but it does seem to me that *Deerslayer* is not a work of art in any sense; it does seem to me that it is destitute of every detail that goes to the making of a work of art; in truth, it seems to me that *Deerslayer* is just simply a literary *delirium tremens.*

A work of art? It has no invention; it has no order, system, sequence, or result; it has no lifelikeness, no thrill, no stir, no seeming of reality; its characters are confusedly drawn, and by their acts and words they prove that they are not the sort of people the author claims that they are; its humor is pathetic; its pathos is funny; its conversations are—oh! indescribable; its love-scenes odious; its English a crime against the language.

Counting these out, what is left is Art. I think we must all admit that.

*A Cooper Indian who has been washed is a poor thing, and commonplace; it is the Cooper Indian in his paint that thrills. Cooper's extra words are Cooper's paint—his paint, his feathers, his tomahawk, his warwhoop.

In the two-thirds of a page elsewhere referred to, wherein Cooper scored 114 literary transgressions out of a possible 115, he appears before us with all his things on. As follows, the italics are mine—they indicate violations of Rule 14:

In a minute he was once more fastened to the tree, *a helpless object of any insult or wrong that might be offered. So eagerly did every one now act, that nothing was said.* The fire was immediately lighted *in the pile, and the end of all was anxiously expected.*

It was not the intention of the Hurons *absolutely* to destroy *the life of* their victim by *means of* fire. They designed merely to put his *physical fortitude* to the severest proofs it could endure, short of that extremity. In the end, they fully intended to carry his scalp into their village, but it was their wish first to break down his resolution, and to reduce him to *the level of* a complaining sufferer. With this view, the pile of brush *and branches* had been placed at a *proper* distance, *or one* at which it was thought the heat would soon become intolerable, though *it might* not *be* immediately dangerous. *As often happened, however, on these occasions,* this distance had been miscalculated, and the flames *began to wave their forked tongues in a proximity to the face of the victim that* would have proved fatal in another instant had not Hetty rushed through the crowd, armed with a stick, and scattered the blazing pile *in a dozen directions.* More than one hand was raised to strike the *presumptuous* intruder to the earth; but the chiefs prevented the blows by reminding their *irritated* followers of the state of her mind. Hetty, herself,

* Since the first edition of this volume, some further unpublished pages of Mark Twain's essay have been found among Mark Twain's papers by Mr. Bernard De Voto, who published them in the *New England Quarterly* of September 1946. This new material follows here (copyright 1946 by the Mark Twain Company). The first section of the essay, Mr. De Voto tells us, appears in the manuscript "as Number I in a series called *Studies in Literary Criticism,* which were supposed to have been 'prepared for last term by Mark Twain, M.A., Professor of Belles Lettres in the Veterinary College of Arizona.'" The second section is evidently unfinished. E.W.

was insensible to the risk she ran; but, *as soon as she had performed this bold act, she* stood looking about her in frowning resentment, as if to rebuke the *crowd of attentive* savages *for their cruelty.*

'God bless you, dear*est sister,* for that brave and ready act,' murmured Judith, *herself unnerved so much as to be incapable of exertion;* 'Heaven itself has sent you on its holy errand.'

Number of words, 320; necessary ones, 220; words wasted by the generous spendthrift, 100.

In our day those 100 unnecessary words would have to come out. We will take them out presently and make the episode approximate the modern requirement in the matter of compression.

If we may consider each unnecessary word in Cooper's report of that barbecue a separate and individual violation of Rule 14, then that rule is violated 100 times in that report. Other rules are violated in it. Rule 12, two instances; [1] Rule 13, three instances; [2] Rule 15, one instance; [3] Rule 16, two instances; [4] Rule 17, one or two little instances; [5] the Report in its entirety is an offense against Rule 18 [6]—also against Rule 16. Total score, about 114 violations of the laws of literary art out of a possible 115.

Let us now bring forward the Report again, with the most of the unnecessary words knocked out. By departing from Cooper's style and manner, all the facts could be put into 150 words, and the effects heightened at the same time —this is manifest, of course—but that would not be desirable. We must stick to Cooper's language as closely as we can:

In a minute he was once more fastened to the tree. The fire was immediately lighted. It was not the intention of the Hurons to destroy Deerslayer's life by fire; they designed merely to put

[1] Rule 12: "*Say* what he is proposing to say, not merely come near it."

[2] Rule 13: "Use the right word, not its second cousin."

[3] Rule 15: "Not omit necessary details."

[4] Rule 16: "Avoid slovenliness of form."

[5] Rule 17: "Use good grammar."

[6] Rule 18: "Employ a simple and straightforward style."

his fortitude to the severest proofs it could endure short of that extremity. In the end, they fully intended to take his life, but it was their wish first to break down his resolution and reduce him to a complaining sufferer. With this view the pile of brush had been placed at a distance at which it was thought the heat would soon become intolerable, without being immediately dangerous. But this distance had been miscalculated; the fire was so close to the victim that he would have been fatally burned in another instant if Hetty had not rushed through the crowd and scattered the brands with a stick. More than one Indian raised his hand to strike her down but the chiefs saved her by reminding them of the state of her mind. Hetty herself was insensible to the risk she ran; she stood looking about her in frowning resentment, as if to rebuke the savages for their cruelty.

'God bless you, dear!' cried Judith, 'for that brave and ready act. Heaven itself has sent you on its holy errand, and you shall have a chromo.'

Number of words, 220—and the facts are all in.

II

In studying Cooper you will find it profitable to study him in detail—word by word, sentence by sentence. For every sentence of his is interesting. Interesting because of its make-up; its peculiar make-up, its original make-up. Let us examine a sentence or two, and see. Here is a passage from Chapter XI of *The Last of the Mohicans,* one of the most famous and most admired of Cooper's books:

Notwithstanding the swiftness of their flight, one of the Indians had found an opportunity to strike a straggling fawn with an arrow, and had borne the more preferable fragments of the victim, patiently on his shoulders, to the stopping-place. Without any aid from the science of cookery, he was immediately employed, in common with his fellows, in gorging himself with this digestible sustenance. Magua alone sat apart, without participating in the revolting meal, and apparently buried in the deepest thought.

This little paragraph is full of matter for reflection and inquiry. The remark about the swiftness of the flight was

unnecessary, as it was merely put in to forestall the possible objection of some over-particular reader that the Indian couldn't have found the needed "opportunity" while fleeing swiftly. The reader would not have made that objection. He would care nothing about having that small matter explained and justified. But that is Cooper's way; frequently he will explain and justify little things that do not need it and then make up for this by as frequently failing to explain important ones that do need it. For instance he allowed that astute and cautious person, Deerslayer-Hawkeye, to throw his rifle heedlessly down and leave it lying on the ground where some hostile Indians would presently be sure to find it—a rifle prized by that person above all things else in the earth—and the reader gets no word of explanation of that strange act. There was a reason, but it wouldn't bear exposure. Cooper meant to get a fine dramatic effect out of the finding of the rifle by the Indians, and he accomplished this at the happy time; but all the same, Hawkeye could have hidden the rifle in a quarter of a minute where the Indians could not have found it. Cooper couldn't think of any way to explain why Hawkeye didn't do that, so he just shirked the difficulty and did not explain at all. In another place Cooper allowed Heyward to shoot at an Indian with a pistol that wasn't loaded—and grants us not a word of explanation as to how the man did it.

No, the remark about the swiftness of their flight was not necessary; neither was the one which said that the Indian found an opportunity; neither was the one which said he *struck* the fawn; neither was the one which explained that it was a "straggling" fawn; neither was the one which said the striking was done with an arrow; neither was the one which said the Indian bore the "fragments"; nor the remark that they were preferable fragments; nor the remark that they were *more* preferable fragments; nor the explanation that they were fragments of the "victim"; nor the over-particular explanation that specifies the Indian's "shoulders" as the part of him that supported the fragments; nor the statement that the Indian bore the fragments patiently. None of those details has any value. We don't care what

the Indian struck the fawn with; we don't care whether it was a straggling fawn or an unstraggling one; we don't care which fragments the Indian saved; we don't care why he saved the "more" preferable ones when the merely preferable ones would have amounted to just the same thing and couldn't have been told from the more preferable ones by anybody, dead or alive; we don't care whether the Indian carried them on his shoulders or in his handkerchief; and finally, we don't care whether he carried them patiently or struck for higher pay and shorter hours. We are indifferent to that Indian and all his affairs.

There was only one fact in that long sentence that was worth stating, and it could have been squeezed into these few words—and with advantage to the narrative, too: "During the flight one of the Indians had killed a fawn, and he brought it into camp." You will notice that "During the flight one of the Indians had killed a fawn and he brought it into camp," is more straightforward and business-like, and less mincing and smirky, than it is to say "Notwithstanding the swiftness of their flight, one of the Indians had found an opportunity to strike a straggling fawn with an arrow, and had borne the more preferable fragments of the victim, patiently on his shoulders, to the stopping-place." You will notice that the form "During the flight one of the Indians had killed a fawn and he brought it into camp" holds up its chin and moves to the front with the steady stride of a grenadier, whereas the form "Notwithstanding the swiftness of their flight, one of the Indians had found an opportunity to strike a straggling fawn with an arrow, and had borne the more preferable fragments of the victim, patiently on his shoulders, to the stopping-place," simpers along with an airy, complacent, monkey-with-a-parasol gait which is not suited to the transportation of raw meat.

I beg to remind you that an author's way of setting forth a matter is called his Style, and that an author's style is a main part of his equipment for business. The style of some authors has variety in it, but Cooper's style is remarkable for the absence of this feature. Cooper's style is always grand and stately and noble. Style may be likened to an

army, the author to its general, the book to the campaign. Some authors proportion an attacking force to the strength or weakness, the importance or unimportance, of the object to be attacked; but Cooper doesn't. It doesn't make any difference to Cooper whether the object of attack is a hundred thousand men or a cow; he hurls his entire force against it. He comes thundering down with all his battalions at his back, cavalry in the van, artillery on the flanks, infantry massed in the middle, forty bands braying, a thousand banners streaming in the wind; and whether the object be an army or a cow you will see him come marching sublimely in, at the end of the engagement, bearing the more preferable fragments of the victim patiently on his shoulders, to the stopping-place. Cooper's style is grand, awful, beautiful; but it is sacred to Cooper, it is his very own, and no student of the Veterinary College of Arizona will be allowed to filch it from him.

In one of his chapters Cooper throws an ungentle slur at one Gamut because he is not exact enough in his choice of words. But Cooper has that failing himself, as was remarked in our first Lecture. If the Indian had "struck" the fawn with a brick, or with a club, or with his fist, no one could find fault with the word used. And one cannot find much fault when he strikes it with an arrow; still it sounds affected, and it might have been a little better to lean to simplicity and say he shot it with an arrow.

"Fragments" is well enough, perhaps, when one is speaking of the parts of a dismembered deer, yet it hasn't just exactly the right sound—and sound is something; in fact sound is a good deal. It makes the difference between good music and poor music, and it can sometimes make the difference between good literature and indifferent literature. "Fragments" sounds all right when we are talking about the wreckage of a breakable thing that has been smashed; it also sounds all right when applied to cat's-meat; but when we use it to describe large hunks and chunks like the fore- and hind-quarters of a fawn, it grates upon the fastidious ear.

"Without any aid from the science of cookery, he was

immediately employed, in common with his fellows, in gorging himself with this digestible sustenance."

This was a mere statistic; just a mere cold, colorless statistic; yet you see Cooper has made a chromo out of it. To use another figure, he has clothed a humble statistic in flowing, voluminous and costly raiment, whereas both good taste and economy suggest that he ought to have saved these splendors for a king, and dressed the humble statistic in a simple breech-clout. Cooper spent twenty-four words here on a thing not really worth more than eight. We will reduce the statistic to its proper proportions and state it in this way:

"He and the others ate the meat raw."

"Digestible sustenance" is a handsome phrase, but it was out of place there, because we do not know these Indians or care for them; and so it cannot interest us to know whether the meat was going to agree with them or not. Details which do not assist a story are better left out.

"Magua alone sat apart, without participating in the revolting meal," is a statement which we understand, but that is our merit, not Cooper's. Cooper is not clear. He does not say who it is that is revolted by the meal. It is really Cooper himself, but there is nothing in the statement to indicate that it isn't Magua. Magua is an Indian and likes raw meat.

The word "alone" could have been left out and space saved. It has no value where it is.

I must come back with some frequency, in the course of these Lectures, to the matter of Cooper's inaccuracy as an Observer. In this way I shall hope to persuade you that it is well to look at a thing carefully before you try to describe it; but I shall rest you between times with other matters and thus try to avoid over-fatiguing you with that detail of our theme. In *The Last of the Mohicans* Cooper gets up a stirring "situation" on an island flanked by great cataracts—a lofty island with steep sides—a sort of tongue which projects downstream from the midst of the divided waterfall. There are caverns in this mass of rock, and a party of Cooper people hide themselves in one of these to get away from some hostile Indians. There is a small exit at each end of this cavern. These exits are closed with blankets and the

light excluded. The exploring hostiles back themselves up against the blankets and rave and rage in a blood-curdling way, but they are Cooper Indians and of course fail to discover the blankets; so they presently go away baffled and disappointed. Alice, in her gratitude for this deliverance, flings herself on her knees to return thanks. The darkness in there must have been pretty solid; yet if we may believe Cooper, it was a darkness which could not have been told from daylight; for here are some nice details which were visible in it:

"Both Heyward and the more tempered Cora witnessed the act of involuntary emotion with powerful sympathy, the former secretly believing that piety had never worn a form so lovely as it had now assumed in the youthful person of Alice. Her eyes were radiant with the glow of grateful feelings; the flush of her beauty was again seated on her cheeks, and her whole soul seemed ready and anxious to pour out its thanksgivings, through the medium of her eloquent features. But when her lips moved, the words they should have uttered appeared frozen by some new and sudden chill. Her bloom gave place to the paleness of death; her soft and melting eyes grew hard, and seemed contracting with horror; while those hands which she had raised, clasped in each other, towards heaven, dropped in horizontal lines before her, the fingers pointed forward in convulsed motion."

It is a case of strikingly inexact observation. Heyward and the more tempered Cora could not have seen the half of it in the dark that way.

I must call your attention to certain details of this work of art which invite particular examination. "Involuntary" is surplusage, and violates Rule 14. All emotion is involuntary when genuine, and then the qualifying term is not needed; a qualifying term is needed only when the emotion is pumped-up and ungenuine. "Secretly" is surplusage, too; because Heyward was not believing out loud, but all to himself; and a person cannot believe a thing all to himself without doing it privately. I do not approve of the word "seated," to describe the process of locating a flush. No one

can seat a flush. A flush is not a deposit on an exterior surface, it is a something which squashes out from within.

