

Four American Leaders eBook

Four American Leaders by Charles William Eliot

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FOUR AMERICAN LEADERS

By
Charles W. Eliot

Boston
American unitarian association
1906

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American Unitarian Association

Note

The four essays in this volume were written for celebrations or commemorations in which several persons took part. Each of them is, therefore, only a partial presentation of the life and character of its subject. The delineation in every case is not comprehensive and proportionate, but rather portrays the man in some of his aspects and qualities.

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Four American Leaders

FRANKLIN

The facts about Franklin as a printer are simple and plain, but impressive. His father, respecting the boy's strong disinclination to become a tallow-chandler, selected the printer's trade for him, after giving him opportunities to see members of several different trades at their work, and considering the boy's own tastes and aptitudes. It was at twelve years of age that Franklin signed indentures as an apprentice to his older brother James, who was already an established printer. By the time he was seventeen years old he had mastered the trade in all its branches so completely that he could venture, with hardly any money in his pocket, first into New York and then into Philadelphia without a friend or acquaintance in either place, and yet succeed promptly in earning his living. He knew all departments of the business. He was a pressman as well as a compositor. He understood both newspaper and book work. There were at that time no such sharp subdivisions of labor and no such elaborate machinery as exist in the trade to-day; and Franklin could do with his own eyes and hands, long before he was of age, everything which the printer's art was then equal to. When the faithless Governor Keith caused Franklin to land in London without any resources

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whatever except his skill at his trade, the youth was fully capable of supporting himself in the great city as a printer. Franklin had been induced by the governor to go to England, where he was to buy a complete outfit for a good printing office to be set up in Philadelphia. He had already presented the governor with an inventory of the materials needed in a small printing office, and was competent to make a critical selection of all these materials; yet when he arrived in London on this errand he was only eighteen years old. Thrown completely on his own resources in the great city, he immediately got work at a famous printing house in Bartholomew Close, but soon moved to a still larger printing house, in which he remained during the rest of his stay in London. Here he worked as a pressman at first, but was soon transferred to the composing room, evidently excelling his comrades in both branches of the art. The customary drink money was demanded of him, first by the pressmen with whom he was associated, and afterwards by the compositors. Franklin undertook to resist the second demand; and it is interesting to learn that after a resistance of three weeks he was forced to yield to the demands of the men by just such measures as are now used against any scab in a unionized printing office. He says in his autobiography: "I had so many little pieces of private mischief done me by mixing my sorts, transposing my pages, breaking my matter, and so forth, if I were ever so little out of the room ... that, notwithstanding the master's protection, I found myself obliged to comply and pay the money, convinced of the folly of being on ill terms with those one is to live with continually." He was stronger than any of his mates, kept his head clearer because he did not fuddle it with beer, and availed himself of the liberty which then existed of working as fast and as much as he chose. On this point he says: "My constant attendance (I never making a St. Monday) recommended me to the master; and my uncommon quickness at composing occasioned my being put upon all work of dispatch, which was generally better paid. So I went on now very agreeably."

On his return to Philadelphia Franklin obtained for a few months another occupation than that of printer; but this employment failing through the death of his employer, Franklin returned to printing, becoming the manager of a small printing office, in which he was the only skilled workman and was expected to teach several green hands. At that time he was only twenty-one years of age. This printing office often wanted sorts, and there was no type-foundry in America. Franklin succeeded in contriving a mould, struck the matrices in lead, and thus supplied the deficiencies of the office. The autobiography says: "I also engraved several things on occasion; I made the ink; I was warehouse man and everything, and in short quite a factotum." Nevertheless, he was dismissed before long by his incompetent employer, who, however, was glad to re-engage

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him a few days later on obtaining a job to print some paper money for New Jersey. Thereupon Franklin contrived a copperplate press for this job—the first that had been seen in the country—and cut the ornaments for the bills. Meantime Franklin, with one of the apprentices, had ordered a press and types from London, that they two might set up an independent office. Shortly after the New Jersey job was finished, these materials arrived in Philadelphia, and Franklin immediately opened his own printing office. His partner “was, however, no compositor, a poor pressman, and seldom sober.” The office prospered, and in July, 1730, when Franklin was twenty-four years old, the partnership was dissolved, and Franklin was at the head of a well-established and profitable printing business. This business was the foundation of Franklin’s fortune; and better foundation no man could desire. His industry was extraordinary. Contrary to the current opinion, Dr. Baird of St. Andrews testified that the new printing office would succeed, “for the industry of that Franklin,” he said, “is superior to anything I ever saw of the kind; I see him still at work when I go home from the club, and he is at work again before the neighbors are out of bed.” No trade rules or customs limited or levied toll on his productiveness. He speedily became by far the most successful printer in all the colonies, and in twenty years was able to retire from active business with a competency.

One would, however, get a wrong impression of Franklin’s career as a printer, if he failed to observe that from his boyhood Franklin constantly used his connection with a printing office to facilitate his remarkable work as an author, editor, and publisher. Even while he was an apprentice to his brother James he succeeded in getting issued from his brother’s press ballads and newspaper articles of which he was the anonymous author. When he had a press of his own he used it for publishing a newspaper, an almanac, and numerous essays composed or compiled by himself. His genius as a writer supported his skill and industry as a printer.

The second part of the double subject assigned to me is Franklin as philosopher. The philosophy he taught and illustrated related to four perennial subjects of human interest—education, natural science, politics, and morals. I propose to deal in that order with these four topics.

Franklin’s philosophy of education was elaborated as he grew up, and was applied to himself throughout his life. In the first place, he had no regular education of the usual sort. He studied and read with an extraordinary diligence from his earliest years; but he studied only the subjects which attracted him, or which he himself believed would be good for him, and throughout life he pursued only those inquiries for pursuing which he found within himself an adequate motive. The most important element in his training was reading, for which he had a precocious desire

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which was imperative, and proved to be lasting. His opportunities to get books were scanty; but he seized on all such opportunities, and fortunately he early came upon the "Pilgrim's Progress," the Spectator, Plutarch, Xenophon's "Memorabilia," and Locke "On the Human Understanding." Practice of English composition was the next agency in Franklin's education; and his method—quite of his own invention—was certainly an admirable one. He would make brief notes of the thoughts contained in a good piece of writing, and lay these notes aside for several days; then, without looking at the book, he would endeavor to express these thoughts in his own words as fully as they had been expressed in the original paper. Lastly, he would compare his product with the original, thus discovering his shortcomings and errors. To improve his vocabulary he turned specimens of prose into verse, and later, when he had forgotten the original, turned the verse back again into prose. This exercise enlarged his vocabulary and his acquaintance with synonyms and their different shades of meaning, and showed him how he could twist phrases and sentences about. His times for such exercises and for reading were at night after work, before work in the morning, and on Sundays. This severe training he imposed on himself; and he was well advanced in it before he was sixteen years of age. His memory and his imagination must both have served him well; for he not only acquired a style fit for narrative, exposition, or argument, but also learned to use the fable, parable, paraphrase, proverb, and dialogue. The third element in his education was writing for publication; he began very early, while he was still a young boy, to put all he had learned to use in writing for the press. When he was but nineteen years old he wrote and published in London "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain." In after years he was not proud of this pamphlet; but it was, nevertheless, a remarkable production for a youth of nineteen. So soon as he was able to establish a newspaper in Philadelphia he wrote for it with great spirit, and in a style at once accurate, concise, and attractive, making immediate application of his reading and of the conversation of intelligent acquaintances on both sides of the ocean. His fourth principle of education was that it should continue through life, and should make use of the social instincts. To that end he thought that friends and acquaintances might fitly band together in a systematic endeavor after mutual improvement. The Junto was created as a school of philosophy, morality, and politics; and this purpose it actually served for many years. Some of the questions read at every meeting of the Junto, with a pause after each one, would be curiously opportune in such a society at the present day. For example, No. 5, "Have you lately heard how any present rich man, here or elsewhere, got his estate?" And No. 6, "Do you know of a fellow-citizen

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... who has lately committed an error proper for us to be warned against and avoid?” When a new member was initiated he was asked, among other questions, the following: “Do you think any person ought to be harmed in his body, name, or goods, for mere speculative opinions or his external way of worship?” and again, “Do you love truth for truth’s sake, and will you endeavor impartially to find it, receive it yourself, and communicate it to others?” The Junto helped to educate Franklin, and he helped greatly to train all its members.