I cannot approve of the word "new." If Alice had had an old chill, formerly, it would be all right to distinguish this one from that one by calling this one the new chill; but she had not had any old chill, this one was the only chill she had had, up till now, and so the tacit reference to an old anterior chill is unwarranted and misleading. And I do not altogether like the phrase "while those hands which she had raised." It seems to imply that she had some other hands—some other ones which she had put on the shelf a minute so as to give her a better chance to raise those ones; but it is not true; she had only the one pair. The phrase is in the last degree misleading. But I like to see her extend these ones in front of her and work the fingers. I think that that is a very good effect. And it would have almost doubled the effect if the more tempered Cora had done it some, too.

JOHN JAY CHAPMAN'S FINE ESSAY on Emerson came out under the title *Emerson Sixty Years Later,* in the *Atlantic Monthly* of January and February 1897, and was published the next year in a book called *Emerson and Other Essays.* By the nineties, the heroic individualism of Emerson had been pretty well driven underground by the individualism of Big Business, and the artists and literary men had been feeling themselves freer abroad. John Jay Chapman was an exception to this. He denounced the emigration and stood his ground in the United States. His career was a curious one. He was a moralist, a literary critic, a poet, and a political reformer; and his character was passionate, erratic, intransigent, and self-willed. There is in him something of a more limited Tolstoy and something of the traditional American crank. On one occasion, in 1911, when he read that a Negro had been burned alive in a Pennsylvania steel town, he went there, hired a hall, and held a sort of memorial service, which was attended by only two people, one of them a plain-clothes man.

It was a flare-up of the stifled Emersonian idealism as well as an echo of the Abolitionist protest. We are out of touch

today with the dynamic elements of Emerson. Though his credit still remains high, we are rather put off from reading him (as is not the case with Thoreau) by his uninviting literary form. In one very important respect he lacks the technique of the prose writer: he cannot carry you from page to page. He had the tendency either to compose a set speech somewhat in the nature of a sermon, in which his matter was drawn up under heads; or to compile under the most general titles—*Love, Friendship, The Oversoul,* etc.—loose collections of aphorisms from his note-books. In these aphorisms he is dazzling, a poet; and there are passages and even whole essays such as the one included here on Thoreau in which we feel a high voltage. But, neglecting him, it is hard for us to realize how stimulating he seemed to his contemporaries, who used to couple his name with Carlyle's; and that he was even one of the influences behind Nietzsche, of whom Charles Andler says that he had absorbed Emerson's thought so thoroughly that he could not always distinguish it from his own.

It is this Nietzschean side of Emerson that Chapman here presents—or rather Chapman and Nietzsche both feed themselves from Emerson's fire and give expression to points of view which, though both are self-assertive and defiant, assert quite distinct selves. And this essay of Chapman's is today perhaps more easily assimilable than Emerson. Chapman's world is closer to our world; and his prose is among the best of his period.

Chapman's grandmother, Maria Weston Chapman, had been a lieutenant of William Lloyd Garrison's; but Chapman was essentially a New Yorker, who had approached the New England culture from outside. In a preface of 1909 he places his point of view as follows:

> As I look back over the past, the figure of Emerson looms up in my mind as the first modern man, and the City of Boston as the first living civilization which I knew.
>
> New York is not a civilization; it is a railway station. There are epochs of revolution and convulsion,—times of the migration or expulsion of races, when too much happens in a moment

to permit of anything being either understood or recorded. Such times have no history. They are mysteries and remain mysterious. Such an epoch has been passing over New York City ever since I have known it. The present in New York is so powerful that the past is lost. There is no past. Not a bookshelf, nor a cornice, nor a sign, nor a face, nor a type of mind endures for a generation, and a New York boy who goes away to boarding school returns to a new world at each vacation. He finds perhaps on his return from boarding school, that the street where he and his companions used to play ball is given over to a migration of Teutons. When he returns from college, the Teutons have vanished and given place to Italians. When he reaches the Law school, behold no more Italians—Polish Jews to the horizon's verge.

The young person born in New York during the last quarter century has been like a rat in a bag which the rat-catcher keeps agitating lest the creature's teeth get a purchase on the prison. The New York youth cannot be expected to get hold of any idea while the kaleidoscope is turning so furiously. He is numb and dizzy. He cannot connect his reading with his environment; for the books of the world have been projected out of quietude. They reflect stability, depth, relaxation, and all those conditions of peace and harmony which make thought possible. The youth, therefore, discards books as incomprehensible,—foolish, in fact. Education has for the time being lost its significance.

Now in Massachusetts there has been a consecutive development of thought since colonial times. Her links with the past have never been broken. The influx of new blood and new idea has not overwhelmed the old blood and old idea. There is in New England a traceable connection between the whole historic volume and stream of human culture,—that moving treasury of human thought and experience which flows down out of antiquity and involves us, surrounds and supports us and makes us the thing we are, no matter how much we struggle or how little we may understand. In Massachusetts you may still stop the first man you meet in the street and find in his first remark the influence of Wyclif or Samuel Adams. The spiritual life in New England has never been luxuriant. It is one-sided, sad, and inexpressive in many ways. But it has coherence, and this is what makes it valuable for the young American. Every young person in the United States ought to be sent to Massachusetts for some part of his education. The proximity of Harvard College to Boston gives Harvard a natural advantage over

our other colleges. You cannot go to Harvard or indeed to any New England college without getting into some sort of contact with a logical civilization.

I had read Emerson's essays as a boy, but it was not till I reached college that they assumed any special significance to me. Then came a time when it seemed as if Emerson were a younger brother to Shakespeare. No book except Shakespeare's plays ever gave me such keen delight. I was intoxicated with Emerson. He let loose something within me which made me in my own eyes as good as anyone else. To express this I invented a phrase which I have always thought equal to any of Emerson's own exhortations to spiritual independence, and much more modest in form. It was this:

"After all it is just as well that there should be *one* person like *me* in the world."

When I was a student at Harvard, Emerson was still living. And I have seen him wandering about the streets of Cambridge in that stage which is called dotage and which often borders on the sublime even in ordinary people. I never met him; but many of his contemporaries were alive and very willing to talk about the early days. My grandmother, a Massachusetts woman, told me that the first time she had ever heard Emerson's name was when a neighbor said to her: "Oh, have you heard? The new minister of the Second Church has gone mad." Out of gossip and observation I put together a picture of Emerson and his times, without the least intention of writing about him, without, indeed, knowing what I was doing; and when, years afterwards, the *Atlantic Monthly* asked me to write about Emerson I said to myself, "Very well, why not? Be bold, be bold, be not too bold."

Not without trepidation did I launch all those generalizations about Emerson and the New England of Emerson's day. My reading was so superficial that I felt almost criminal in adopting that pose of finality which is customary with historians. I secretly wondered whether all historians were as great humbugs as I, or whether they really knew more about the past.

My reassurance, however, came almost at once in the shape of letters from old original Emersonians in all parts of the country, who wrote that I had found the Emerson whom they had known. I knew, of course, that what these ancient people enjoyed had come from themselves. Out of the mouths not of babes and sucklings but of sybils and old prophets had the truth been established. I was at one with these old antebellum

enthusiasts. I had climbed up out of the hurly-burly of nineteenth-century America and was sitting on a sort of bleak Massachusetts Ararat, panting but safe. Dry ground at least was under foot; a consecutive relation to all the past had been established. This much I owe to Emerson and to Massachusetts; and, no doubt, thousands of others before and since have owed the same.

JOHN JAY CHAPMAN

EMERSON

LEAVE this hypocritical prating about the masses. Masses are rude, lame, unmade, pernicious in their demands and influence, and need not to be flattered, but to be schooled. I wish not to concede anything to them, but to tame, drill, divide, and break them up, and draw individuals out of them. The worst of charity is that the lives you are asked to preserve are not worth preserving. Masses! The calamity is the masses. I do not wish any mass at all, but honest men only, lovely, sweet, accomplished women only, and no shovel-handed, narrow-brained, gin-drinking million stockingers or lazzaroni at all. If government knew how, I should like to see it check, not multiply the population. When it reaches its true law of action, every man that is born will be hailed as essential. Away with this hurrah of masses, and let us have the considerate vote of single men spoken on their honor and their conscience.

This extract from *The Conduct of Life* gives fairly enough the leading thought of Emerson's life. The unending warfare between the individual and society shows us in each generation a poet or two, a dramatist or a musician who exalts and deifies the individual, and leads us back again to the only object which is really worthy of enthusiasm or which can permanently excite it,—the character of a man. It is surprising to find this identity of content in all great deliverances. The only thing we really admire is personal

liberty. Those who fought for it and those who enjoyed it are our heroes.

But the hero may enslave his race by bringing in a system of tyranny; the battle-cry of freedom may become a dogma which crushes the soul; one good custom may corrupt the world. And so the inspiration of one age becomes the damnation of the next. This crystallizing of life into death has occurred so often that it may almost be regarded as one of the laws of progress.

Emerson represents a protest against the tyranny of democracy. He is the most recent example of elemental hero-worship. His opinions are absolutely unqualified except by his temperament. He expresses a form of belief in the importance of the individual which is independent of any personal relations he has with the world. It is as if a man had been withdrawn from the earth and dedicated to condensing and embodying this eternal idea—the value of the individual soul—so vividly, so vitally, that his words could not die, yet in such illusive and abstract forms that by no chance and by no power could his creed be used for purposes of tyranny. Dogma cannot be extracted from it. Schools cannot be built on it. It either lives as the spirit lives, or else it evaporates and leaves nothing. Emerson was so afraid of the letter that killeth that he would hardly trust his words to print. He was assured there was no such thing as literal truth, but only literal falsehood. He therefore resorted to metaphors which could by no chance be taken literally. And he has probably suceeded in leaving a body of work which cannot be made to operate to any other end than that for which he designed it. If this be true, he has accomplished the inconceivable feat of eluding misconception. If it be true, he stands alone in the history of teachers; he has circumvented fate, he has left an unmixed blessing behind him.

The signs of those times which brought forth Emerson are not wholly undecipherable. They are the same times which gave rise to every character of significance during the period before the war. Emerson is indeed the easiest to understand of all the men of his time, because his life is freest from the tangles and qualifications of circumstance.

He is a sheer and pure type and creature of destiny, and the unconsciousness that marks his development allies him to the deepest phenomena. It is convenient, in describing him, to use language which implies consciousness on his part, but he himself had no purpose, no theory of himself; he was a product.

The years between 1820 and 1830 were the most pitiable through which this country has ever passed. The conscience of the North was pledged to the Missouri Compromise, and that Compromise neither slumbered nor slept. In New England, where the old theocratical oligarchy of the colonies had survived the Revolution and kept under its own water-locks the new flood of trade, the conservatism of politics reinforced the conservatism of religion; and as if these two inquisitions were not enough to stifle the soul of man, the conservatism of business self-interest was superimposed. The history of the conflicts which followed has been written by the radicals, who negligently charge up to self-interest all the resistance which establishments offer to change. But it was not solely self-interest, it was conscience that backed the Missouri Compromise, nowhere else, naturally, so strongly as in New England. It was conscience that made cowards of us all. The white-lipped generation of Edward Everett were victims, one might even say martyrs, to conscience. They suffered the most terrible martyrdom that can fall to man, a martyrdom which injured their immortal volition and dried up the springs of life. If it were not that our poets have too seldom designed to dip into real life, I do not know what more awful subject for a poem could have been found than that of the New England judge enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law. For lack of such a poem the heroism of these men has been forgotten, the losing heroism of conservatism. It was this spiritual power of a committed conscience which met the new forces as they arose, and it deserves a better name than these new forces afterward gave it. In 1830 the social fruits of these heavy conditions could be seen in the life of the people. Free speech was lost.

"I know no country," says Tocqueville, who was here in 1831, "in which there is so little independence of mind and

freedom of discussion as in America." Tocqueville recurs to the point again and again. He cannot disguise his surprise at it, and it tinged his whole philosophy and his book. The timidity of the Americans of this era was a thing which intelligent foreigners could not understand. Miss Martineau wrote in her *Autobiography:*

It was not till months afterwards that I was told that there were two reasons why I was not invited there [Chelsea] as elsewhere. One reason was that I had avowed, in reply to urgent questions, that I was disappointed in an oration of Mr. Everett's; and another was that I had publicly condemned the institution of slavery. I hope the Boston people have outgrown the childishness of sulking at opinions not in either case volunteered, but obtained by pressure. But really, the subservience to opinion at that time seemed a sort of mania.

The mania was by no means confined to Boston, but qualified this period of our history throughout the Northern States. There was no literature. "If great writers have not at present existed in America, the reason is very simply given in the fact that there can be no literary genius without freedom of opinion, and freedom of opinion does not exist in America," wrote Tocqueville. There were no amusements, neither music nor sport nor pastime, indoors or out-of-doors. The whole life of the community was a life of the intelligence, and upon the intelligence lay the weight of intellectual tyranny. The pressure kept on increasing, and the suppressed forces kept on increasing, till at last, as if to show what gigantic power was needed to keep conservatism dominant, the Merchant Province put forward Daniel Webster.

The worst period of panic seems to have preceded the anti-slavery agitations of 1831, because these agitations soon demonstrated that the sky did not fall nor the earth yawn and swallow Massachusetts because of Mr. Garrison's opinions, as most people had sincerely believed would be the case. Some semblance of free speech was therefore gradually regained.

Let us remember the world upon which the young Emerson's eyes opened. The South was a plantation. The North crooked the hinges of the knee where thrift might follow

fawning. It was the era of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a malicious caricature,—founded on fact. This time of humiliation, when there was no free speech, no literature, little manliness, no reality, no simplicity, no accomplishment, was the era of American brag. We flattered the foreigner and we boasted of ourselves. We were oversensitive, insolent, and cringing. As late as 1845, G. P. Putnam, a most sensible and modest man, published a book to show what the country had done in the field of culture. The book is a monument of the age. With all its good sense and good humor, it justifies foreign contempt because it is explanatory. Underneath everything lay a feeling of unrest, an instinct—"this country cannot permanently endure half slave and half free"—which was the truth, but which could not be uttered.

So long as there is any subject which men may not freely discuss, they are timid upon all subjects. They wear an iron crown and talk in whispers. Such social conditions crush and maim the individual, and throughout New England, as throughout the whole North, the individual was crushed and maimed.

The generous youths who came to manhood between 1820 and 1830, while this deadly era was maturing, seem to have undergone a revulsion against the world almost before touching it; at least two of them suffered, revolted, and condemned, while still boys sitting on benches in school, and came forth advancing upon this old society like gladiators. The activity of William Lloyd Garrison, the man of action, preceded by several years that of Emerson, who is his prophet. Both of them were parts of one revolution. One of Emerson's articles of faith was that a man's thoughts spring from his actions rather than his actions from his thoughts, and possibly the same thing holds good for society at large. Perhaps all truths, whether moral or economic, must be worked out in real life before they are discovered by the student, and it was therefore necessary that Garrison should be evolved earlier than Emerson.

The silent years of early manhood, during which Emerson passed through the Divinity School and to his ministry, known by few, understood by none, least of all by himself,

were years in which the revolting spirit of an archangel thought out his creed. He came forth perfect, with that serenity of which we have scarce another example in history —that union of the man himself, his beliefs, and his vehicle of expression that makes men great because it makes them comprehensible. The philosophy into which he had already transmuted all his earlier theology at the time we first meet him consisted of a very simple drawing together of a few ideas, all of which had long been familiar to the world. It is the wonderful use he made of these ideas, the closeness with which they fitted his soul, the tact with which he took what he needed, like a bird building its nest, that make the originality, the man.

The conclusion of Berkeley, that the external world is known to us only through our impressions, and that therefore, for aught we know, the whole universe exists only in our own consciousness, cannot be disproved. It is so simple a conception that a child may understand it; and it has probably been passed before the attention of every thinking man since Plato's time. The notion is in itself a mere philosophical catch or crux to which there is no answer. It may be true. The mystics made this doctrine useful. They were not content to doubt the independent existence of the external world. They imagined that this external world, the earth, the planets, the phenomena of nature, bore some relation to the emotions and destiny of the soul. The soul and the cosmos were somehow related, and related so intimately that the cosmos might be regarded as a sort of projection or diagram of the soul.

Plato was the first man who perceived that this idea could be made to provide the philosopher with a vehicle of expression more powerful than any other. If a man will once plant himself firmly on the proposition that *he is* the universe, that every emotion or expression of his mind is correlated in some way to phenomena in the external world, and that he shall say how correlated, he is in a position where the power of speech is at a maximum. His figures of speech, his tropes, his witticisms, take rank with the law of gravity and the precession of the equinoxes. Philosophical

exaltation of the individual cannot go beyond this point. It is the climax.

This is the school of thought to which Emerson belonged. The sun and moon, the planets, are mere symbols. They signify whatever the poet chooses. The planets for the most part stay in conjunction just long enough to flash his thought through their symbolism, and no permanent relation is established between the soul and the zodiac. There is, however, one link of correlation between the external and internal worlds which Emerson considered established, and in which he believed almost literally, namely, the moral law. This idea he drew from Kant through Coleridge and Wordsworth, and it is so familiar to us all that it hardly needs stating. The fancy that the good, the true, the beautiful—all things of which we instinctively approve—are somehow connected together and are really one thing; that our appreciation of them is in its essence the recognition of a law; that this law, in fact all law and the very idea of law, is a mere subjective experience; and that hence any external sequence which we coördinate and name, like the law of gravity, is really intimately connected with our moral nature—this fancy has probably some basis of truth. Emerson adopted it as a corner stone of his thought.

Such are the ideas at the basis of Emerson's philosophy, and it is fair to speak of them in this place because they antedate everything else which we know of him. They had been for years in his mind before he spoke at all. It was in the armor of this invulnerable idealism and with weapons like shafts of light that he came forth to fight.

In 1836, at the age of thirty-three, Emerson published the little pamphlet called *Nature*, which was an attempt to state his creed. Although still young, he was not without experience of life. He had been assistant minister to the Rev. Dr. Ware from 1829 to 1832, when he resigned his ministry on account of his views regarding the Lord's Supper. He had married and lost his first wife in the same interval. He had been abroad and had visited Carlyle in 1833. He had returned and settled in Concord, and had taken up the profession of lecturing, upon which he in part supported

himself ever after. It is unnecessary to review these early lectures. "Large portions of them," says Mr. Cabot, his biographer, "appeared afterwards in the *Essays*, especially those of the first series." Suffice it that through them Emerson had become so well known that although *Nature* was published anonymously, he was recognized as the author. Many people had heard of him at the time he resigned his charge, and the story went abroad that the young minister of the Second Church had gone mad. The lectures had not discredited the story, and *Nature* seemed to corroborate it. Such was the impression which the book made upon Boston in 1836. As we read it today, we are struck by its extraordinary beauty of language. It is a supersensuous, lyrical, and sincere rhapsody, written evidently by a man of genius. It reveals a nature compelling respect,—a Shelley, and yet a sort of Yankee Shelley, who is mad only when the wind is nor'-nor'west; a mature nature which must have been nourished for years upon its own thoughts, to speak this new language so eloquently, to stand so calmly on its feet The deliverance of his thought is so perfect that this work adapts itself to our mood and has the quality of poetry. This fluency Emerson soon lost; it is the quality missing in his poetry. It is the efflorescence of youth.

In good health, the air is a cordial of incredible virtue. Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. . . . It is the uniform effect of culture on the human mind, not to shake our faith in the stability of particular phenomena, as heat, water, azote, but to lead us to regard nature as phenomenon, not a substance; to attribute necessary existence to spirit; to esteem nature as an accident and an effect.

Perhaps these quotations from the pamphlet called *Nature* are enough to show the clouds of speculation in which

Emerson had been walking. With what lightning they were charged was soon seen.

In 1837 he was asked to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa oration at Cambridge. This was the opportunity for which he had been waiting. The mystic and eccentric young poet-preacher now speaks his mind, and he turns out to be a man exclusively interested in real life. This recluse, too tender for contact with the rough facts of the world, whose conscience has retired him to rural Concord, pours out a vial of wrath. This cub puts forth the paw of a full-grown lion.

Emerson has left behind him nothing stronger than this address, *The American Scholar*. It was the first application of his views to the events of his day, written and delivered in the heat of early manhood while his extraordinary powers were at their height. It moves with a logical progression of which he soon lost the habit. The subject of it, the scholar's relation to the world, was the passion of his life. The body of his belief is to be found in this address, and in any adequate account of him the whole address ought to be given.

Thus far, our holiday has been simply a friendly sign of the survival of the love of letters amongst a people too busy to give to letters any more. As such it is precious as the sign of an indestructible instinct. Perhaps the time is already come when it ought to be, and will be, something else; when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. . . . The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him life; it went out from him truth. . . . Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, the act of thought, is transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine, also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant. . . . Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end which all means go to effect? They are for nothing but to in-

spire. . . . The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although in almost all men obstructed, and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth and utters truth, or creates. In this action it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man. . . . Genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over-influence. The literature of every nation bears me witness. The English dramatic poets have Shakespearized now for two hundred years. . . . These being his functions, it becomes him to feel all confidence in himself, and to defer never to the popular cry. He, and he only, knows the world. The world of any moment is the merest appearance. Some great decorum, some fetish of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man, is cried up by half mankind and cried down by the other half, as if all depended on this particular up or down. The odds are that the whole question is not worth the poorest thought which the scholar has lost in listening to the controversy. Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom.

Dr. Holmes called this speech of Emerson's our "intellectual Declaration of Independence," and indeed it was. "The Phi Beta Kappa speech," says Mr. Lowell, "was an event without any former parallel in our literary annals,—a scene always to be treasured in the memory for its picturesqueness and its inspiration. What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of foregone dissent!"

The authorities of the Divinity School can hardly have been very careful readers of *Nature* and *The American Scholar,* or they would not have invited Emerson, in 1838, to deliver the address to the graduating class. This was Emerson's second opportunity to apply his beliefs directly to society. A few lines out of the famous address are enough to show that he saw in the church of his day signs of the same decadence that he saw in the letters:

The prayers and even the dogmas of our church are like the zodiac of Denderah and the astronomical monuments of the

Hindoos, wholly insulated from anything now extant in the life and business of the people. They mark the height to which the waters once rose. . . . It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that he speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity—a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man—is lost. None believeth in the soul of man, but only in some man or person old and departed. Ah me! no man goeth alone. All men go in flocks to this saint or that poet, avoiding the God who seeth in secret. They cannot see in secret; they love to be blind in public. They think society wiser than their soul, and know not that one soul, and their soul, is wiser than the whole world.

It is almost misleading to speak of the lofty utterances of these early addresses as attacks upon society, but their reception explains them. The element of absolute courage is the same in all natures. Emerson himself was not unconscious of what function he was performing.

The "storm in our wash-bowl" which followed this Divinity School address, the letters of remonstrance from friends, the advertisements by the Divinity School of "no complicity," must have been cheering to Emerson. His unseen yet dominating ambition is shown throughout the address, and in this note in his diary of the following year:

August 31. Yesterday at the Phi Beta Kappa anniversary. Steady, steady. I am convinced that if a man will be a true scholar he shall have perfect freedom. The young people and the mature hint at odium and the aversion of forces to be presently encountered in society. I say No; I fear it not.

The lectures and addresses which form the latter half of the first volume in the collected edition show the early Emerson in the ripeness of his powers. These writings have a lyrical sweep and a beauty which the later works often lack. Passages in them remind us of Hamlet:

How silent, how spacious, what room for all, yet without space to insert an atom;—in graceful succession, in equal fullness, in balanced beauty, the dance of the hours goes forward still. Like an odor of incense, like a strain of music, like a sleep, it is inexact and boundless. It will not be dissected, nor unraveled, nor shown. . . . The great Pan of old, who was clothed in a leopard skin to signify the beautiful variety of things and the

firmament, his coat of stars,—was but the representative of thee, O rich and various man! thou palace of sight and sound, carrying in thy senses the morning and the night and the unfathomable galaxy; in thy brain, the geometry of the City of God; in thy heart, the bower of love and the realms of right and wrong. . . . Every star in heaven is discontent and insatiable. Gravitation and chemistry cannot content them. Ever they woo and court the eye of the beholder. Every man who comes into the world they seek to fascinate and possess, to pass into his mind, for they desire to republish themselves in a more delicate world than that they occupy. . . . So it is with all immaterial objects. These beautiful basilisks set their brute glorious eyes on the eye of every child, and, if they can, cause their nature to pass through his wondering eyes into him, and so all things are mixed.

Emerson is never far from his main thought:

"The universe does not attract us till it is housed in an individual." "A man, a personal ascendancy, is the only great phenomenon." "I cannot find language of sufficient energy to convey my sense of the sacredness of private integrity."

On the other hand, he is never far from his great fear: "But Truth is such a fly-away, such a sly-boots, so untransportable and unbarrelable a commodity, that it is as bad to catch as light." "Let him beware of proposing to himself any end. . . . I say to you plainly, there is no end so sacred or so large that if pursued for itself will not become carrion and an offense to the nostril."

There can be nothing finer than Emerson's knowledge of the world, his sympathy with young men and with the practical difficulties of applying his teachings. We can see in his early lectures before students and mechanics how much he had learned about the structure of society from his own short contact with the organized church.

Each finds a tender and very intelligent conscience a disqualification for success. Each requires of the practitioner a certain shutting of the eyes, a certain dapperness and compliance, an acceptance of customs, a sequestration from the sentiments of generosity and love, a compromise of private opinion and lofty integrity. . . . The fact that a new thought and hope have dawned in your breast, should apprise you that

in the same hour a new light broke in upon a thousand private hearts. . . . And further I will not dissemble my hope that each person whom I address has felt his own call to cast aside all evil customs, timidity, and limitations, and to be in his place a free and helpful man, a reformer, a benefactor, not content to slip along through the world like a footman or a spy, escaping by his nimbleness and apologies as many knocks as he can, but a brave and upright man who must find or cut a straight road to everything excellent in the earth, and not only go honorably himself, but make it easier for all who follow him to go in honor and with benefit. . . .

Beneath all lay a greater matter—Emerson's grasp of the forms and conditions of progress, his reach of intellect, which could afford fair play to everyone.

His lecture on *The Conservative* is not a puzzling *jeu d'esprit,* like *Bishop Blougram's Apology,* but an honest attempt to set up the opposing chessmen of conservatism and reform so as to represent real life. Hardly can such a brilliant statement of the case be found elsewhere in literature. It is not necessary to quote here the reformer's side of the question, for Emerson's whole life was devoted to it. The conservatives' attitude he gives with such accuracy and such justice that the very bankers of State Street seem to be speaking:

The order of things is as good as the character of the population permits. Consider it as the work of a great and beneficent and progressive necessity, which, from the first pulsation in the first animal life up to the present high culture of the best nations, has advanced thus far. . . .

The conservative party in the universe concedes that the radical would talk sufficiently to the purpose if we were still in the garden of Eden; he legislates for man as he ought to be; his theory is right, but he makes no allowance for friction, and this omission makes his whole doctrine false. The idealist retorts that the conservative falls into a far more noxious error in the other extreme. The conservative assumes sickness as a necessity, and his social frame is a hospital, his total legislation is for the present distress, a universe in slippers and flannels, with bib and pap-spoon, swallowing pills and herb tea. Sickness gets organized as well as health, the vice as well as the virtue.

It is unnecessary to go, one by one, through the familiar essays and lectures which Emerson published between 1838 and 1875. They are in everybody's hands and in everybody's thoughts. In 1840 he wrote in his diary:

> In all my lectures I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man. This the people accept readily enough, and even with commendation, as long as I call the lecture Art or Politics, or Literature or the Household; but the moment I call it Religion they are shocked, though it be only the application of the same truth which they receive elsewhere to a new class of facts.

To the platform he returned, and left it only once or twice during the remainder of his life.

His writings vary in coherence. In his early occasional pieces, like the Phi Beta Kappa address, coherence is at a maximum. They were written for a purpose, and were perhaps struck off all at once. But he earned his living by lecturing, and a lecturer is always recasting his work and using it in different forms. A lecturer has no prejudice against repetition. It is noticeable that in some of Emerson's important lectures the logical scheme is more perfect than in his essays. The truth seems to be that in the process of working up and perfecting his writings, in revising and filing his sentences, the logical scheme became more and more obliterated. Another circumstance helped make his style fragmentary. He was by nature a man of inspirations and exalted moods. He was subject to ecstasies, during which his mind worked with phenomenal brilliancy. Throughout his works and in his diary we find constant reference to these moods, and to his own inability to control or recover them. "But what we want is consecutiveness. 'Tis with us a flash of light, then a long darkness, then a flash again. Ah! could we turn these fugitive sparkles into an astronomy of Copernican worlds!"