The nature of Franklin’s own education accounts for many of his opinions on the general subject. Thus, he believed, contrary to the judgment of his time, that Latin and Greek were not essential subjects in a liberal education, and that mathematics, in which he never excelled, did not deserve the place it held. He believed that any one who had acquired a command of good English could learn any other modern language that he really needed when he needed it; and this faith he illustrated in his own person, for he learned French, when he needed it, sufficiently well to enable him to exercise great influence for many years at the French court. As the fruit of his education he exhibited a clear, pungent, persuasive English style, both in writing and in conversation—a style which gave him great and lasting influence among men. It is easy to say that such a training as Franklin’s is suitable only for genius. Be that as it may, Franklin’s philosophy of education certainly tells in favor of liberty for the individual in his choice of studies, and teaches that a desire for good reading and a capacity to write well are two very important fruits of any liberal culture. It was all at the service of his successor Jefferson, the founder of the University of Virginia.

Franklin’s studies in natural philosophy are characterized by remarkable directness, patience, and inventiveness, absolute candor in seeking the truth, and a powerful scientific imagination. What has been usually considered his first discovery was the now familiar fact that northeast storms on the Atlantic coast begin to leeward. The Pennsylvania fireplace he invented was an ingenious application to the warming and ventilating of an apartment of the laws that regulate the movement of hot air. At the age of forty-one he became interested in the subject of electricity, and with the aid of many friends and acquaintances pursued the subject for four years, with no thought about personal credit for inventing either theories or processes, but simply with delight in experimentation and in efforts to explain the phenomena he observed. His kite experiment to prove lightning to be an electrical phenomenon very possibly did not really draw lightning from the cloud; but it supplied evidence of electrical energy in the atmosphere which went far to prove that lightning was an electrical discharge. The sagacity of Franklin’s scientific inquiries is well illustrated by his notes on colds

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and their causes. He maintains that influenzas usually classed as colds do not arise, as a rule, from either cold or dampness. He points out that savages and sailors, who are often wet, do not catch cold, and that the disease called a cold is not taken by swimming. He maintains that people who live in the forest, in open barns, or with open windows, do not catch cold, and that the disease called a cold is generally caused by impure air, lack of exercise, or overeating. He comes to the conclusion that influenzas and colds are contagious—a doctrine which, a century and a half later, was proved, through the advance of bacteriological science, to be sound. The following sentence exhibits remarkable insight, considering the state of medical art at that time: “I have long been satisfied from observation, that besides the general colds now termed influenzas (which may possibly spread by contagion, as well as by a particular quality of the air), people often catch cold from one another when shut up together in close rooms and coaches, and when sitting near and conversing so as to breathe in each other’s transpiration; the disorder being in a certain state.” In the light of present knowledge what a cautious and exact statement is that!

There being no learned society in all America at the time, Franklin’s scientific experiments were almost all recorded in letters written to interested friends; and he was never in any haste to write these letters. He never took a patent on any of his inventions, and made no effort either to get a profit from them, or to establish any sort of intellectual proprietorship in his experiments and speculations. One of his English correspondents, Mr. Collinson, published in 1751 a number of Franklin’s letters to him in a pamphlet called “New Experiments and Observations in Electricity made at Philadelphia in America.” This pamphlet was translated into several European languages, and established over the continent—particularly in France—Franklin’s reputation as a natural philosopher. A great variety of phenomena engaged his attention, such as phosphorescence in sea water, the cause of the saltness of the sea, the form and the temperatures of the Gulf Stream, the effect of oil in stilling waves, and the cause of smoky chimneys. Franklin also reflected and wrote on many topics which are now classified under the head of political economy,—such as paper currency, national wealth, free trade, the slave trade, the effects of luxury and idleness, and the misery and destruction caused by war. Not even his caustic wit could adequately convey in words his contempt and abhorrence for war as a mode of settling questions arising between nations. He condensed his opinions on that subject into the epigram: “There never was a good war or a bad peace.”



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Franklin's political philosophy may all be summed up in seven words—"first freedom, then public happiness and comfort." The spirit of liberty was born in him. He resented his brother's blows when he was an apprentice, and escaped from them. As a mere boy he refused to attend church on Sundays in accordance with the custom of his family and his town, and devoted his Sundays to reading and study. In practising his trade he claimed and diligently sought complete freedom. In public and private business alike he tried to induce people to take any action desired of them by presenting to them a motive they could understand and feel—a motive which acted on their own wills and excited their hopes. This is the only method possible under a regime of liberty. A perfect illustration of his practice in this respect is found in his successful provision of one hundred and fifty four-horse wagons for Braddock's force, when it was detained on its march from Annapolis to western Pennsylvania by the lack of wagons. The military method would have been to seize horses, wagons, and drivers wherever found. Franklin persuaded Braddock, instead of using force, to allow him (Franklin) to offer a good hire for horses, wagons, and drivers, and proper compensation for the equipment in case of loss. By this appeal to the frontier farmers of Pennsylvania he secured in two weeks all the transportation required. To defend public order Franklin was perfectly ready to use public force, as, for instance, when he raised and commanded a regiment of militia to defend the northwestern frontier from the Indians after Braddock's defeat, and again, when it became necessary to defend Philadelphia from a large body of frontiersmen who had lynched a considerable number of friendly Indians, and were bent on revolutionizing the Quaker government. But his abhorrence of all war was based on the facts, first, that during war the law must be silent, and, secondly, that military discipline, which is essential for effective fighting, annihilates individual liberty. "Those," he said, "who would give up essential liberty for the sake of a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." The foundation of his firm resistance on behalf of the colonies to the English Parliament was his impregnable conviction that the love of liberty was the ruling passion of the people of the colonies. In 1766 he said of the American people: "Every act of oppression will sour their tempers, lessen greatly, if not annihilate, the profits of your commerce with them, and hasten their final revolt; for the seeds of liberty are universally found there, and nothing can eradicate them." Because they loved liberty, they would not be taxed without representation; they would not have soldiers quartered on them, or their governors made independent of the people in regard to their salaries; or their ports closed, or their commerce regulated by Parliament. It is interesting to observe how Franklin's experiments and speculations

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in natural science often had a favorable influence on freedom of thought. His studies in economics had a strong tendency in that direction. His views about religious toleration were founded on his intense faith in civil liberty; and even his demonstration that lightning was an electrical phenomenon brought deliverance for mankind from an ancient terror. It removed from the domain of the supernatural a manifestation of formidable power that had been supposed to be a weapon of the arbitrary gods; and since it increased man's power over nature, it increased his freedom.

This faith in freedom was fully developed in Franklin long before the American Revolution and the French Revolution made the fundamental principles of liberty familiar to civilized mankind. His views concerning civil liberty were even more remarkable for his time than his views concerning religious liberty; but they were not developed in a passionate nature inspired by an enthusiastic idealism. He was the very embodiment of common sense, moderation, and sober honesty. His standard of human society is perfectly expressed in the description of New England which he wrote in 1772: "I thought often of the happiness in New England, where every man is a freeholder, has a vote in public affairs, lives in a tidy, warm house, has plenty of good food and fuel, with whole clothes from head to foot, the manufacture perhaps of his own family. Long may they continue in this situation!" Such was Franklin's conception of a free and happy people. Such was his political philosophy.

The moral philosophy of Franklin consisted almost exclusively in the inculcation of certain very practical and unimaginative virtues, such as temperance, frugality, industry, moderation, cleanliness, and tranquillity. Sincerity and justice, and resolution—that indispensable fly-wheel of virtuous habit—are found in his table of virtues; but all his moral precepts seem to be based on observation and experience of life, and to express his convictions concerning what is profitable, prudent, and on the whole satisfactory in the life that now is. His philosophy is a guide of life, because it searches out virtues, and so provides the means of expelling vices. It may reasonably determine conduct. It did determine Franklin's conduct to a remarkable degree, and has had a prodigious influence for good on his countrymen and on civilized mankind. Nevertheless, it omits all consideration of the prime motive power, which must impel to right conduct, as fire supplies the power which actuates the engine. That motive power is pure, unselfish love—love to God and love to man. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ... and thy neighbor as thyself."



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Franklin never seems to have perceived that the supreme tests of civilization are the tender and honorable treatment of women as equals, and the sanctity of home life. There was one primary virtue on his list which he did not always practise. His failures in this respect diminished his influence for good among his contemporaries, and must always qualify the admiration with which mankind will regard him as a moral philosopher and an exhorter to a good life. His sagacity, intellectual force, versatility, originality, firmness, fortunate period of service, and longevity combined to make him a great leader of his people. In American public affairs the generation of wise leaders next to his own felt for him high admiration and respect; and the strong republic, whose birth and youthful growth he witnessed, will carry down his fame as political philosopher, patriot, and apostle of liberty through long generations.

WASHINGTON

The virtues of Washington were of two kinds, the splendid and the homely; I adopt, for my part in this celebration, some consideration of Washington as a man of homely virtues, giving our far-removed generation a homely example.

The first contrast to which I invite your attention is the contrast between the early age at which Washington began to profit by the discipline of real life and the late age at which our educated young men exchange study under masters, and seclusion in institutions of learning, for personal adventure and responsibility out in the world. Washington was a public surveyor at sixteen years of age. He could not spell well; but he could make a correct survey, keep a good journal, and endure the hardships to which a surveyor in the Virginia wilderness was inevitably exposed. Our expectation of good service and hard work from boys of sixteen, not to speak of young men of twenty-six, is very low. I have heard it maintained in a learned college faculty that young men who were on the average nineteen years of age, were not fit to begin the study of economics or philosophy, even under the guidance of skilful teachers, and that no young man could nowadays begin the practice of a profession to advantage before he was twenty-six or twenty-seven years old. Now, Washington was at twenty-one the Governor of Virginia's messenger to the French forts beyond the Alleghanies. He was already an accomplished woodman, an astute negotiator with savages and the French, and the cautious yet daring leader of a company of raw, insubordinate frontiersmen, who were to advance 500 miles into a wilderness with nothing but an Indian trail to follow. In 1755, at twenty-three years of age, twenty years before the Revolutionary War broke out, he was a skilful and experienced fighter, and a colonel in the Virginia service. What a contrast to our college under-graduates of to-day, who at twenty-two years of age are still getting their bodily vigor through sports and not



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through real work, and who seldom seem to realize that, just as soon as they have acquired the use of the intellectual tools and stock with which a livelihood is to be earned in business or in the professions, the training of active life is immeasurably better than the training of the schools! Yet Washington never showed at any age the least spark of genius; he was only “sober, sensible, honest, and brave,” as he said of Major-General Lincoln in 1791.

By inheritance and by marriage Washington became, while he was still young, one of the richest men in the country; but what a contrast between his sort of riches and our sorts! He was a planter and sportsman—a country gentleman. All his home days were spent in looking after his farms; in breeding various kinds of domestic animals; in fishing for profit; in attending to the diseases and accidents which befall livestock, including slaves; in erecting buildings, and repairing them; in caring for or improving his mills, barns, farm implements, and tools. He always lived very close to nature, and from his boyhood studied the weather, the markets, his crops and woods, and the various qualities of his lands. He was an economical husbandman, attending to all the details of the management of his large estates. He was constantly on horseback, often riding fifteen miles on his daily rounds. At sixty-seven years of age he caught the cold which killed him by getting wet on horseback, riding as usual about his farms.

Compare this sort of life, physical and mental, with the life of the ordinary rich American of to-day, who has made his money in stocks and bonds, or as a banker, broker, or trader, or in the management of great transportation or industrial concerns. This modern rich man, in all probability, has nothing whatever to do with nature or with country life. He is soft and tender in body; lives in the city; takes no vigorous exercise, and has very little personal contact with the elemental forces of either nature or mankind. He is not like Washington an out-of-door man. Washington was a combination of land-owner, magistrate, and soldier,—the best combination for a leader of men which the feudal system produced. Our modern rich man is apt to possess no one of these functions, any one of which, well discharged, has in times past commanded the habitual respect of mankind. It is a grave misfortune for our country, and especially for our rich men, that the modern forms of property,—namely, stocks and bonds, mortgages, and city buildings—do not carry with them any inevitable responsibilities to the state, or involve their owner in personal risks and charges as a leader or commander of the people. The most enviable rich man to-day is the intelligent industrial or commercial adventurer or promoter, in the good sense of those terms. He takes risks and assumes burdens on a large scale, and has a chance to develop will, mind, and character, just as Queen Elizabeth’s adventurers did all over the then known world.

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Again, Washington, as I have already indicated, was an economical person, careful about little expenditures as well as great, averse to borrowing money, and utterly impatient of waste. If a slave were hopelessly ill, he did not call a doctor, because it would be a useless expenditure. He insisted that the sewing woman, Carolina, who had only made five shirts in a week, not being sick, should make nine. He entered in his account "thread and needle, one penny," and used said thread and needle himself. All this closeness and contempt for shiftlessness and prodigality were perfectly consistent with a large and hospitable way of living; for during many years of his life he kept open house at Mt. Vernon. This frugal and prudent man knew exactly what it meant to devote his "life and fortune to the cause we are engaged in, if needful," as he wrote in 1774. This was not an exaggerated or emotional phrase. It was moderate, but it meant business. He risked his whole fortune. What he lost through his service in the Revolutionary War is clearly stated in a letter written from Mt. Vernon in 1784: "I made no money from my estate during the nine years I was absent from it, and brought none home with me. Those who owed me, for the most part, took advantage of the depreciation, and paid me off with sixpence in the pound. Those to whom I was indebted, I have yet to pay, without other means, if they will wait, than selling part of my estate, or distressing those who were too honest to take advantage of the tender laws to quit scores with me." Should we not all be glad if to-day a hundred or two multi-millionaires could give such an account as that of their losses incurred in the public service, even if they had not, like Washington, risked their lives as well? In our times we have come to think that a rich man should not be frugal or economical, but rather wasteful or extravagant. We have even been asked to believe that a cheap coat makes a cheap man. If there were a fixed relation between a man's character and the price of his clothes, what improvement we should have seen in the national character since 1893! At Harvard University, twelve hundred students take three meals a day in the great dining-room of Memorial Hall, and manage the business themselves through an elected President and Board of Directors. These officers proscribe stews, apparently because it is a form in which cheap meat may be offered them, neglecting the more important fact that the stew is the most nutritious and digestible form in which meats can be eaten. Mr. Edward Atkinson, the economist, invented an oven in which various kinds of foods may be cheaply and well prepared with a minimum of attention to the process. The workingmen, among whom he attempted to introduce it, took no interest in it whatever, because it was recommended to them as a cheap way of preparing inexpensive though excellent foods. This modern temper affords a most striking contrast to the practices and sentiments of Washington, sentiments and practices which underlay his whole public life as well as his private life.

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If he were alive to-day, would he not be bewildered by much of our talk about the rights of men and animals? Washington's mind dwelt very little on rights and very much on duties. For him, patriotism was a duty; good citizenship was a duty; and for the masses of mankind it was a duty to clear away the forest, till the ground, and plant fruit trees, just as he prescribed to the hoped-for tenants on his Ohio and Kanawha lands. For men and women in general he thought it a duty to increase and multiply, and to make the wilderness glad with rustling crops, lowing herds, and children's voices. When he retired from the Presidency, he expressed the hope that he might "make and sell a little flour annually." For the first soldier and first statesman of his country, surely this was a modest anticipation of continued usefulness. We think more about our rights than our duties. He thought more about his duties than his rights. Posterity has given him first place because of the way in which he conceived and performed his duties; it will judge the leaders of the present generation by the same standard, whatever their theories about human rights.