In order to take advantage of these periods of divination, he used to write down the thoughts that came to him at such times. From boyhood onward he kept journals and commonplace books, and in the course of his reading and

meditation he collected innumerable notes and quotations which he indexed for ready use. In these mines he "quarried," as Mr. Cabot says, for his lectures and essays. When he needed a lecture he went to the repository, threw together what seemed to have a bearing on some subject, and gave it a title. If any other man should adopt this method of composition, the result would be incomprehensible chaos; because most men have many interests, many moods, many and conflicting ideas. But with Emerson it was otherwise. There was only one thought which could set him aflame, and that was the thought of the unfathomed might of man. This thought was his religion, his politics, his ethics, his philosophy. One moment of inspiration was in him own brother to the next moment of inspiration, although they might be separated by six weeks. When he came to put together his star-born ideas, they fitted well, no matter in what order he placed them, because they were all part of the same idea.

His works are all one single attack on the vice of the age, moral cowardice. He assails it not by railings and scorn, but by positive and stimulating suggestion. The imagination of the reader is touched by every device which can awake the admiration for heroism, the consciousness of moral courage. Wit, quotation, anecdote, eloquence, exhortation, rhetoric, sarcasm, and very rarely denunciation, are launched at the reader, till he feels little lambent flames beginning to kindle in him. He is perhaps unable to see the exact logical connection between two paragraphs of an essay, yet he feels they are germane. He takes up Emerson tired and apathetic, but presently he feels himself growing heady and truculent, strengthened in his most inward vitality, surprised to find himself again master in his own house.

The difference between Emerson and the other moralists is that all these stimulating pictures and suggestions are not given by him in illustration of a general proposition. They have never been through the mill of generalization in his own mind. He himself could not have told you their logical bearing on one another. They have all the vividness of disconnected fragments of life, and yet they all throw light on one

another, like the facets of a jewel. But whatever cause it was that led him to adopt his method of writing, it is certain that he succeeded in delivering himself of his thought with an initial velocity and carrying power such as few men ever attained. He has the force at his command of the thrower of the discus.

His style is American, and beats with the pulse of the climate. He is the only writer we have had who writes as he speaks, who makes no literary parade, has no pretensions of any sort. He is the only writer we have had who has wholly subdued his vehicle to his temperament. It is impossible to name his style without naming his character: they are one thing.

Both in language and in elocution Emerson was a practiced and consummate artist, who knew how both to command his effects and to conceal his means. The casual, practical, disarming directness with which he writes puts any honest man at his mercy. What difference does it make whether a man who can talk like this is following an argument or not? You cannot always see Emerson clearly; he is hidden by a high wall; but you always know exactly on what spot he is standing. You judge it by the flight of the objects he throws over the wall—a bootjack, an apple, a crown, a razor, a volume of verse. With one or other of these missiles, all delivered with a very tolerable aim, he is pretty sure to hit you. These catchwords stick in the mind. People are not in general influenced by long books or discourses, but by odd fragments of observation which they overhear, sentences or headlines which they read while turning over a book at random or while waiting for dinner to be announced. These are the oracles and orphic words that get lodged in the mind and bend a man's most stubborn will. Emerson called them the Police of the Universe. His works are a treasury of such things. They sparkle in the mine, or you may carry them off in your pocket. They get driven into your mind like nails, and on them catch and hang your own experiences, till what was once his thought has become your character.

"God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please; you can never have both."

"Discontent is want of self-reliance; it is infirmity of will." "It is impossible for a man to be cheated by anyone but himself."

The orchestration with which Emerson introduces and sustains these notes from the spheres is as remarkable as the winged things themselves. Open his works at a hazard. You hear a man talking.

> A garden is like those pernicious machineries we read of every month in the newspapers, which catch a man's coat-skirt or his hand, and draw in his arm, his leg, and his whole body to irresistible destruction. In an evil hour he pulled down his wall and added a field to his homestead. No land is bad, but land is worse. If a man own land, the land owns him. Now let him leave home if he dare. Every tree and graft, every hill of melons, row of corn, or quickset hedge, all he has done and all he means to do, stand in his way like duns, when he would go out of his gate.

Your attention is arrested by the reality of this gentleman in his garden, by the firsthand quality of his mind. It matters not on what subject he talks. While you are musing, still pleased and patronizing, he has picked up the bow of Ulysses, bent it with the ease of Ulysses, and sent a shaft clear through the twelve axes, nor missed one of them. But this, it seems, was mere byplay and marksmanship; for before you have done wondering, Ulysses rises to his feet in anger, and pours flight after flight, arrow after arrow, from the great bow. The shafts sing and strike, the suitors fall in heaps. The brow of Ulysses shines with unearthly splendor. The air is filled with lightning. After a little, without shock or transition, without apparent change of tone, Mr. Emerson is offering you a biscuit before you leave, and bidding you mind the last step at the garden end. If the man who can do these things be not an artist, then must we have a new vocabulary and rename the professions.

There is, in all this effectiveness of Emerson, no pose, no literary art; nothing that corresponds even remotely to the pretended modesty and ignorance with which Socrates lays pitfalls for our admiration in Plato's dialogues.

It was the platform which determined Emerson's style.

He was not a writer, but a speaker. On the platform his manner of speech was a living part of his words. The pauses and hesitation, the abstraction, the searching, the balancing, the turning forward and back of the leaves of his lecture, and then the discovery, the illumination, the gleam of lightning which you saw before your eyes descend into a man of genius,—all this was Emerson. He invented this style of speaking, and made it express the supersensuous, the incommunicable. Lowell wrote, while still under the spell of the magician:

Emerson's oration was more disjointed than usual, even with him. It began nowhere, and ended everywhere, and yet, as always with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way, something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of stars. Every possible criticism might have been made on it but one—that it was not noble. There was a tone in it that awakened all elevating associations. He boggled, he lost his place, he had to put on his glasses; but it was as if a creature from some fairer world had lost his way in our fogs, and it was *our* fault, not his. It was chaotic, but it was all such stuff as stars are made of, and you couldn't help feeling that, if you waited awhile, all that was nebulous would be whirled into planets, and would assume the mathematical gravity of system. All through it I felt something in me that cried, "Ha! ha!" to the sound of the trumpets.

It is nothing for any man sitting in his chair to be overcome with the sense of the immediacy of life, to feel the spur of courage, the victory of good over evil, the value, now and forever, of all great-hearted endeavor. Such moments come to us all. But for a man to sit in his chair and write what shall call up these forces in the bosoms of others—that is desert, that is greatness. To do this was the gift of Emerson. The whole earth is enriched by every moment of converse with him. The shows and shams of life become transparent, the lost kingdoms are brought back, the shutters of the spirit are opened, and provinces and realms of our own existence lie gleaming before us.

It has been necessary to reduce the living soul of Emerson to mere dead attributes like "moral courage" in order that we

might talk about him at all. His effectiveness comes from his character; not from his philosophy, nor from his rhetoric nor his wit, nor from any of the accidents of his education. He might never have heard of Berkeley or Plato. A slightly different education might have led him to throw his teaching into the form of historical essays or of stump speeches. He might, perhaps, have been bred a stone-mason, and have done his work in the world by traveling with a panorama. But he would always have been Emerson. His weight and his power would always have been the same. It is solely as character that he is important. He discovered nothing; he bears no relation whatever to the history of philosophy. We must regard him and deal with him simply as a man.

Strangely enough, the world has always insisted upon accepting him as a thinker: and hence a great coil of misunderstanding. As a thinker, Emerson is difficult to classify. Before you begin to assign him a place, you must clear the ground by a disquisition as to what is meant by "a thinker," and how Emerson differs from other thinkers. As a man, Emerson is as plain as Ben Franklin.

People have accused him of inconsistency; they say that he teaches one thing one day, and another the next day. But from the point of view of Emerson there is no such thing as inconsistency. Every man is each day a new man. Let him be today what he is today. It is immaterial and waste of time to consider what he once was or what he may be.

His picturesque speech delights in fact and anecdote and a public which is used to treatises and deduction cares always to be told the moral. It wants everything reduced to a generalization. All generalizations are partial truths, but we are used to them, and we ourselves mentally make the proper allowance. Emerson's method is, not to give a generalization and trust to our making the allowance, but to give two conflicting statements and leave the balance of truth to be struck in our own minds on the facts. There is no inconsistency in this. It is a vivid and very legitimate method of procedure. But he is much more than a theorist: he is a practitioner. He does not merely state a theory of agitation· he proceeds to agitate. "Do not," he says, "set the least value on what I do,

or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle anything as false or true. I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred, none are profane. I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no past at my back." He was not engaged in teaching many things, but one thing,—Courage. Sometimes he inspires it by pointing to great characters,—Fox, Milton, Alcibiades; sometimes he inspires it by bidding us beware of imitating such men, and, in the ardor of his rhetoric, even seems to regard them as hindrances and dangers to our development. There is no inconsistency here. Emerson might logically have gone one step further and raised inconsistency into a jewel. For what is so useful, so educational, so inspiring, to a timid and conservative man, as to do something inconsistent and regrettable? It lends character to him at once. He breathes freer and is stronger for the experience.

Emerson is no cosmopolitan. He is a patriot. He is not like Goethe, whose sympathies did not run on national lines. Emerson has America in his mind's eye all the time. There is to be a new religion, and it is to come from America; a new and better type of man, and he is to be an American. He not only cared little or nothing for Europe, but he cared not much for the world at large. His thought was for the future of this country. You cannot get into any chamber in his mind which is below this chamber of patriotism. He loves the valor of Alexander and the grace of the Oxford athlete; but he loves them not for themselves. He has a use for them. They are grist to his mill and powder to his gun. His admiration of them he subordinates to his main purpose,—they are his blackboard and diagrams. His patriotism is the backbone of his significance. He came to his countrymen at a time when they lacked, not thoughts, but manliness. The needs of his own particular public are always before him.

It is odd that our people should have, not water on the brain, but a little gas there. A shrewd foreigner said of the Americans that "whatever they say has a little the air of a speech."

I shall not need to go into an enumeration of our national defects and vices which require this Order of Censors in the

State. . . . The timidity of our public opinion is our disease, or, shall I say, the publicness of opinion, the absence of private opinion.

Our measure of success is the moderation and low level of an individual's judgment. Dr. Channing's piety and wisdom had such weight in Boston that the popular idea of religion was whatever this eminent divine held.

Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity, the squalid contentment of the times.

The politicians he scores constantly.

"Who that sees the meanness of our politics but congratulates Washington that he is long already wrapped in his shroud and forever safe." The following is his description of the social world of his day: "If any man consider the present aspects of what is called by distinction *society*, he will see the need of these ethics. The sinew and heart of man seem to be drawn out, and we are become timorous, desponding whimperers."

It is the same wherever we open his books. He must spur on, feed up, bring forward the dormant character of his countrymen. When he goes to England, he sees in English life nothing except those elements which are deficient in American life. If you wish a catalogue of what America has not, read *English Traits*. Emerson's patriotism had the effect of expanding his philosophy. Today we know the value of physique, for science has taught it, but it was hardly discovered in his day, and his philosophy affords no basis for it. Emerson in this matter transcends his philosophy. When in England, he was fairly made drunk with the physical life he found there. He is like Casper Hauser gazing for the first time on green fields. *English Traits* is the ruddiest book he ever wrote. It is a hymn to force, honesty, and physical well-being, and ends with the dominant note of his belief: "By this general activity and by this sacredness of individuals, they [the English] have in seven hundred years evolved the principles of freedom. It is the land of patriots, martyrs, sages, and bards, and if the ocean out of which it emerged should wash it away, it will be remembered as an island

famous for immortal laws, for the announcements of original right which make the stone tables of liberty."

He had found in England free speech, personal courage, and reverence for the individual.

No convulsion could shake Emerson or make his view unsteady even for an instant. What no one else saw, he saw, and he saw nothing else. Not a boy in the land welcomed the outbreak of the war so fiercely as did this shy village philosopher, then at the age of fifty-eight. He saw that war was the cure for cowardice, moral as well as physical. It was not the cause of the slave that moved him; it was not the cause of the Union for which he cared a farthing. It was something deeper than either of these things for which he had been battling all his life. It was the cause of character against convention. Whatever else the war might bring, it was sure to bring in character, to leave behind it a file of heroes; if not heroes, then villains, but in any case strong men. On the ninth of April 1861, three days before Fort Sumter was bombarded, he had spoken with equanimity of "the downfall of our character-destroying civilization. . . . We find that civilization crowed too soon, that our triumphs were treacheries; we had opened the wrong door and let the enemy into the castle."

"Ah," he said, when the firing began, "sometimes gunpowder smells good." Soon after the attack on Sumter he said in a public address, "We have been very homeless for some years past, say since 1850; but now we have a country again. . . . The war was an eye opener, and showed men of all parties and opinions the value of those primary forces that lie beneath all political action." And it was almost a personal pledge when he said at the Harvard Commemoration in 1865, "We shall not again disparage America, now that we have seen what men it will bear."

The place which Emerson forever occupies as a great critic is defined by the same sharp outlines that mark his work, in whatever light and from whatever side we approach it. A critic in the modern sense he was not, for his point of view is fixed, and he reviews the world like a searchlight placed on the top of a tall tower. He lived too early and at

too great a distance from the forum of European thought to absorb the ideas of evolution and give place to them in his philosophy. Evolution does not graft well upon the Platonic Idealism, nor are physiology and the kindred sciences sympathetic. Nothing aroused Emerson's indignation more than the attempts of the medical faculty and of phrenologists to classify, and therefore limit individuals. "The grossest ignorance does not disgust me like this ignorant knowingness."

We miss in Emerson the underlying conception of growth, of development, so characteristic of the thought of our own day, and which, for instance, is found everywhere latent in Browning's poetry. Browning regards character as the result of experience and as an ever-changing growth. To Emerson, character is rather an entity complete and eternal from the beginning. He is probably the last great writer to look at life from a stationary standpoint. There is a certain lack of the historic sense in all he has written. The ethical assumption that all men are exactly alike permeates his work. In his mind, Socrates, Marco Polo, and General Jackson stand surrounded by the same atmosphere, or rather stand as mere naked characters surrounded by no atmosphere at all. He is probably the last great writer who will fling about classic anecdotes as if they were club gossip. In the discussion of morals, this assumption does little harm. The stories and proverbs which illustrate the thought of the moralist generally concern only those simple relations of life which are common to all ages. There is charm in this familiar dealing with antiquity. The classics are thus domesticated and made real to us. What matter if Æsop appear a little too much like an American citizen, so long as his points tell?