Having said thus much about contrasts, let me now turn to some interesting resemblances between Washington's times and our own. We may notice in the first place the permanency of the fighting quality in the English-American stock. Washington was all his life a fighter. The entire American people is to-day a fighting people, prone to resort to force and prompt to take arms, the different sections of the population differing chiefly in regard to the nature and amount of the provocation which will move them to violence and combat. To this day nothing moves the admiration of the people so quickly as composure, ingenuity, and success in fighting; so that even in political contests all the terms and similes are drawn from war, and among American sports the most popular have in them a large element of combat. Washington was roused and stimulated by the dangers of the battlefield, and utterly despised cowards, or even men who ran away in battle from a momentary terror which they did not habitually manifest. His early experience taught him, however, that the Indian way of fighting in woods or on broken ground was the most effective way; and he did not hesitate to adopt and advocate that despised mode of fighting, which has now, one hundred and fifty years later, become the only possible mode. The Indian in battle took instantly to cover, if he could find it. In our Civil War both sides learned to throw up breastworks wherever they expected an engagement to take place; and the English in South Africa have demonstrated that the only possible way to fight with the present long range quick-firing guns, is the way in which the "treacherous devils," as Washington called the Indians, fought General Braddock, that is, with stratagem, surprise, and ambush; with hiding and crawling behind screens and obstacles; with the least possible appearance in open view, with nothing that can glitter on either arms or clothes, and with no visible distinction between officers and men. War is now a genuinely Indian performance, just as Washington saw one hundred and fifty years ago that it ought to be.

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The silent Washington's antipathy to the press finds an exact parallel in our own day. He called the writers of the press "infamous scribblers." President Cleveland called them "ghouls." But it must be confessed that the newspapers of Washington's time surpassed those of the present day in violence of language, and in lack of prophetic insight and just appreciation of men and events. When Washington retired from the Presidency the *Aurora* said, "If ever a Nation was debauched by a man, the American Nation has been debauched by Washington."

Some of the weaknesses or errors of the Congresses of Washington's time have been repeated in our own day, and seem as natural to us as they doubtless seemed to the men of 1776 and 1796. Thus, the Continental Congress incurred all the evils of a depreciated currency with the same blindness which afflicted the Congress of the Southern Confederacy and the Union Congress during the Civil War, or the Democrat-Populist party of still more recent times. The refusal of the Congress of 1777 to carry out the agreement made with the Hessian prisoners at Saratoga reminds one of the refusal of Congress, in spite of the public exhortations of our present Executive, and his cabinet, to carry out the understanding with Cuba in regard to the commercial relations of the island with the United States. In both cases the honor of the country was tarnished.

The intensity of party spirit in Washington's time closely resembles that of our own day, but was certainly fiercer than it is now, the reason being that the questions at issue were absolutely fundamental. When the question was whether the Constitution of the United States was a sure defence for freedom or a trap to ensnare an unsuspecting people, intensity of feeling on both sides was well-nigh inevitable. During Washington's two administrations a considerable number of the most eminent American publicists feared that dangerous autocratic powers had been conferred on the President by the Constitution. Washington held that there was no ground for these fears, and acted as if the supposition was absurd. When the question was whether we should love and adhere to revolutionary France, or rather become partisans of Great Britain—the power from which we had just won independence—it is no wonder that political passions burnt fiercely. On this question Washington stood between the opposing parties, and often commended himself to neither. In spite of the tremendous partisan heat of the times, Washington, through both his administrations, made appointments to public office from both parties indifferently. He appointed some well-known Tories and many Democrats. He insisted only on fitness as regards character, ability, and experience, and preferred persons, of whatever party, who had already proved their capacity in business or the professions, or in legislative or administrative offices. It is a striking fact that Washington is the only one of the Presidents of

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the United States who has, as a rule, acted on these principles. His example was not followed by his early successors, or by any of the more recent occupants of the Presidency. His successors, elected by a party, have not seen their way to make appointments without regard to party connections. The Civil Service Reform agitation of the last twenty-five years is nothing but an effort to return, in regard to the humbler national offices, to the practice of President Washington.

In spite of these resemblances between Washington's time and our own, the profound contrasts make the resemblances seem unimportant. In the first years of the Government of the United States there was widespread and genuine apprehension lest the executive should develop too much power, and lest the centralization of the Government should become overwhelming. Nothing can be farther from our political thoughts to-day than this dread of the power of the national executive. On the contrary, we are constantly finding that it is feeble where we wish it were strong, impotent where we wish it omnipotent. The Senate of the United States has deprived the President of much of the power intended for his office, and has then found it, on the whole, convenient and desirable to allow itself to be held up by any one of its members who possesses the bodily strength and the assurance to talk or read aloud by the week. Other forces have developed within the Republic quite outside of the Government, which seem to us to override and almost defy the closely limited governmental forces. Quite lately we have seen two of these new forces—one a combination of capitalists, the other a combination of laborers—put the President of the United States into a position of a mediator between two parties whom he could not control, and with whom he must intercede. This is part of the tremendous nineteenth century democratic revolution, and of the newly acquired facilities for combination and association for the promotion of common interests. We no longer dread abuse of the power of state or church; we do dread abuse of the powers of compact bodies of men, highly organized and consenting to be despotically ruled, for the advancement of their selfish interests.

Washington was a stern disciplinarian in war; if he could not shoot deserters he wanted them "stoutly whipped." He thought that army officers should be of a different class from their men, and should never put themselves on an equality with their men; he went himself to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, and always believed that firm government was essential to freedom. He never could have imagined for a moment the toleration of disorder and violence which is now exhibited everywhere in our country when a serious strike occurs. He was the chief actor through the long struggles, military and civil, which attended the birth of this nation, and took the gravest responsibilities which could then fall to the lot of soldiers or statesmen; but he never encountered, and indeed never imagined, the anxieties and dangers which now beset the Republic of which he was the founder. We face new difficulties. Shall we face them with Washington's courage, wisdom, and success?

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Finally, I ask your attention to the striking contrast between the wealth of Washington and the poverty of Abraham Lincoln, the only one of the succeeding Presidents who won anything like the place in the popular heart that Washington has always occupied. Washington, while still young, was one of the richest men in the country; Lincoln, while young, was one of the poorest; both rendered supreme service to their country and to freedom; between these two extremes men of many degrees as regards property holding have occupied the Presidency, the majority of them being men of moderate means. The lesson to be drawn from these facts seems to be that the Republic can be greatly served by rich and poor alike, but has oftenest been served creditably by men who were neither rich nor poor. In the midst of the present conflicts between employers and employed, between the classes that are already well to do and the classes who believe it to be the fault of the existing order that they too are not well to do, and in plain sight of the fact that democratic freedom permits the creation and perpetuation of greater differences as regards possessions than the world has ever known before, it is comforting to remember that true patriots and wise men are bred in all the social levels of a free commonwealth, and that the Republic may find in any condition of life safe leaders and just rulers.

CHANNING

We commemorate to-day a great preacher. It is the fashion to say that preaching is a thing of the past, other influences having taken its place. But Boston knows better; for she had two great preachers in the nineteenth century, and is sure that an immense and enduring force was theirs, and through them, hers. Channing and Brooks! Men very unlike in body and mind, but preachers of like tendency and influence from their common love of freedom and faith in mankind. This city has learned by rich experience that preaching becomes the most productive of all human works the moment the adequate preacher appears—a noble man with a noble message. Such was Channing.

His public work was preceded and accompanied by a great personal achievement. All his life he grew in spirit, becoming always freer, broader, and more sympathetic. In forty years he worked his way out of moderate Calvinism without the Trinity into such doctrines as these:—"The idea of God ... is the idea of our own spiritual natures purified and enlarged to infinity." "The sense of duty is the greatest gift of God. The idea of right is the primary and highest revelation of God to the human mind; and all outward revelations are founded on and addressed to it." There is "but one object of cherished and enduring love in heaven or on earth, and that is moral goodness." "I do and I must reverence human nature.... I honor it for its struggles against oppression, for its growth and progress under the weight of so many chains and prejudices, for its achievements in science

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and art, and still more for its examples of heroic and saintly virtue. These are marks of a divine origin and pledges of a celestial inheritance.” “Perfection is man’s proper and natural goal.” What an immense distance between these doctrines of Channing’s maturity and the Calvinism of his youth! He was a meditative, reflecting man, who read much, but took selected thoughts of others into the very substance and fibre of his being, and made them his own. The foundation of his professional power and public influence was this great personal achievement, this attuning of his own soul to noblest harmonies.

Thousands of ministers and spiritually-minded laymen of many denominations have travelled since Channing’s death the road he laid out, and so have been delivered from the inhuman doctrines of the fall of man, the wrath of God, vicarious atonement, everlasting hell for the majority, and the rescue of a predestined few. They should all join in giving heartfelt praise and thanks to Channing, who thought out clearly, and preached with fervid reiteration, the doctrines which have delivered them from a painful bondage.

Another remarkable quality of Channing’s teachings is their universality. Men of learning and spirituality in all the civilized nations have welcomed his words, and found in them teachings of enduring and expansive influence. Many Biblical scholars, in the technical sense, have arrived eighty years later at Channing’s conclusions about the essential features of Christianity, although Channing was no scholar in the modern sense; while they go far beyond him in treating the Bible as a collection of purely human writings and in rejecting the so-called supernatural quality of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Indeed, many Biblical scholars belonging to-day to evangelical sects have arrived not only at Channing’s position, but also at Emerson’s.

Just how much Channing’s published works have had to do with this quiet but fateful revolution no man can tell. The most eminent to-day of American Presbyterian divines preached an excellent sermon in the Harvard College Chapel one Sunday evening not many years ago, and asked me, as we walked away together, how I liked it. I replied: “Very much; it was all straight out of Channing.” “That is strange,” he said, “for I have never read Channing.” It is great testimony to the pervasive quality of a prophet’s teachings when they become within fifty years a component of the intellectual atmosphere of the new times. At a dinner of Harvard graduates I once complained that, although I heard in the College Chapel a great variety of preachers connected with many different denominations, the preaching was, after all, rather monotonous, because they all preached Channing. Phillips Brooks spoke after me and said: “The President is right in thinking our present preaching monotonous, and the reason he gives for this monotony is correct; we all do preach Channing.”

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The direct influence of Channing's writings has been vast, for they are read in English in all parts of the world, and have been translated into many languages. Thirty years ago I spent a long day in showing Don Pedro, the Emperor of Brazil, some of the interesting things in the laboratories and collections of Harvard University. He was the most assiduous visitor that I ever conducted through the University buildings, intelligently interested in a great variety of objects and ideas. Late in the afternoon he suddenly said, with a fresh eagerness: "Now I will visit the tomb of Channing." We drove to Mount Auburn, and found the monument erected by the Federal Street Church. The Emperor copied with his own hand George Ticknor's inscriptions on the stone, and made me verify his copies. Then, with his great weight and height, he leaped into the air, and snatched a leaf from the maple which overhung the tomb. "I am going to put that leaf," he said, "into my best edition of Channing. I have read all his published works,—some of them many times over. He was a very great man." The Emperor of Brazil was a Roman Catholic.

Channing's philanthropy was a legitimate outcome of his view of religion. For him practical religion was character-building by the individual human being. But character-building in any large group or mass of human beings means social reform; therefore Channing was a preacher and active promoter of social regeneration in this world. He depicted the hideous evils and wrongs of intemperance, slavery, and war. He advocated and supported every well-directed effort to improve public education, the administration of charity, and the treatment of criminals, and to lift up the laboring classes. He denounced the bitter sectarian and partisan spirit of his day. He refused entire sympathy to the abolitionists, because of the ferocity and violence of their habitual language and the injustice of their indiscriminate attacks. He distrusted money worship, wealth, and luxury.

These sentiments and actions grew straight out of his religious conceptions, and were their legitimate fruit. All his social aspirations and hopes were rooted in his fundamental conception of the fatherhood of God, and its corollary the brotherhood of men. It was his lofty idea of the infinite worth of human nature and of the inherent greatness of the human soul, in contrast with the then prevailing doctrines of human vileness and impotency, which made him resent with such indignation the wrongs of slavery, intemperance, and war, and urge with such ardor every effort to deliver men from poverty and ignorance, and to make them gentler and juster to one another.

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In no subject which he discussed does the close connection between Channing's theology and his philanthropy appear more distinctly than in education. He says in his remarks on education: ... "There is nothing on earth so precious as the mind, soul, character of the child.... There should be no economy in education. Money should never be weighed against the soul of a child. It should be poured out like water for the child's intellectual and moral life." It is more than two generations since those sentences were written, and still the average public expenditure on the education of a child in the United States is less than fifteen dollars a year. Eastern Massachusetts is the community in the whole world which gives most thought, time, and money to education, public and endowed. Whence came this social wisdom? From Protestantism, from Congregationalism, from the religious teachings of Channing and his disciples. Listen to this sentence: "Benevolence is short-sighted indeed, and must blame itself for failure, if it do not see in education the chief interest of the human race."

It is impossible to join in this centennial celebration of the advent to Boston of this religious pioneer and philanthropic leader without perceiving that in certain respects the country has recently fallen away from the moral standards he set up. Channing taught that no real good can come through violence, injustice, greed, and the inculcation of hatred and enmities, or of suspicions and contempts. He believed that public well-being can be promoted only through public justice, freedom, peace, and good will among men.

He never could have imagined that there would be an outburst in his dear country, grown rich and strong, of such doctrines as that the might of arms, possessions, or majorities makes right; that a superior civilization may rightly force itself on an inferior by wholesale killing, hurting, and impoverishing; that an extension of commerce, or of missionary activities, justifies war; that the example of imperial Rome is an instructive one for republican America; and that the right to liberty and the brotherhood of man are obsolete sentimentalities.

Nevertheless, in spite of these temporary aberrations of the public mind and heart, it is plain that many of Channing's anticipations and hopes have already been realized, that his influence on three generations of men has been profound and wholly beneficent, and that the world is going his way, though with slow and halting steps.

His life brightened to its close. In its last summer but one he wrote: "This morning I plucked a globe of the dandelion—the seed-vessel—and was struck as never before with the silent, gentle manner in which nature sows her seed.... I saw, too, how nature sows her seed broadcast.... So we must send truth abroad, not forcing it on here and there a mind, and watching its progress anxiously, but trusting that it will light on a kindly soil, and yield its fruit. So nature teaches."



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May those who stand here one hundred years hence say,—the twentieth century supplied more of kindly soil for Channing seed than the nineteenth.

EMERSON

Emerson was not a logician or reasoner, and not a rhetorician, in the common sense. He was a poet, who wrote chiefly in prose, but also in verse. His verse was usually rough, but sometimes finished and melodious; it was always extraordinarily concise and expressive. During his engagement to the lady who became his second wife, he wrote thus to her: "I am born a poet,—of a low class without doubt, yet a poet; that is my nature and vocation. My singing, be sure, is very husky, and is, for the most part, in prose. Still, I am a poet in the sense of a perceiver and dear lover of the harmonies that are in the soul and in matter, and specially of the correspondences between these and those."

This husky poet had his living to get. His occupations in life were those of the teacher, minister, lecturer, and author. He was a teacher at various times between 1818 and 1826; but he never liked teaching. He was a preacher at intervals from 1826 to 1847, but a settled minister only from 1829 to 1832. His career as a lecturer began in the autumn of 1833; and his first book, "Nature," was published in 1836, when he was thirty-three years old. His lectures for money were given as a rule during the winter and early spring; and for thirty years the travelling he was obliged to do in search of audiences was often extremely fatiguing, and not without serious hardships and exposures. These occupations usually gave him an income sufficient for his simple wants; but there were times when outgo exceeded income. The little property his first wife left him (\$1200 a year) relieved him from serious pecuniary anxiety by 1834; although it did not relieve him from earning by his own labor the livelihood of his family.