It is in Emerson's treatment of the fine arts that we begin to notice his want of historic sense. Art endeavors to express subtle and ever-changing feelings by means of conventions which are as protean as the forms of a cloud; and the man who in speaking on the plastic arts makes the assumption that all men are alike will reveal before he has uttered three sentences that he does not know what art is, that he has never experienced any form of sensation from it. Emerson

lived in a time and clime where there was no plastic art, and he was obliged to arrive at his ideas about art by means of a highly complex process of reasoning. He dwelt constantly in a spiritual place which was the very focus of high moral fervor. This was his enthusiasm, this was his revelation, and from it he reasoned out the probable meaning of the fine arts. "This," thought Emerson, his eye rolling in a fine frenzy of moral feeling, "this must be what Apelles experienced, this fervor is the passion of Bramante. I understand the Parthenon." And so he projected his feelings about morality into the field of the plastic arts. He deals very freely and rather indiscriminately with the names of artists —Phidias, Raphael, Salvator Rosa—and he speaks always in such a way that it is impossible to connect what he says with any impression we have ever received from the works of those masters.

In fact, Emerson has never in his life felt the normal appeal of any painting, or any sculpture, or any architecture, or any music. These things, of which he does not know the meaning in real life, he yet uses, and uses constantly, as symbols to convey ethical truths. The result is that his books are full of blind places, like the notes which will not strike on a sick piano.

It is interesting to find that the one art of which Emerson did have a direct understanding, the art of poetry, gave him some insight into the relation of the artist to his vehicle. In his essay on Shakespeare there is a full recognition of the debt of Shakespeare to his times. This essay is filled with the historic sense. We ought not to accuse Emerson because he lacked appreciation of the fine arts, but rather admire the truly Goethean spirit in which he insisted upon the reality of arts of which he had no understanding. This is the same spirit which led him to insist on the value of the Eastern poets. Perhaps there exist a few scholars who can tell us how far Emerson understood or misunderstood Saadi and Firdusi and the Koran. But we need not be disturbed for his learning. It is enough that he makes us recognize that these men were men, too, and that their writings mean something not unknowable to us. The East added nothing

to Emerson, but gave him a few trappings of speech. The whole of his mysticism is to be found in *Nature,* written before he knew the sages of the Orient, and it is not improbable that there is some real connection between his own mysticism and the mysticism of the Eastern poets.

Emerson's criticism on men and books is like the test of a great chemist who seeks one or two elements. He burns a bit of the stuff in his incandescent light, shows the lines of it in his spectrum, and there an end.

It was a thought of genius that led him to write *Representative Men.* The scheme of this book gave play to every illumination of his mind, and it pinned him down to the objective, to the field of vision under his microscope. The table of contents of *Representative Men* is the dial of his education. It is as follows: Uses of Great Men; Plato, or The Philosopher; Plato, New Readings; Swedenborg, or The Mystic; Montaigne, or The Skeptic; Shakespeare, or The Poet; Napoleon, or The Man of the World; Goethe, or The Writer. The predominance of the writers over all other types of men is not cited to show Emerson's interest in The Writer, for we know his interest centered in the practical man,—even his ideal scholar is a practical man,—but to show the sources of his illustration. Emerson's library was the old-fashioned gentleman's library. His mines of thought were the world's classics. This is one reason why he so quickly gained an international currency. His very subjects in *Representative Men* are of universal interest, and he is limited only by certain inevitable local conditions. *Representative Men* is thought by many persons to be his best book. It is certainly filled with the strokes of a master. There exists no more profound criticism than Emerson's analysis of Goethe and of Napoleon, by both of whom he was at once fascinated and repelled.

II

The attitude of Emerson's mind toward reformers results so logically from his philosophy that it is easily understood. He saw in them people who sought something as a panacea

or as an end in itself. To speak strictly and not irreverently, he had his own panacea—the development of each individual; and he was impatient of any other. He did not believe in association. The very idea of it involved a surrender by the individual of some portion of his identity, and of course all the reformers worked through their associations. With their general aims he sympathized. "These reforms," he wrote, "are our contemporaries; they are ourselves, our own light and sight and conscience; they only name the relation which subsists between us and the vicious institutions which they go to rectify."

But with the methods of the reformers he had no sympathy: "He who aims at progress should aim at an infinite, not at a special benefit. The reforms whose fame now fills the land with temperance, anti-slavery, non-resistance, no-government, equal labor, fair and generous as each appears, are poor bitter things when prosecuted for themselves as an end." Again: "The young men who have been vexing society for these last years with regenerative methods seem to have made this mistake: they all exaggerated some special means, and all failed to see that the reform of reforms must be accomplished without means."

Emerson did not at first discriminate between the movement of the Abolitionists and the hundred and one other reform movements of the period; and in this lack of discrimination lies a point of extraordinary interest. The Abolitionists, as it afterwards turned out, had in fact got hold of the issue which was to control the fortunes of the republic for thirty years. The difference between them and the other reformers was this: that the Abolitionists were men set in motion by the primary and unreasoning passion of pity. Theory played small part in the movement. It grew by the excitement which exhibitions of cruelty will arouse in the minds of sensitive people.

It is not to be denied that the social conditions in Boston in 1831 foreboded an outbreak in some form. If the abolition excitement had not drafted off the rising forces, there might have been a Merry Mount, an epidemic of crime or insanity, or a mob of some sort. The abolition movement afforded the

purest form of an indulgence in human feeling that was ever offered to men. It was intoxicating. It made the agitators perfectly happy. They sang at their work and bubbled over with exhilaration. They were the only people in the United States, at this time, who were enjoying an exalted, glorifying, practical activity.

But Emerson at first lacked the touchstone, whether of intellect or of heart, to see the difference between this particular movement and the other movements then in progress. Indeed, in so far as he sees any difference between the Abolitionists and the rest, it is that the Abolitionists were more objectionable and distasteful to him. "Those," he said, "who are urging with most ardor what are called the greatest benefits to mankind are narrow, conceited, self-pleasing men, and affect us as the insane do." And again: "By the side of these men [the idealists] the hot agitators have a certain cheap and ridiculous air; they even look smaller than others. Of the two, I own I like the speculators the best. They have some piety which looks with faith to a fair future unprofaned by rash and unequal attempts to realize it." He was drawn into the abolition cause by having the truth brought home to him that these people were fighting for the Moral Law. He was slow in seeing this, because in their methods they represented everything he most condemned. As soon, however, as he was convinced, he was ready to lecture for them and to give them the weight of his approval. In 1844 he was already practically an Abolitionist, and his feelings upon the matter deepened steadily in intensity ever after.

The most interesting page of Emerson's published journal is the following, written at some time previous to 1844; the exact date is not given. A like page, whether written or unwritten, may be read into the private annals of every man who lived before the war. Emerson has, with unconscious mastery, photographed the half-specter that stalked in the minds of all. He wrote:

I had occasion to say the other day to Elizabeth Hoar that I like best the strong and worthy persons, like her father, who support the social order without hesitation or misgiving. I like these; they never incommode us by exciting grief, pity, or

perturbation of any sort. But the professed philanthropists, it is strange and horrible to say, are an altogether odious set of people, whom one would shun as the worst of bores and canters. But my conscience, my unhappy conscience respects that hapless class who see the faults and stains of our social order, and who pray and strive incessantly to right the wrong; this annoying class of men and women, though they commonly find the work altogether beyond their faculty, and their results are, for the present, distressing. They are partial, and apt to magnify their own. Yes, and the prostrate penitent, also—he is not comprehensive, he is not philosophical in those tears and groans. Yet I feel that under him and his partiality and exclusiveness is the earth and the sea and all that in them is, and the axis around which the universe revolves passes through his body where he stands.

It was the defection of Daniel Webster that completed the conversion of Emerson and turned him from an adherent into a propagandist of abolition. Not pity for the slave, but indignation at the violation of the Moral Law by Daniel Webster, was at the bottom of Emerson's anger. His abolitionism was secondary to his main mission, his main enthusiasm. It is for this reason that he stands on a plane of intellect where he might, under other circumstances, have met and defeated Webster. After the seventh of March 1850 he recognized in Webster the embodiment of all that he hated. In his attacks on Webster, Emerson trembles to his inmost fiber with antagonism. He is savage, destructive, personal, bent on death.

This exhibition of Emerson as a fighting animal is magnificent, and explains his life. There is no other instance of his ferocity. No other nature but Webster's ever so moved him; but it was time to be moved, and Webster was a man of his size. Had these two great men of New England been matched in training as they were matched in endowment, and had they then faced each other in debate, they would not have been found to differ so greatly in power. Their natures were electrically repellent, but from which did the greater force radiate? Their education differed so radically that it is impossible to compare them, but if you translate the Phi Beta Kappa address into politics, you have something

stronger than Webster,—something that recalls Chathar and Emerson would have had this advantage,—that he w not afraid. As it was, he left his library and took the stum Mr. Cabot has given us extracts from his speeches:

The tameness is indeed complete; all are involved in one h haste of terror,—presidents of colleges and professors, saints ar brokers, lawyers and manufacturers; not a liberal recollectio not so much as a snatch of an old song for freedom, dares i trude on their passive obedience. . . . Mr. Webster, perhap is only following the laws of his blood and constitution. I su pose his pledges were not quite natural to him. He is a ma who lives by his memory; a man of the past, not a man faith and of hope. All the drops of his blood have eyes th look downward, and his finely developed understanding on works truly and with all its force when it stands for anim good; that is, for property. He looks at the Union as an estate, large farm, and is excellent in the completeness of his defen of it so far. What he finds already written he will defen Lucky that so much had got well written when he came, f he has no faith in the power of self-government. Not the sma est municipal provision, if it were new, would receive h sanction. In Massachusetts, in 1776, he would, beyond a question, have been a refugee. He praises Adams and Jefferso but it is a past Adams and Jefferson. A present Adams or Jeffe son he would denounce. . . . But one thing appears certa to me: that the Union is at an end as soon as an immoral la is enacted. He who writes a crime into the statute book di under the foundations of the Capitol. . . . The words of Joh Randolph, wiser than he knew, have been ringing ominous in all echoes for thirty years. "We do not govern the people the North by our black slaves, but by their own white slaves . . . They come down now like the cry of fate, in the mome when they are fulfilled.

The exasperation of Emerson did not subside, but wei on increasing during the next four years, and on March 1854, he read his lecture on the Fugitive Slave Law at th New York Tabernacle:

I have lived all my life without suffering any inconvenien from American Slavery. I never saw it; I never heard the whi I never felt the check on my free speech and action, until th

other day, when Mr. Webster, by his personal influence, brought the Fugitive Slave Law on the country. I say Mr. Webster, for though the bill was not his, it is yet notorious that he was the life and soul of it, that he gave it all he had. It cost him his life, and under the shadow of his great name inferior men sheltered themselves, threw their ballots for it, and made the law. . . . Nobody doubts that Daniel Webster could make a good speech. Nobody doubts that there were good and plausible things to be said on the part of the South. But this is not a question of ingenuity, not a question of syllogisms, but of sides. *How came he there?* . . . But the question which history will ask is broader. In the final hour when he was forced by the peremptory necessity of the closing armies to take a side,—did he take the part of great principles, the side of humanity and justice, or the side of abuse, and oppression and chaos? . . . He did as immoral men usually do,—made very low bows to the Christian Church and went through all the Sunday decorums, but when allusion was made to the question of duty and the sanctions of morality, he very frankly said, at Albany, "Some higher law, something existing somewhere between here and the heaven—I do not know where." And if the reporters say true, this wretched atheism found some laughter in the company.

It was too late for Emerson to shine as a political debater. On May 14, 1857, Longfellow wrote in his diary: "It is rather painful to see Emerson in the arena of politics, hissed and hooted at by young law students." Emerson records a similar experience at a later date: "If I were dumb, yet would I have gone and mowed and muttered or made signs. The mob roared whenever I attempted to speak, and after several beginnings I withdrew." There is nothing "painful" here: it is the sublime exhibition of a great soul in bondage to circumstance.

The thing to be noted is that this is the same man, in the same state of excitement about the same idea, who years before spoke out in *The American Scholar,* in the *Essays,* and in the *Lectures.*

What was it that had aroused in Emerson such Promethean antagonism in 1837 but those same forces which in 1850 came to their culmination and assumed visible shape

in the person of Daniel Webster? The formal victory of Webster drew Emerson into the arena, and made a dramatic episode in his life. But his battle with those forces had begun thirteen years earlier, when he threw down the gauntlet to them in his Phi Beta Kappa oration. Emerson by his writings did more than any other man to rescue the youth of the next generation and fit them for the fierce times to follow. It will not be denied that he sent ten thousand sons to the war.

In speaking of Emerson's attitude toward the anti-slavery cause, it has been possible to dispense with any survey of that movement, because the movement was simple and specific and is well remembered. But when we come to analyze the relations he bore to some of the local agitations of his day, it becomes necessary to weave in with the matter a discussion of certain tendencies deeply imbedded in the life of his times, and of which he himself was in a sense an outcome. In speaking of the Transcendentalists, who were essentially the children of the Puritans, we must begin with some study of the chief traits of Puritanism.

What parts the factors of climate, circumstance, and religion have respectively played in the development of the New England character no analysis can determine. We may trace the imaginary influence of a harsh creed in the lines of the face. We may sometimes follow from generation to generation the course of a truth which at first sustained the spirit of man, till we see it petrify into a dogma which now kills the spirits of men. Conscience may destroy the character. The tragedy of the New England judge enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law was no new spectacle in New England. A dogmatic crucifixion of the natural instincts had been in progress there for two hundred years. Emerson, who is more free from dogma than any other teacher that can be named, yet comes very near being dogmatic in his reiteration of the Moral Law.

Whatever volume of Emerson we take up, the Moral Law holds the same place in his thoughts. It is the one statable revelation of truth which he is ready to stake his all upon. "The illusion that strikes me as the masterpiece in that

ring of illusions which our life is, is the timidity with which we assert our moral sentiment. We are made of it, the world is built by it, things endure as they share it; all beauty, all health, all intelligence exist by it; yet we shrink to speak of it or range ourselves by its side. Nay, we presume strength of him or them who deny it. Cities go against it, the college goes against it, the courts snatch any precedent at any vicious form of law to rule it out; legislatures listen with appetite to declamations against it and vote it down."

With this very beautiful and striking passage no one will quarrel, nor will anyone misunderstand it.

The following passage has the same sort of poetical truth: "Things are saturated with the moral law. There is no escape from it. Violets and grass preach it; rain and snow, wind and tides, every change, every cause in Nature is nothing but a disguised missionary. . . ."

But Emerson is not satisfied with metaphor. "We affirm that in all men is this majestic perception and command; that it is the presence of the eternal in each perishing man; that it distances and degrades all statements of whatever saints, heroes, poets, as obscure and confused stammerings before its silent revelation. *They* report the truth. *It* is the truth." In this last extract we have Emerson actually affirming that his dogma of the Moral Law is Absolute Truth. He thinks it not merely a form of truth, like the old theologies, but very distinguishable from all other forms in the past.