In 1834 he went to live in Concord, where his grandfather had been the minister at the time of the Revolution, and in 1835 he bought the house and grounds there which were his home for the rest of his days. Before settling in Concord, he had spent one winter and spring (1826-27) in the Southern states, and seven months of 1833 in Europe. Both of these absences were necessitated by the state of his health, which was precarious during his young manhood. With these exceptions, he had lived in Boston or its immediate neighborhood, until he settled in Concord. His progenitors on both sides were chiefly New England ministers. His formal education was received in the Boston Latin School and Harvard College, and was therefore purely local. How narrow and provincial seems his experience of life! A little city, an isolated society, a country village! Yet through books, and through intercourse with intelligent persons, he was really "set in a large place." The proof of this largeness, and of the keenness of his mental and moral vision, is that, in regard to some of the chief concerns of mankind, he was a seer and a fore-seer. This prophetic quality of his I hope to demonstrate to-night in three great fields of thought—education, social organization, and religion.

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Although a prophet and inspirer of reform, Emerson was not a reformer. He was but a halting supporter of the reforms of his day; and the eager experimenters and combatants in actual reforms found him a disappointing sort of sympathizer. His visions were far-reaching, his doctrines often radical, and his exhortations fervid; but when it came to action, particularly to habitual action, he was surprisingly conservative. With an exquisite candor, and a gentle resolution of rarest quality he broke his strong ties to the Second Church of Boston before he was thirty years old, abandoning the profession for which he had been trained, and which, in many of its aspects, he honored and enjoyed; yet he attended church on Sundays all his life with uncommon regularity. He refused to conduct public prayer, and had many things to say against it; but when he was an Overseer of Harvard College, he twice voted to maintain the traditional policy of compelling all the students to attend morning prayers, in spite of the fact that a large majority of the Faculty urgently advocated abandoning that policy. He manifested a good deal of theoretical sympathy with the community experiments at Brook Farm and Fruitlands; but he declined to take part in them himself. He was intimate with many of the leading abolitionists; but no one has described more vividly their grave intellectual and social defects. He laid down principles which, when applied, would inevitably lead to progress and reform; but he took little part in the imperfect step-by-step process of actual reforming. He probably would have been an ineffective worker in any field of reform; and, at any rate, strenuous labor on applications of his philosophy would have prevented him from maintaining the flow of his philosophic and prophetic visions. The work of giving practical effect to his thought was left for other men to do,—indeed for generations of other serviceable men, who, filled with his ideals, will slowly work them out into institutions, customs, and other practical values.

When we think of Emerson as a prophet, we at once become interested in the dates at which he uttered certain doctrines, or wrote certain pregnant sentences; but just here the inquirer meets a serious difficulty. He can sometimes ascertain that a given doctrine or sentence was published at a given date; but he may be quite unable to ascertain how much earlier the doctrine was really formulated, or the sentence written. Emerson has been dead twenty-one years, and it is thirty years since he wrote anything new; but his whole philosophy of life was developed by the time he was forty years old, and it may be doubted if he wrote anything after 1843, the germinal expression of which may not be found in his journals, sermons, or lectures written before that date. If, therefore, we find in the accepted thought, or established institutions, of to-day recent developments of principles and maxims laid down by Emerson, we may fairly say that his thought outran his times certainly by one, and probably by two generations of men.

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I take up now the prophetic teachings of Emerson with regard to education. In the first place, he saw, with a clearness to which very few people have yet attained, the fundamental necessity of the school as the best civilizing agency, next to steady labor, and the only sure means of permanent and progressive reform. He says outright: "We shall one day learn to supersede politics by education. What we call our root-and-branch reforms, of slavery, war, gambling, intemperance, is only medicating the symptoms. We must begin higher up—namely, in education." He taught that if we hope to reform mankind, we must begin not with adults, but with children: we must begin in the school. There are some signs that this doctrine has now at last entered the minds of the so-called practical men. The Cubans are to be raised in the scale of civilization and public happiness; so both they and we think they must have more and better schools. The Filipinos, too, are to be developed after the American fashion; so we send them a thousand teachers of English. The Southern states are to be rescued from the persistent poison of slavery; and, after forty years of failure with political methods, we at last accept Emerson's doctrine, and say: We must begin earlier,—at school. The city slums are to be redeemed; and the scientific charity workers find the best way is to get the children into kindergartens and manual training schools.

Since the Civil War, a whole generation of educational administrators has been steadily at work developing what is called the elective system in the institutions of education which deal with the ages above twelve. It has been a slow, step-by-step process, carried on against much active opposition and more sluggish obstruction. The system is a method of educational organization which recognizes the immense expansion of knowledge during the nineteenth century, and takes account of the needs and capacities of the individual child and youth. Now, Emerson laid down in plain terms the fundamental doctrines on which this elective system rests. He taught that the one prudence in life is concentration; the one evil, dissipation. He said: "You must elect your work: you shall take what your brain can, and drop all the rest." To this exhortation he added the educational reason for it,—only by concentration can the youth arrive at the stage of doing something with his knowledge, or get beyond the stage of absorbing, and arrive at the capacity for producing. As Emerson puts it, "Only so can that amount of vital force accumulate which can make the step from knowing to doing." The educational institutions of to-day have not yet fully appreciated this all-important step from knowing to doing. They are only beginning to perceive that, all along the course of education, the child and the youth should be doing something as well as learning something; should be stimulated and trained by achievement; should be constantly encouraged



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to take the step beyond seeing and memorizing to doing,—the step, as Emerson says, “out of a chalk circle of imbecility into fruitfulness.” Emerson carried this doctrine right on into mature life. He taught that nature arms each man with some faculty, large or small, which enables him to do easily some feat impossible to any other, and thus makes him necessary to society; and that this faculty should determine the man’s career. The advocates of the elective system have insisted that its results were advantageous for society as a whole, as well as for the individual. Emerson put this argument in a nutshell at least fifty years ago: “Society can never prosper, but must always be bankrupt, until every man does that which he was created to do.”

Education used to be given almost exclusively through books. In recent years there has come in another sort of education through tools, machines, gardens, drawings, casts, and pictures. Manual training, shop-work, sloyd, and gardening have come into use for the school ages; the teaching of trades has been admitted to some public school systems; and, in general, the use of the hands and eyes in productive labor has been recognized as having good educational effects. The education of men by manual labor was a favorite doctrine with Emerson. He had fully developed it as early as 1837, and he frequently recurred to it afterwards. In December of that year, in a course of lectures on Human Culture, he devoted one lecture to The Hands. He saw clearly that manual labor might be made to develop not only good mental qualities, but good moral qualities. To-day, it is frequently necessary for practical teachers, who are urging measures of improvement, to point this out, and to say, just as Emerson said two generations ago, that any falseness in mechanical work immediately appears; that a teacher can judge of the moral quality of each boy in the class before him better and sooner from manual work than from book-work. Emerson taught that manual labor is the study of the external world; that the use of manual labor never grows obsolete, and is inapplicable to no person. He said explicitly that “a man should have a farm or a mechanical craft for his culture”; that there is not only health, but education in garden work; that when a man gets sugar, hominy, cotton, buckets, crockery ware, and letter paper by simply signing his name to a cheque, it is the producers and carriers of these articles that have got the education they yield, he only the commodity; and that labor is God’s education. This was Emerson’s doctrine more than sixty years ago. It is only ten years since the Mechanic Arts High School was opened in Boston.

We are all of us aware that within the last twenty years there has been a determined movement of the American people toward the cultivation of art, and toward the public provision of objects which open the sense of beauty and increase public enjoyment. It is curious to see how literally Emerson prophesied the actual direction of these efforts:



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“On the city’s paved street
Plant gardens lined with lilac sweet;
Let spouting fountains cool the air,
Singing in the sun-baked square;
Let statue, picture, park, and hall,
Ballad, flag, and festival
The past restore, the day adorn,
And make to-morrow a new morn!”

We have introduced into our schools, of late years, lessons in drawing, modelling, and designing,—not sufficiently, but in a promising and hopeful way. Emerson taught that it is the office of art to educate the perception of beauty; and he precisely describes one of the most recent of the new tendencies in American education and social life, when he says: “Beauty must come back to the useful arts, and the distinction between the fine and the useful arts be forgotten.” That sentence is the inspiration of one of the most recent of the efforts to improve the arts and crafts, and to restore to society the artistic craftsman. But how slow is the institutional realization of this ideal of art education! We are still struggling in our elementary and secondary schools to get a reasonable amount of instruction in drawing and music, and to transfer from other subjects a fair allotment of time to these invaluable elements of true culture, which speak a universal language. Yet the ultimate object of art in education is to teach men to see nature to be beautiful and at the same time useful, beautiful because alive and reproductive, useful while symmetrical and fair. Take up to-day the last essays on education, the last book on landscape architecture, or the freshest teachings of the principles of design, and you will find them penetrated with Emerson’s doctrine of art as teacher of mankind. Emerson insists again and again that true culture must open the sense of beauty; that “a man is a beggar who only lives to the useful.” It will probably require several generations yet to induce the American people to accept his doctrine that all moments and objects can be embellished, and that cheerfulness, serenity, and repose in energy are the “end of culture and success enough.”

It has been clearly perceived of late that a leading object in education is the cultivation of fine manners. On this point the teachings of Emerson are fundamental; but the American institutions of education are only beginning to appreciate their significance. He teaches that genius or love invents fine manners, “which the baron and the baroness copy very fast, and by the advantage of a palace better the instruction. They stereotype the lesson they have learned into a mode.” There is much in that phrase, “by the advantage of a palace.” For generations, American institutions of education were content with the humblest sort of shelters, with plain wooden huts and brick barracks, and unkempt grounds about the buildings. They are only lately beginning to acquire fine buildings with pleasing surroundings; that is, they are just beginning to carry into practice

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Emerson's wisdom of sixty years ago. The American cities are beginning to build handsome houses for their High Schools. Columbia University builds a noble temple for its library. The graduates and friends of Harvard like to provide her with a handsome fence round the Yard, with a fair array of shrubs within the fence, with a handsome stadium instead of shabby, wooden seats round the football gridiron, and to take steps for securing in the future broad connections between the grounds of the University and the Cambridge parks by the river. They are just now carrying into practice Emerson's teaching; by the advantage of a palace they mean to better Harvard's instruction in manners. They are accepting his doctrine that "manners make the fortune of the ambitious youth; that for the most part his manners marry him, and, for the most part, he marries manners. When we think what keys they are, and to what secrets; what high lessons, and inspiring tokens of character they convey, and what divination is required in us for the reading of this fine telegraph,—we see what range the subject has, and what relations to convenience, power, and beauty."

In Emerson's early days there was nothing in our schools and colleges which at all corresponded to what we now know too much about under the name of athletic sports. The elaborate organization of these sports is a development of the last thirty years in our schools and colleges; but I find in Emerson the true reason for the athletic cult, given a generation before it existed among us. Your boy "hates the grammar and Gradus, and loves guns, fishing-rods, horses, and boats. Well, the boy is right, and you are not fit to direct his bringing-up, if your theory leaves out his gymnastic training.... Football, cricket, archery, swimming, skating, climbing, fencing, riding are lessons in the art of power, which it is his main business to learn.... Besides, the gun, fishing-rod, boat, and horse constitute, among all who use them, secret free-masonries." We shall never find a completer justification of athletic sports than that.

In his memorable address on The American Scholar, which was given at Cambridge in 1837, Emerson pointed out that the function of the scholar should include creative action, or, as we call it in these days, research, or the search for new truth. He says: "The soul active ... utters truth, or creates.... In its essence it is progressive. The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius.... They look backward and not forward. But genius looks forward. Man hopes: genius creates. Whatever talents may be, if the man create not, the pure efflux of the Deity is not his;—cinders and smoke there may be, but not yet flame." And more explicitly still, he says: "Colleges have their indispensable office,—to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us when they aim not to drill, but to create." When Emerson wrote this passage, the spirit of research, or discovery, or creation had not yet breathed life into the higher institutions of learning in our country; and to-day they have much to do and to acquire before they will conform to Emerson's ideal.



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There are innumerable details in which Emerson anticipated the educational experiences of later generations. I can cite but two of them. He taught that each age must write its own books; "or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this." How true that is in our own day when eighty thousand new books come from the press of the civilized world in a single year! Witness the incessant remaking or re-casting of the books of the preceding generation! Emerson himself has gone into thousands of books in which his name is never mentioned. Even history has to be re-written every few years, the long-surviving histories being rather monuments of style and method than accepted treasuries of facts. Again, contrary to the prevailing impression that the press has, in large measure, stripped eloquence of its former influence, Emerson taught that "if there ever was a country where eloquence was a power, it is the United States." He included under eloquence the useful speech, all sorts of political persuasion in the great arena of the Republic, and the lessons of science, art, and religion which should be "brought home to the instant practice of thirty millions of people," now become eighty. The colleges and universities have now answered in the affirmative Emerson's question, "Is it not worth the ambition of every generous youth to train and arm his mind with all the resources of knowledge, of method, of grace, and of character to serve such a constituency?" But then Emerson's definition of eloquence is simple, and foretells the practice of to-day rather than describes the practice of Webster, Everett, Choate, and Winthrop, his contemporaries: "Know your fact; hug your fact. For the essential thing is heat, and heat comes of sincerity.... Eloquence is the power to translate a truth into language perfectly intelligible to the person to whom you speak."

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I turn next to some examples of Emerson's anticipation of social conditions, visible to him as seer in his own day, and since become plain to the sight of the ordinary millions. When he accumulated in his journals the original materials of his essay on Worship, there were no large cities in the United States in the present sense of that term. The great experiment of democracy was not far advanced, and had not developed many of its sins and dangers; yet how justly he presented them in the following description: "In our large cities, the population is godless, materialized,—no bond, no fellow-feeling, no enthusiasm. These are not men, but hungers, thirsts, fevers, and appetites walking. How is it people manage to live on, so aimless as they are? ... There is faith in chemistry, in meat and wine, in wealth, in machinery, in the steam-engine, galvanic battery, turbine wheels, sewing-machines, and in public opinion, but not in divine causes."

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In Emerson's day, luxury in the present sense had hardly been developed in our country; but he foresaw its coming, and its insidious destructiveness. "We spend our incomes for paint and paper, for a hundred trifles, I know not what, and not for the things of a man. Our expense is almost all for conformity. It is for cake that we run in debt; it is not the intellect, not the heart, not beauty, not worship, that costs us so much. Why needs any man be rich? Why must he have horses, fine garments, handsome apartments, access to public houses and places of amusement? Only for want of thought... We are first thoughtless, and then find that we are moneyless. We are first sensual and then must be rich." He foresaw the young man's state of mind to-day about marriage—I must have money before I can marry; and deals with it thus: "Give us wealth and the home shall exist. But that is a very imperfect and inglorious solution of the problem, and therefore no solution. Give us wealth! You ask too much. Few have wealth; but all must have a home. Men are not born rich; in getting wealth the man is generally sacrificed, and often is sacrificed without acquiring wealth at last."