Curiously enough, his statement of the law grows dogmatic and incisive in proportion as he approaches the borderland between his law and the natural instincts: "The last revelation of intellect and of sentiment is that in a manner it severs the man from all other men; makes known to him *that the spiritual powers are sufficient to him if no other being existed;* that he is to deal absolutely in the world, as if he alone were a system and a state, and though all should perish could make all anew." Here we have the dogma applied, and we see in it only a new form of old Calvinism as cruel as Calvinism, and not much different from its original. The italics are not Emerson's, but are inserted to bring out an idea which is everywhere prevalent in his teaching.

In this final form, the Moral Law, by insisting that sheer conscience can slake the thirst that rises in the soul, is convicted of falsehood; and this heartless falsehood is the same falsehood that has been put into the porridge of every Puritan child for six generations. A grown man can digest doctrine and sleep at night. But a young person of high purpose and strong will, who takes such a lie as this half-truth and feeds on it as on the bread of life, will suffer. It will injure the action of his heart. Truly the fathers have eaten sour grapes, therefore the children's teeth are set on edge.

To understand the civilization of cities, we must look at the rural population from which they draw their life. We have recently had our attention called to the last remnants of that village life so reverently gathered up by Miss Wilkins, and of which Miss Emily Dickinson was the last authentic voice. The spirit of this age has examined with an almost pathological interest this rescued society. We must go to it if we would understand Emerson, who is the blossoming of its culture. We must study it if we would arrive at any intelligent and general view of that miscellaneous crop of individuals who have been called the Transcendentalists.

Between 1830 and 1840 there were already signs in New England that the nutritive and reproductive forces of society were not quite wholesome, not exactly well adjusted. Self-repression was the religion which had been inherited. "Distrust Nature" was the motto written upon the front of the temple. What would have happened to that society if left to itself for another hundred years no man can guess. It was rescued by the two great regenerators of mankind, new land and war. The dispersion came, as Emerson said of the barbarian conquests of Rome, not a day too soon. It happened that the country at large stood in need of New England as much as New England stood in need of the country. This congested virtue, in order to be saved, must be scattered. This ferment, in order to be kept wholesome, must be used as leaven to leaven the whole lump. "As you know,"

says Emerson in his Eulogy on Boston, "New England supplies annually a large detachment of preachers and schoolmasters and private tutors to the interior of the South and West. . . . We are willing to see our sons emigrate, as to see our hives swarm. That is what they were made to do, and what the land wants and invites."

For purposes of yeast, there was never such leaven as the Puritan stock. How little the natural force of the race had really abated became apparent when it was placed under healthy conditions, given land to till, foes to fight, the chance to renew its youth like the eagle. But during this period the relief had not yet come. The terrible pressure of Puritanism and conservatism in New England was causing a revolt not only of the Abolitionists, but of another class of people of a type not so virile as they. The times have been smartly described by Lowell in his essay on Thoreau:

> Every possible form of intellectual and physical dyspepsia brought forth its gospel. Bran had its prophets. . . . Everybody had a Mission (with a capital M) to attend to everybody else's business. No brain but had its private maggot, which must have found pitiably short commons sometimes. Not a few impecunious zealots abjured the use of money (unless earned by other people), professing to live on the internal revenues of the spirit. Some had an assurance of instant millennium so soon as hooks and eyes should be substituted for buttons. Communities were established where everything was to be common but common sense. . . . Conventions were held for every hitherto inconceivable purpose.

Whatever may be said of the Transcendentalists, it must not be forgotten that they represented an elevation of feeling, which through them qualified the next generation, and can be traced in the life of New England today. The strong intrinsic character lodged in these recusants was later made manifest; for many of them became the best citizens of the commonwealth,—statesmen, merchants, soldiers, men and women of affairs. They retained their idealism while becoming practical men. There is hardly an example of what we should have thought would be common in their later lives, namely, a reaction from so much ideal effort, and a

plunge into cynicism and malice, scoundrelism, and the flesh-pots. In their early life they resembled the Abolitionists in their devotion to an idea; but with the Transcendentalists self-culture and the aesthetic and sentimental education took the place of more public aims. They seem also to have been persons of greater social refinement than the Abolitionists.

The Transcendentalists were sure of only one thing,—that society as constituted was all wrong. In this their main belief they were right. They were men and women whose fundamental need was activity, contact with real life, and the opportunity for social expansion; and they keenly felt the chill and fictitious character of the reigning conventionalities. The rigidity of behavior which at this time characterized the Bostonians seemed sometimes ludicrous and sometimes disagreeable to the foreign visitor. There was great gravity, together with a certain pomp and dumbness, and these things were supposed to be natural to the inhabitants and to give them joy. People are apt to forget that such masks are never worn with ease. They result from the application of an inflexible will, and always inflict discomfort. The Transcendentalists found themselves all but stifled in a society as artificial in its decorum as the court of France during the last years of Louis XIV.

Emerson was in no way responsible for the movement, although he got the credit of having evoked it by his teaching. He was elder brother to it, and was generated by its parental forces; but even if Emerson had never lived, the Transcendentalists would have appeared. He was their victim rather than their cause. He was always tolerant of them and sometimes amused at them, and disposed to treat them lightly. It is impossible to analyze their case with more astuteness than he did in an editorial letter in *The Dial.* The letter is cold, but is a masterpiece of good sense. He had, he says, received fifteen letters on the Prospects of Culture.

"Excellent reasons have been shown us why the writers, obviously persons of sincerity and elegance, should be dissatisfied with the life they lead, and with their company. . . . They want a friend to whom they can speak and from whom

they may hear now and then a reasonable word." After discussing one or two of their proposals,—one of which was that the tiresome "uncles and aunts" of the enthusiasts should be placed by themselves in one delightful village, the dough, as Emerson says, be placed in one pan and the leaven in another,—he continues: "But it would be unjust not to remind our younger friends that whilst this aspiration has always made its mark in the lives of men of thought, in vigorous individuals it does not remain a detached object, but is satisfied along with the satisfaction of other aims." Young Americans "are educated above the work of their times and country, and disdain it. Many of the more acute minds pass into a lofty criticism . . . which only embitters their sensibility to the evil, and widens the feeling of hostility between them and the citizens at large. . . . We should not know where to find in literature any record of so much unbalanced intellectuality, such undeniable apprehension without talent, so much power without equal applicability, as our young men pretend to. . . . The balance of mind and body will redress itself fast enough. Superficialness is the real distemper. . . . It is certain that speculation is no succedaneum for life." He then turns to find the cure for these distempers in the farm lands of Illinois, at that time already being fenced in "almost like New England itself," and closes with a suggestion that so long as there is a woodpile in the yard, and the "wrongs of the Indian, of the Negro, of the emigrant, remain unmitigated," relief might be found even nearer home.

In his lecture on the Transcendentalists he says: ". . . But their solitary and fastidious manners not only withdraw them from the conversation, but from the labors of the world: they are not good citizens, not good members of society; unwillingly they bear their part of the public and private burdens; they do not willingly share in the public charities, in the public religious rites, in the enterprises of education, of missions foreign and domestic, in the abolition of the slave-trade, or in the temperance society. They do not even like to vote."

A less sympathetic observer, Harriet Martineau, wrote of

them: "While Margaret Fuller and her adult pupils sat 'gorgeously dressed,' talking about Mars and Venus, Plato and Goethe, and fancying themselves the elect of the earth in intellect and refinement, the liberties of the republic were running out as fast as they could go at a breach which another sort of elect persons were devoting themselves to repair; and my complaint against the 'gorgeous' pedants was that they regarded their preservers as hewers of wood and drawers of water, and their work as a less vital one than the pedantic orations which were spoiling a set of well-meaning women in a pitiable way." Harriet Martineau, whose whole work was practical, and who wrote her journal in 1855 and in the light of history, was hardly able to do justice to these unpractical but sincere spirits.

Emerson was divided from the Transcendentalists by his common sense. His shrewd business intellect made short work of their schemes. Each one of their social projects contained some covert economic weakness, which always turned out to lie in an attack upon the integrity of the individual, and which Emerson of all men could be counted on to detect. He was divided from them also by the fact that he was a man of genius, who had sought out and fought out his means of expression. He was a great artist, and as such he was a complete being. No one could give to him nor take from him. His yearnings found fruition in expression. He was sure of his place and of his use in this world. But the Transcendentalists were neither geniuses nor artists nor complete beings. Nor had they found their places or uses as yet. They were men and women seeking light. They walked in dry places, seeking rest and finding none. The Transcendentalists are not collectively important because their *Sturm und Drang* was intellectual and bloodless. Though Emerson admonish and Harriet Martineau condemn, yet from the memorials that survive, one is more impressed with the sufferings than with the ludicrousness of these persons. There is something distressing about their letters, their talk, their memoirs, their interminable diaries. They worry and contort and introspect. They rave and dream. They peep and theorize. They cut open the bellows

of life to see where the wind comes from. Margaret Fuller analyzes Emerson, and Emerson Margaret Fuller. It is not a wholesome ebullition of vitality. It is a nightmare, in which the emotions, the terror, the agony, the rapture, are all unreal, and have no vital content, no consequence in the world outside. It is positively wonderful that so much excitement and so much suffering should have left behind nothing in the field of art which is valuable. All that intelligence could do toward solving problems for his friends Emerson did. But there are situations in life in which the intelligence is helpless, and in which something else, something perhaps possessed by a plowboy, is more divine than Plato.

If it were not pathetic, there would be something cruel—indeed there is something cruel—in Emerson's incapacity to deal with Margaret Fuller. He wrote to her on October 24, 1840:

> My dear Margaret, I have your frank and noble and affecting letter, and yet I think I could wish it unwritten. I ought never to have suffered you to lead me into any conversation or writing on our relation, a topic from which with all persons my Genius warns me away.

The letter proceeds with unimpeachable emptiness and integrity in the same strain. In 1841 he writes in his diary:

> Strange, cold-warm, attractive-repelling conversation with Margaret, whom I always admire, most revere when I nearest see, and sometimes love; yet whom I freeze and who freezes me to silence when we promise to come nearest.

Human sentiment was known to Emerson mainly in the form of pain. His nature shunned it; he cast it off as quickly as possible. There is a word or two in the essay on *Love* which seems to show that the inner and diaphanous core of this seraph had once, but not for long, been shot with blood: he recalls only the pain of it. His relations with Margaret Fuller seem never normal, though they lasted for years. This brilliant woman was in distress. She was asking for bread, and he was giving her a stone, and neither of them was conscious of what was passing. This is pitiful. It makes

us clutch about us to catch hold, if we somehow may, of the hand of a man.

There was manliness in Horace Greeley, under whom Miss Fuller worked on the New York *Tribune* not many years afterward. She wrote:

> Mr. Greeley I like—nay, more, love. He is in his habit a plebeian, in his heart a nobleman. His abilities in his own way are great. He believes in mine to a surprising degree. We are true friends.

This anaemic incompleteness of Emerson's character can be traced to the philosophy of his race; at least it can be followed in that philosophy. There is an implication of a fundamental falsehood in every bit of Transcendentalism, including Emerson. That falsehood consists in the theory of the self-sufficiency of each individual, men and women alike. Margaret Fuller is a good example of the effect of this philosophy, because her history afterward showed that she was constituted like other human beings, was dependent upon human relationship, and was not only a very noble, but also a very womanly creature. Her marriage, her Italian life, and her tragic death light up with the splendor of reality the earlier and unhappy period of her life. This woman had been driven into her vagaries by the lack of something which she did not know existed, and which she sought blindly in metaphysics. Harriet Martineau writes of her:

> It is the most grievous loss I have almost ever known in private history, the deferring of Margaret Fuller's married life so long. That noble last period of her life is happily on record as well as the earlier.

The hardy Englishwoman has here laid a kind human hand on the weakness of New England, and seems to be unconscious that she is making a revelation as to the whole Transcendental movement. But the point is this: there was no one within reach of Margaret Fuller, in her early days, who knew what was her need. One offered her Kant, one Comte, one Fourier, one Swedenborg, one the Moral Law. You cannot feed the heart on these things.

Yet there is a bright side to this New England spirit, which seems, if we look only to the graver emotions, so dry, dismal, and deficient. A bright and cheery courage appears in certain natures of which the sun has made conquest, that almost reconciles us to all loss, so splendid is the outcome. The practical, dominant, insuppressible active temperaments who have a word for every emergency, and who carry the controlled force of ten men at their disposal, are the fruits of this same spirit. Emerson knew not tears, but he and the hundred other beaming and competent characters which New England has produced make us almost envy their state. They give us again the old Stoics at their best.

Very closely connected with this subject—the crisp and cheery New England temperament—lies another which any discussion of Emerson must bring up—namely, Asceticism. It is probable that in dealing with Emerson's feelings about the plastic arts we have to do with what is really the inside, or metaphysical side, of the same phenomena which present themselves on the outside, or physical side, in the shape of asceticism.

Emerson's natural asceticism is revealed to us in almost every form in which history can record a man. It is in his philosophy, in his style, in his conduct, and in his appearance. It was, however, not in his voice. Mr. Cabot, with that reverence for which everyone must feel personally grateful to him, has preserved a description of Emerson by the New York journalist, N. P. Willis:

> It is a voice with shoulders in it, which he has not; with lungs in it far larger than his; with a walk which the public never see; with a fist in it which his own hand never gave him the model for; and with a gentleman in it which his parochial and "bare-necessaries-of-life" sort of exterior gives no other betrayal of. We can imagine nothing in nature (which seems too to have a type for everything) like the want of correspondence between the Emerson that goes in at the eye and the Emerson that goes in at the ear. A heavy and vaselike blossom of a magnolia, with fragrance enough to perfume a whole wilderness, which should be lifted by a whirlwind and dropped into a branch of aspen, would not seem more as if it could never have

grown there than Emerson's voice seems inspired and foreign to his visible and natural body.

Emerson's ever-exquisite and wonderful good taste seems closely connected with this asceticism, and it is probable that his taste influenced his views and conduct to some small extent.

The anti-slavery people were not always refined. They were constantly doing things which were tactically very effective, but were not calculated to attract the oversensitive. Garrison's rampant and impersonal egotism was good politics, but bad taste. Wendell Phillips did not hesitate upon occasion to deal in personalities of an exasperating kind. One sees a certain shrinking in Emerson from the taste of the Abolitionists. It was not merely their doctrines or their methods which offended him. He at one time refused to give Wendell Phillips his hand because of Phillips' treatment of his friend, Judge Hoar. One hardly knows whether to be pleased at Emerson for showing a human weakness, or annoyed at him for not being more of a man. The anecdote is valuable in both lights. It is like a tiny speck on the crystal of his character which shows us the exact location of the orb, and it is the best illustration of the feeling of the times which has come down to us.

If by "asceticism" we mean an experiment in starving the senses, there is little harm in it. Nature will soon reassert her dominion, and very likely our perceptions will be sharpened by the trial. But "natural asceticism" is a thing hardly to be distinguished from functional weakness. What is natural asceticism but a lack of vigor? Does it not tend to close the avenues between the soul and the universe? "Is it not so much death?" The accounts of Emerson show him to have been a man in whom there was almost a hiatus between the senses and the most inward spirit of life. The lower register of sensations and emotions which domesticate a man into fellowship with common life was weak. Genial familiarity was to him impossible; laughter was almost a pain. "It is not the sea and poverty and pursuit that separate us. Here is Alcott by my door,—yet is the union more profound? No! the

sea, vocation, poverty, are seeming fences, but man is insular and cannot be touched. Every man is an infinitely repellent orb, and holds his individual being on that condition. . . . Most of the persons whom I see in my own house I see across a gulf; I cannot go to them nor they come to me."

This aloofness of Emerson must be remembered only as blended with his benignity. "His friends were all that knew him," and, as Dr. Holmes said, "his smile was the well-remembered line of Terence written out in living features." Emerson's journals show the difficulty of his intercourse even with himself. He could not reach himself at will, nor could another reach him. The sensuous and ready contact with nature which more carnal people enjoy was unknown to him. He had eyes for the New England landscape, but for no other scenery. If there is one supreme sensation reserved for man, it is the vision of Venice seen from the water. This sight greeted Emerson at the age of thirty. The famous city, as he approached it by boat, "looked for some time like nothing but New York. It is a great oddity, a city for beavers, but to my thought a most disagreeable residence. You feel always in prison and solitary. It is as if you were always at sea. I soon had enough of it."

Emerson's contempt for travel and for the "rococo toy," Italy, is too well known to need citation. It proceeds from the same deficiency of sensation. His eyes saw nothing; his ears heard nothing. He believed that men traveled for distraction and to kill time. The most vulgar plutocrat could not be blinder to beauty nor bring home less from Athens than this cultivated saint. Everything in the world which must be felt with a glow in the breast, in order to be understood, was to him dead-letter. Art was a name to him; music was a name to him; love was a name to him. His essay on *Love* is a nice compilation of compliments and elegant phrases ending up with some icy morality. It seems very well fitted for a gift-book or an old-fashioned lady's annual.

The lovers delight in endearments, in avowals of love, in comparisons of their regards. . . . The soul which is in the soul of each, craving a perfect beatitude, detects incongruities, defects, and disproportion in the behavior of the other. Hence

arise surprise, expostulation, and pain. Yet that which drew them to each other was signs of loveliness, signs of virtue; and these virtues are there, however eclipsed. They appear and reappear and continue to attract; but the regard changes, quits the sign, and attaches to the substance. This repairs the wounded affection. Meantime, as life wears on, it proves a game of permutation and combination of all possible positions of the parties, to employ all the resources of each, and acquaint each with the weakness of the other. . . . At last they discover that all which at first drew them together—those once sacred features, that magical play of charms—was deciduous, had a prospective end like the scaffolding by which the house was built, and the purification of the intellect and the heart from year to year is the real marriage, foreseen and prepared from the first, and wholly above their consciousness. . . . Thus are we put in training for a love which knows not sex nor person nor partiality, but which seeks wisdom and virtue everywhere, to the end of increasing virtue and wisdom. . . . There are moments when the affections rule and absorb the man, and make his happiness dependent on a person or persons. But in health the mind is presently seen again, *etc.*

All this is not love, but the merest literary coquetry. Love is different from this. Lady Burton, when a very young girl, and six years before her engagement, met Burton at Boulogne. They met in the street, but did not speak. A few days later they were formally introduced at a dance. Of this she writes: "That was a night of nights. He waltzed with me once, and spoke to me several times. I kept the sash where he put his arm around me and my gloves, and never wore them again."

A glance at what Emerson says about marriage shows that he suspected that institution. He can hardly speak of it without some sort of caveat or precaution. "Though the stuff of tragedy and of romances is in a moral union of two superior persons whose confidence in each other for long years, out of sight and in sight, and against all appearances, is at last justified by victorious proof of probity to gods and men, causing joyful emotions, tears, and glory—though there be for heroes this *moral union*, yet they too are as far as ever from an intellectual union, and the moral is for low and external

purposes, like the corporation of a ship's company or of a fire club." In speaking of modern novels, he says: "There is no new element, no power, no furtherance. 'Tis only confectionery, not the raising of new corn. Great is the poverty of their inventions. *She was beautiful, and he fell in love.* . . . Happy will that house be in. which the relations are formed by character; after the highest and not after the lowest; the house in which character marries and not confusion and a miscellany of unavowable motives. . . . To each occurs soon after puberty, some event, or society or way of living, which becomes the crisis of life and the chief fact in their history. In women it is love and marriage (which is more reasonable), and yet it is pitiful to date and measure all the facts and sequel of an unfolding life from such a youthful and generally inconsiderate period as the age of courtship and marriage. . . . Women more than all are the element and kingdom of illusion. Being fascinated they fascinate: They see through Claude Lorraines. And how dare anyone, if he could, pluck away the coulisses, stage effects, and ceremonies by which they live? Too pathetic, too pitiable, is the region of affection, and its atmosphere always liable to mirage."

We are all so concerned that a man who writes about love shall tell the truth that if he chance to start from premises which are false or mistaken, his conclusions will appear not merely false, but offensive. It makes no matter how exalted the personal character of the writer may be. Neither sanctity nor intellect nor moral enthusiasm, though they be intensified to the point of incandescence, can make up for a want of nature.

This perpetual splitting up of love into two species, one of which is condemned, but admitted to be useful—is it not degrading? There is in Emerson's theory of the relation between the sexes neither good sense, nor manly feeling, nor sound psychology. It is founded on none of these things. It is a pure piece of dogmatism, and reminds us that he was bred to the priesthood. We are not to imagine that there was in this doctrine anything peculiar to Emerson. But we are surprised to find the pessimism inherent in the doctrine overcome Emerson, to whom pessimism is foreign. Both doctrine

and pessimism are a part of the Puritanism of the times. They show a society in which the intellect had long been used to analyze the affections, in which the head had become dislocated from the body. To this disintegration of the simple passion of love may be traced the lack of maternal tenderness characteristic of the New England nature. The relation between the blood and the brain was not quite normal in this civilization, nor in Emerson, who is its most remarkable representative.

If we take two steps backward from the canvas of this mortal life and glance at it impartially, we shall see that these matters of love and marriage pass like a pivot through the lives of almost every individual, and are, sociologically speaking, the *primum mobile* of the world. The books of any philosopher who slurs them or distorts them will hold up a false mirror to life. If an inhabitant of another planet should visit the earth, he would receive, on the whole, a truer notion of human life by attending an Italian opera than he would by reading Emerson's volumes. He would learn from the Italian opera that there were two sexes; and this, after all, is probably the fact with which the education of such a stranger ought to begin.

In a review of Emerson's personal character and opinions, we are thus led to see that his philosophy, which finds no room for the emotions, is a faithful exponent of his own and of the New England temperament, which distrusts and dreads the emotions. Regarded as a sole guide to life for a young person of strong conscience and undeveloped affections, his works might conceivably be even harmful because of their unexampled power of purely intellectual stimulation.

Emerson's poetry has given rise to much heart-burning and disagreement. Some people do not like it. They fail to find the fire in the ice. On the other hand, his poems appeal not only to a large number of professed lovers of poetry, but also to a class of readers who find in Emerson an element for which they search the rest of poesy in vain.

It is the irony of fate that his admirers should be more

than usually sensitive about his fame. This prophet who desired not to have followers, lest he too should become a cult and a convention, and whose main thesis throughout life was that piety is a crime, has been calmly canonized and embalmed in amber by the very forces he braved. He is become a tradition and a sacred relic. You must speak of him under your breath, and you may not laugh near his shrine.

Emerson's passion for nature was not like the passion of Keats or of Burns, of Coleridge or of Robert Browning; compared with these men he is cold. His temperature is below blood-heat, and his volume of poems stands on the shelf of English poets like the icy fish which in *Caliban upon Setebos* is described as finding himself thrust into the warm ooze of an ocean not his own.

But Emerson is a poet, nevertheless, a very extraordinary and rare man of genius, whose verses carry a world of their own within them. They are overshadowed by the greatness of his prose, but they are authentic. He is the chief poet of that school of which Emily Dickinson is a minor poet. His poetry is a successful spiritual deliverance of great interest. His worship of the New England landscape amounts to a religion. His poems do that most wonderful thing, make us feel that we are alone in the fields and with the trees,—not English fields nor French lanes, but New England meadows and uplands. There is no human creature in sight, not even Emerson is there, but the wind and the flowers, the wild birds, the fences, the transparent atmosphere, the breath of nature. There is a deep and true relation between the intellectual and almost dry brilliancy of Emerson's feelings and the landscape itself. Here is no defective English poet, no Shelley without the charm, but an American poet, a New England poet with two hundred years of New England culture and New England landscape in him.

People are forever speculating upon what will last, what posterity will approve, and some people believe that Emerson's poetry will outlive his prose. The question is idle. The poems are alive now, and they may or may not survive the race whose spirit they embody; but one thing is plain: they have qualities which have preserved poetry in the past. They

are utterly indigenous and sincere. They are short. They represent a civilization and a climate.

His verse divides itself into several classes. We have the single lyrics, written somewhat in the style of the later seventeenth century. Of these *The Humble Bee* is the most exquisite, and although its tone and imagery can be traced to various well-known and dainty bits of poetry, it is by no means an imitation, but a masterpiece of fine taste. *The Rhodora* and *Terminus* and perhaps a few others belong to that class of poetry which, like *Abou Ben Adhem,* is poetry because it is the perfection of statement. The *Boston Hymn,* the *Concord Ode,* and the other occasional pieces fall in another class, and do not seem to be important. The first two lines of the *Ode,*

> O tenderly the haughty day
> Fills his blue urn with fire,

are for their extraordinary beauty worthy of some mythical Greek, some Simonides, some Sappho, but the rest of the lines are commonplace. Throughout his poems there are good bits, happy and golden lines, snatches of grace. He himself knew the quality of his poetry, and wrote of it,

> All were sifted through and through,
> Five lines lasted sound and true.

He is never merely conventional, and his poetry, like his prose, is homespun and sound. But his ear was defective: his rhymes are crude, and his verse is often lame and unmusical, a fault which can be countervailed by nothing but force, and force he lacks. To say that his ear was defective is hardly strong enough. Passages are not uncommon which hurt the reader and unfit him to proceed; as, for example:

> Thorough a thousand voices
> Spoke the universal dame:
> "Who telleth one of my meanings
> Is master of all I am."

He himself has very well described the impression his verse is apt to make on a new reader when he says,

> Poetry must not freeze, but flow.

The lovers of Emerson's poems freely acknowledge all these defects, but find in them another element, very subtle and rare, very refined and elusive, if not altogether unique. This is the mystical element or strain which qualifies many of his poems, and to which some of them are wholly devoted.

There has been so much discussion as to Emerson's relation to the mystics that it is well here to turn aside for a moment and consider the matter by itself. The elusiveness of "mysticism" arises out of the fact that it is not a creed, but a state of mind. It is formulated into no dogmas, but, in so far as it is communicable, it is conveyed, or sought to be conveyed, by symbols. These symbols to a skeptical or an unsympathetic person will say nothing, but the presumption among those who are inclined toward the cult is that if these symbols convey anything at all, that thing is mysticism. The mystics are right. The familiar phrases, terms, and symbols of mysticism are not meaningless, and a glance at them shows that they do tend to express and evoke a somewhat definite psychic condition.

There is a certain mood of mind experienced by most of us in which we feel the mystery of existence; in which our consciousness seems to become suddenly separated from our thoughts, and we find ourselves asking, "Who am I? What are these thoughts?" The mood is very apt to overtake us while engaged in the commonest acts. In health it is always momentary, and seems to coincide with the instant of the transition and shift of our attention from one thing to another. It is probably connected with the transfer of energy from one set of faculties to another set, which occurs, for instance, on our waking from sleep, on our hearing a bell at night, on our observing any common object, a chair or a pitcher, at a time when our mind is or has just been thoroughly preoccupied with something else. This displacement of the attention occurs in its most notable form when we walk from the study into the open fields. Nature then attacks us on all sides at once, overwhelms, drowns, and destroys our old thoughts, stimulates vaguely and all at once a thousand new ideas, dissipates all focus of thought, and dissolves our attention. If we happen to be mentally fatigued, and we

take a walk in the country, a sense of immense relief, of rest and joy, which nothing else on earth can give, accompanies this distraction of the mind from its problems. The reaction fills us with a sense of mystery and expansion. It brings us to the threshold of those spiritual experiences which are the obscure core and reality of our existence, ever alive within us, but generally veiled and subconscious. It brings us, as it were, into the antechamber of art, poetry, and music. The condition is one of excitation and receptiveness, where art may speak and we shall understand. On the other hand, the condition shows a certain dethronement of the will and attention which may ally it to the hypnotic state.

Certain kinds of poetry imitate this method of nature by calling on us with a thousand voices at once. Poetry deals often with vague or contradictory statements, with a jumble of images, a throng of impressions. But in true poetry the psychology of real life is closely followed. The mysticism is momentary. We are not kept suspended in a limbo, "trembling like a guilty thing surprised," but are ushered into another world of thought and feeling. On the other hand, a mere statement of inconceivable things is the *reductio ad absurdum* of poetry, because such a statement puzzles the mind, scatters the attention, and does to a certain extent superinduce the "blank misgivings" of mysticism. It does this, however, *without* going further and filling the mind with new life. If I bid a man follow my reasoning closely, and then say, "I am the slayer and the slain, I am the doubter and the doubt," I puzzle his mind, and may succeed in reawakening in him the sense he has often had come over him that we are ignorant of our own destinies and cannot grasp the meaning of life. If I do this, nothing can be a more legitimate opening for a poem, for it is an opening of the reader's mind. Emerson, like many other highly organized persons, was acquainted with the mystic mood. It was not momentary with him. It haunted him, and he seems to have believed that the whole of poetry and religion was contained in the mood. And no one can gainsay that this mental condition is intimately connected with our highest feelings and leads directly into them.

The fault with Emerson is that he stops in the antechamber of poetry. He is content if he has brought us to the hypnotic point. His prologue and overture are excellent, but where is the argument? Where is the substantial artistic content that shall feed our souls?

The *Sphinx* is a fair example of an Emerson poem. The opening verses are musical, though they are handicapped by a reminiscence of the German way of writing. In the succeeding verses we are lapped into a charming reverie, and then at the end suddenly jolted by the question, "What is it all about?" In this poem we see expanded into four or five pages of verse an experience which in real life endures an eighth of a second, and when we come to the end of the mood we are at the end of the poem.

There is no question that the power to throw your sitter into a receptive mood by a pass or two which shall give you his virgin attention is necessary to any artist. Nobody has the knack of this more strongly than Emerson in his prose writings. By a phrase or a common remark he creates an ideal atmosphere in which his thought has the directness of great poetry. But he cannot do it in verse. He seeks in his verse to do the very thing which he avoids doing in his prose: follow a logical method. He seems to know too much what he is about, and to be content with doing too little. His mystical poems, from the point of view of such criticism as this, are all alike in that they all seek to do the same thing. Nor does he always succeed. How does he sometimes fail in verse to say what he conveys with such everlasting happiness in prose!

> I am owner of the sphere,
> Of the seven stars and the solar year,
> Of Cæsar's hand and Plato's brain,
> Of Lord Christ's heart and Shakespeare's strain.

In these lines we have the same thought which appears a few pages later in prose: "All that Shakespeare says of the king, yonder slip of a boy that reads in the corner feels to be true of himself." He has failed in the verse because he has thrown a mystical gloss over a thought which was stronger in

its simplicity; because in the verse he states an abstraction instead of giving an instance. The same failure follows him sometimes in prose when he is too conscious of his machinery.

Emerson knew that the sense of mystery accompanies the shift of an absorbed attention to some object which brings the mind back to the present. "There are times when the cawing of a crow, a weed, a snowflake, a boy's willow whistle, or a farmer planting in his field is more suggestive to the mind than the Yosemite gorge or the Vatican would be in another hour. In like mood, an old verse, or certain words, gleam with rare significance." At the close of his essay on *History* he is trying to make us feel that all history, in so far as we can know it, is within ourselves, and is in a certain sense autobiography. He is speaking of the Romans, and he suddenly pretends to see a lizard on the wall, and proceeds to wonder what the lizard has to do with the Romans. For this he has been quite properly laughed at by Dr. Holmes, because he has resorted to an artifice and has failed to create an illusion. Indeed, Dr. Holmes is somewhere so irreverent as to remark that a gill of alcohol will bring on a psychical state very similar to that suggested by Emerson; and Dr. Holmes is accurately happy in his jest, because alcohol does dislocate the attention in a thoroughly mystical manner.

There is throughout Emerson's poetry, as throughout all of the New England poetry, too much thought, too much argument. Some of his verse gives the reader a very curious and subtle impression that the lines are a translation. This is because he is closely following a thesis. Indeed, the lines are a translation. They were thought first, and poetry afterwards. Read off his poetry, and you see through the scheme of it at once. Read his prose, and you will be put to it to make out the connection of ideas. The reason is that in the poetry the sequence is intellectual, in the prose the sequence is emotional. It is no mere epigram to say that his poetry is governed by the ordinary laws of prose writing, and his prose by the laws of poetry.

The lines entitled *Days* have a dramatic vigor, a mystery, and a music all their own:

> Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
> Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
> And marching single in an endless file,
> Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
> To each they offer gifts after his will,
> Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
> I, in my pleachèd garden, watched the pomp,
> Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
> Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
> Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
> Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

The prose version of these lines, which in this case is inferior, is to be found in *Works and Days:*

> He only is rich who owns the day. . . . They come and go like muffled and veiled figures, sent from a distant friendly party; but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away.

That Emerson had within him the soul of a poet no one will question, but his poems are expressed in prose forms. There are passages in his early addresses which can be matched in English only by bits from Sir Thomas Browne or Milton, or from the great poets. Heine might have written the following parable into verse, but it could not have been finer. It comes from the very bottom of Emerson's nature. It is his uttermost. Infancy and manhood and old age, the first and the last of him, speak in it.

> Every god is there sitting in his sphere. The young mortal enters the hall of the firmament; there is he alone with them alone, they pouring on him benedictions and gifts, and beckoning him up to their thrones. On the instant, and incessantly, fall snowstorms of illusions. He fancies himself in a vast crowd which sways this way and that, and whose movements and doings he must obey; he fancies himself poor, orphaned, insignificant. The mad crowd drives hither and thither, now furiously commanding this thing to be done, now that. What is

he that he should resist their will, and think or act for himself? Every moment new changes and new showers of deceptions to baffle and distract him. And when, by and by, for an instant, the air clears and the cloud lifts a little, there are the gods still sitting around him on their thrones—they alone with him alone.

With the war closes the colonial period of our history, and with the end of the war begins our national life. Before that time it was not possible for any man to speak for the nation, however much he might long to, for there was no nation; there were only discordant provinces held together by the exercise on the part of each of a strong and conscientious will. It is too much to expect that national character shall be expressed before it is developed, or that the arts shall flourish during a period when everybody is preoccupied with the fear of revolution. The provincial note which runs through all our literature down to the war resulted in one sense from our dependence upon Europe. "All American manners, language, and writings," says Emerson, "are derivative. We do not write from facts, but we wish to state the facts after the English manner. It is the tax we pay for the splendid inheritance of English Literature." But in a deeper sense this very dependence upon Europe was due to our disunion among ourselves. The equivocal and unhappy self-assertive patriotism to which we were consigned by fate, and which made us perceive and resent the condescension of foreigners, was the logical outcome of our political situation.

The literature of the Northern states before the war, although full of talent, lacks body, lacks courage. It has not a full national tone. The South is not in it. New England's share in this literature is so large that small injustice will be done if we give her credit for all of it. She was the Academy of the land, and her scholars were our authors. The country at large has sometimes been annoyed at the self-consciousness of New England, at the atmosphere of clique, of mutual admiration, of isolation, in which all her scholars, except Emerson, have lived, and which notably enveloped the last little distinguished group of them. The circumstances which led to the isolation of Lowell, Holmes,

Longfellow, and the Saturday Club fraternity are instructive. The ravages of the war carried off the poets, scholars, and philosophers of the generation which immediately followed these men, and by destroying their natural successors left them standing magnified beyond their natural size, like a grove of trees left by a fire. The war did more than kill off a generation of scholars who would have succeeded these older scholars. It emptied the universities by calling all the survivors into the field of practical life; and after the war ensued a period during which all the learning of the land was lodged in the heads of these older worthies who had made their mark long before. A certain complacency which piqued the country at large was seen in these men. An ante-bellum colonial posing, inevitable in their own day, survived with them. When Jared Sparks put Washington in the proper attitude for greatness by correcting his spelling, Sparks was in cue with the times. It was thought that a great man must have his hat handed to him by his biographer, and be ushered on with decency toward posterity. In the lives and letters of some of our recent public men there has been a reminiscence of this posing, which we condemn as absurd because we forget it is merely archaic. Provincial manners are always a little formal, and the pomposity of the colonial governor was never quite worked out of our literary men.

Let us not disparage the past. We are all grateful for the New England culture, and especially for the little group of men in Cambridge and Boston who did their best according to the light of their day. Their purpose and taste did all that high ideals and good taste can do, and no more eminent literati have lived during this century. They gave the country songs, narrative poems, odes, epigrams, essays, novels. They chose their models well, and drew their materials from decent and likely sources. They lived stainless lives, and died in their professors' chairs honored by all men. For achievements of this sort we need hardly use as strong language as Emerson does in describing contemporary literature: "It exhibits a vast carcass of tradition every year with as much solemnity as a new revelation."

The mass and volume of literature must always be tradi-

tional, and the secondary writers of the world do nevertheless perform a function of infinite consequence in the spread of thought. A very large amount of first-hand thinking is not comprehensible to the average man until it has been distilled and is fifty years old. The men who welcome new learning as it arrives are the picked men, the minor poets of the next age. To their own times these secondary men often seem great because they are recognized and understood at once. We know the disadvantage under which these Humanists of ours worked. The shadow of the time in which they wrote hangs over us still. The conservatism and timidity of our politics and of our literature today are due in part to that fearful pressure which for sixty years was never lifted from the souls of Americans. That conservatism and timidity may be seen in all our past. They are in the rhetoric of Webster and in the style of Hawthorne. They killed Poe. They created Bryant.

Since the close of our most blessed war, we have been left to face the problems of democracy, unhampered by the terrible complications of sectional strife. It has happened, however, that some of the tendencies of our commercial civilization go toward strengthening and riveting upon us the very traits encouraged by provincial disunion. Wendell Phillips, with a cool grasp of understanding for which he is not generally given credit, states the case as follows:

> The general judgment is that the freest possible government produces the freest possible men and women, the most individual, the least servile to the judgment of others. But a moment's reflection will show any man that this is an unreasonable expectation, and that, on the contrary, entire equality and and freedom in political forms almost invariably tend to make the individual subside into the mass and lose his identity in the general whole. Suppose we stood in England tonight. There is the nobility, and here is the church. There is the trading class, and here is the literary. A broad gulf separates the four; and provided a member of either can conciliate his own section, he can afford in a very large measure to despise the opinions of the other three. He has to some extent a refuge and a breakwater against the tyranny of what we call public opinion. But in a

country like ours, of absolute democratic equality, public opinion is not only omnipotent, it is omnipresent. There is no refuge from its tyranny, there is no hiding from its reach; and the result is that if you take the old Greek lantern and go about to seek among a hundred, you will find not one single American who has not, or who does not fancy at least that he has, something to gain or lose in his ambition, his social life, or his business, from the good opinion and the votes of those around him. And the consequence is that instead of being a mass of individuals, each one fearlessly blurting out his own convictions, as a nation, compared to other nations, we are a mass of cowards. More than all other people, we are afraid of each other.

If we take a bird's-eye view of our history, we shall find that this constant element of democratic pressure has always been so strong a factor in molding the character of our citizens that there is less difference than we could wish to see between the types of citizenship produced before the war and after the war.

Charles Follen, that excellent and worthy German who came to this country while still a young man and who lived in the midst of the social and intellectual life of Boston, felt the want of intellectual freedom in the people about him. If one were obliged to describe the America of today in a single sentence, one could hardly do it better than by a sentence from a letter of Follen to Harriet Martineau written in 1837, after the appearance of one of her books: "You have pointed out the two most striking national characteristics, 'Deficiency of individual moral independence and extraordinary mutual respect and kindness.'"

Much of what Emerson wrote about the United States in 1850 is true of the United States today. It would be hard to find a civilized people who are more timid, more cowed in spirit, more illiberal, than we. It is easy today for the educated man who has read Bryce and Tocqueville to account for the mediocrity of American literature. The merit of Emerson was that he felt the atmospheric pressure without knowing its reason. He felt he was a cabined, cribbed, confined creature, although every man about him was celebrating Liberty and Democracy, and every day was Fourth of July.

He taxes language to its limits in order to express his revolt. He says that no man should write except what he has discovered in the process of satisfying his own curiosity, and that every man will write well in proportion as he has contempt for the public.

Emerson seems really to have believed that if any man would only resolutely be himself, he would turn out to be as great as Shakespeare. He will not have it that anything of value can be monopolized. His review of the world, whether under the title of Manners, Self-Reliance, Fate, Experience, or what-not, leads him to the same thought. His conclusion is always the finding of eloquence, courage, art, intellect, in the breast of the humblest reader. He knows that we are full of genius and surrounded by genius, and that we have only to throw something off, not to acquire any new thing, in order to be bards, prophets, Napoleons, and Goethes. This belief is the secret of his stimulating power. It is this which gives his writings a radiance like that which shone from his personality.

The deep truth shadowed forth by Emerson when he said that "all the American geniuses lacked nerve and dagger" was illustrated by our best scholar. Lowell had the soul of the Yankee, but in his habits of writing he continued English tradition. His literary essays are full of charm. The *Commemoration Ode* is the high-water mark of the attempt to do the impossible. It is a fine thing, but it is imitative and secondary. It has paid the inheritance tax. Twice, however, at a crisis of pressure, Lowell assumed his real self under the guise of a pseudonym; and with his own hand he rescued a language, a type, a whole era of civilization from oblivion. Here gleams the dagger and here is Lowell revealed. His limitations as a poet, his too much wit, his too much morality, his mixture of shrewdness and religion, are seen to be the very elements of power. The novelty of the *Biglow Papers* is as wonderful as their world-old naturalness. They take rank with greatness, and they were the strongest political tracts of their time. They imitate nothing; they are real.

Emerson himself was the only man of his times who consistently and utterly expressed himself, never measuring

himself for a moment with the ideals of others, never troubling himself for a moment with what literature was or how literature should be created. The other men of his epoch, and among whom he lived, believed that literature was a very desirable article, a thing you could create if you were only smart enough. But Emerson had no literary ambition. He cared nothing for belles-lettres. The consequence is that he stands above his age like a colossus. While he lived his figure could be seen from Europe towering like Atlas over the culture of the United States.

Great men are not always like wax which their age imprints. They are often the mere negation and opposite of their age. They give it the lie. They become by revolt the very essence of all the age is not, and that part of the spirit which is suppressed in ten thousand breasts gets lodged, isolated, and breaks into utterance in one. Through Emerson spoke the fractional spirits of a multitude. He had not time, he had not energy left over to understand himself; he was a mouthpiece.

If a soul be taken and crushed by democracy till it utter a cry, that cry will be Emerson. The region of thought he lived in, the figures of speech he uses, are of an intellectual plane so high that the circumstances which produced them may be forgotten; they are indifferent. The Constitution, Slavery, the War itself, are seen as mere circumstances. They did not confuse him while he lived; they are not necessary to support his work now that it is finished. Hence comes it that Emerson is one of the world's voices. He was heard afar off. His foreign influence might deserve a chapter by itself. Conservatism is not confined to this country. It is the very basis of all government. The bolts Emerson forged, his thought, his wit, his perception, are not provincial. They were found to carry inspiration to England and Germany. Many of the important men of the last half century owe him a debt. It is not yet possible to give any account of his influence abroad, because the memoirs which will show it are only beginning to be published. We shall have them in due time; for Emerson was an outcome of the world's progress. His appearance marks the turning-point in the history of that enthusiasm

for pure democracy which has tinged the political thought of the world for the past one hundred and fifty years. The youths of England and Germany may have been surprised at hearing from America a piercing voice of protest against the very influences which were crushing them at home. They could not realize that the chief difference between Europe and America is a difference in the rate of speed with which revolutions in thought are worked out.

While the radicals of Europe were revolting in 1848 against the abuses of a tyranny whose roots were in feudalism, Emerson, the great radical of America, the arch-radical of the world, was revolting against the evils whose roots were in universal suffrage. By showing the identity in essence of all tyranny, and by bringing back the attention of political thinkers to its starting-point, the value of human character, he has advanced the political thought of the world by one step. He has pointed out for us in this country to what ends our efforts must be bent.