We have come to understand by experience that the opinion of masses of men is a formidable power which can be made safe and useful. In earlier days this massed opinion was either despised or dreaded; and it is dreadful, if either confined or misdirected. Emerson compares it to steam. Studied, economized, and directed, steam has become the power by which all great labors are done. Like steam is the opinion of political masses! If crushed by castles, armies, and police, dangerously explosive; but if furnished with schools and the ballot, developing "the most harmless and energetic form of a state." His eyes were wide open to some of the evil intellectual effects of democracy. The individual is too apt to wear the time-worn yoke of the multitude's opinions. No multiplying of contemptible units can produce an admirable mass. "If I see nothing to admire in a unit, shall I admire a million units?" The habit of submitting to majority rule cultivates individual subserviency. He pointed out two generations ago that the action of violent political parties in a democracy might provide for the individual citizen a systematic training in moral cowardice.

It is interesting, at the stage of industrial warfare which the world has now reached, to observe how Emerson, sixty years ago, discerned clearly the absurdity of paying all sorts of service at one rate, now a favorite notion with some labor unions. He points out that even when all labor is temporarily paid at one rate, differences in possessions will instantly arise: "In one hand the dime became an eagle as it fell, and in another hand a copper cent. For the whole value of the dime is in knowing what to do with it." Emerson was never deceived by a specious philanthropy, or by claims of equality which find no support in the

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nature of things. He was a true democrat, but still could say: "I think I see place and duties for a nobleman in every society; but it is not to drink wine and ride in a fine coach, but to guide and adorn life for the multitude by forethought, by elegant studies, by perseverance, self-devotion, and the remembrance of the humble old friend,—by making his life secretly beautiful." How fine a picture of the democratic nobility is that!

In his lecture on Man the Reformer, which was read before the Mechanics' Apprentices' Association in Boston in January, 1841, Emerson described in the clearest manner the approaching strife between laborers and employers, between poor and rich, and pointed out the cause of this strife in the selfishness, unkindness, and mutual distrust which ran through the community. He also described, with perfect precision, the only ultimate remedy,—namely, the sentiment of love. "Love would put a new face on this weary old world in which we dwell as pagans and enemies too long.... The virtue of this principle in human society in application to great interests is obsolete and forgotten. But one day all men will be lovers; and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine." It is more than sixty years since those words were uttered, and in those years society has had large experience of industrial and social strife, of its causes and consequences, and of many attempts to remedy or soften it; but all this experience only goes to show that there is but one remedy for these ills. It is to be found in kindness, good fellowship, and the affections. In Emerson's words, "We must be lovers, and at once the impossible becomes possible." The world will wait long for this remedy, but there is no other.

Like every real seer and prophet whose testimony is recorded, Emerson had intense sympathy with the poor, laborious, dumb masses of mankind, and being a wide reader in history and biography, he early arrived at the conviction that history needed to be written in a new manner. It was long before Green's History of the English People that Emerson wrote: "Hence it happens that the whole interest of history lies in the fortunes of the poor." In recent years this view of history has come to prevail, and we are given the stories of institutions, industries, commerce, crafts, arts, and beliefs, instead of the stories of dynasties and wars. For Emerson it is always feats of liberty and wit which make epochs of history. Commerce is civilizing because "the power which the sea requires in the sailor makes a man of him very fast." The invention of a house, safe against wild animals, frost, and heat, gives play to the finer faculties, and introduces art, manners, and social delights. The discovery of the post office is a fine metre of civilization. The sea-going steamer marks an epoch; the subjection of electricity to take messages and turn wheels marks another. But, after all, the vital stages of human progress are marked by steps toward personal, individual freedom. The love of liberty was Emerson's fundamental passion:—



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“For He that ruleth high and wise,
Nor pauseth in His plan,
Will take the sun out of the skies
Ere freedom out of man.”

The new National League of Independent Workmen of America has very appropriately taken its motto from Emerson:—

“For what avail the plough or sail
Or land or life, if freedom fail?”

The sympathetic reader of Emerson comes often upon passages written long ago which are positively startling in their anticipation of sentiments common to-day and apparently awakened by very recent events. One would suppose that the following passage was written yesterday. It was written fifty-six years ago. “And so, gentlemen, I feel in regard to this aged England, with the possessions, honors, and trophies, and also with the infirmities of a thousand years gathering around her, irretrievably committed as she now is to many old customs which cannot be suddenly changed; pressed upon by the transitions of trade, and new and all incalculable modes, fabrics, arts, machines, and competing populations,—I see her not dispirited, not weak, but well remembering that she has seen dark days before;—indeed with a kind of instinct that she sees a little better in a cloudy day, and that in storm of battle and calamity, she has a secret vigor and a pulse like a cannon.”

Before the Civil War the Jew had no such place in society as he holds to-day. He was by no means so familiar to Americans as he is now. Emerson speaks twice of the Jew in his essay on Fate, in terms precisely similar to those we commonly hear to-day: “We see how much will has been expended to extinguish the Jew, in vain.... The sufferance which is the badge of the Jew has made him in these days the ruler of the rulers of the earth.” Those keen observations were made certainly more than forty years ago, and probably more than fifty.

Landscape architecture is not yet an established profession among us, in spite of the achievements of Downing, Cleveland, and Olmsted and their disciples; yet much has been accomplished within the last twenty-five years to realize the predictions on this subject made by Emerson in his lecture on The Young American. He pointed out in that lecture that the beautiful gardens of Europe are unknown among us, but might be easily imitated here, and said that the landscape art “is the Fine Art which is left for us.... The whole force of all arts goes to facilitate the decoration of lands and dwellings.... I look on such improvement as directly tending to endear the land to the inhabitant.” The following sentence might have been written yesterday, so consistent is it with the thought of to-day: “Whatever events in progress shall go to disgust men with cities, and infuse into them the passion for country life and country pleasures, will render a service

to the whole face of this continent, and will further the most poetic of all the occupations of real life, the bringing out by art the native but hidden graces of the landscape.”

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In regard to books, pictures, statues, collections in natural history, and all such refining objects of nature and art, which heretofore only the opulent could enjoy, Emerson pointed out that in America the public should provide these means of culture and inspiration for every citizen. He thus anticipated the present ownership by cities, or by endowed trustees, of parks, gardens, and museums of art or science, as well as of baths and orchestras. Of music in particular he said: "I think sometimes could I only have music on my own terms; could I ... know where I could go whenever I wished the ablution and inundation of musical waves,—that were a bath and a medicine." It has been a long road from that sentence, written probably in the forties, to the Symphony Orchestra in this Hall, and to the new singing classes on the East Side of New York City.

For those of us who have attended to the outburst of novels and treatises on humble or squalid life, to the copious discussions on child-study, to the masses of slum literature, and to the numerous writings on home economics, how true to-day seems the following sentence written in 1837: "The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life are the topics of the time."

* * * * *

I pass now to the last of the three topics which time permits me to discuss,—Emerson's religion. In no field of thought was Emerson more prophetic, more truly a prophet of coming states of human opinion, than in religion. In the first place, he taught that religion is absolutely natural,—not supernatural, but natural:—

"Out from the heart of Nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old."

He believed that revelation is natural and continuous, and that in all ages prophets are born. Those souls out of time proclaim truth, which may be momentarily received with reverence, but is nevertheless quickly dragged down into some savage interpretation which by and by a new prophet will purge away. He believed that man is guided by the same power that guides beast and flower. "The selfsame power that brought me here brought you," he says to beautiful Rhodora. For him worship is the attitude of those "who see that against all appearances the nature of things works for truth and right forever." He saw good not only in what we call beauty, grace, and light, but in what we call foul and ugly. For him a sky-born music sounds "from all that's fair; from all that's foul:—"

"'Tis not in the high stars alone,
Nor in the cups of budding flowers,
Nor in the redbreast's mellow tone,
Nor in the bow that smiles in showers,



But in the mud and scum of things
There always, always something sings.”

The universe was ever new and fresh in his eyes, not spent, or fallen, or degraded, but eternally tending upward:—

“No ray is dimmed, no atom worn,
My oldest force is good as new,
And the fresh rose on yonder thorn
Gives back the bending heavens in dew.”



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When we come to his interpretation of historical Christianity, we find that in his view the life and works of Jesus fell entirely within the field of human experience. He sees in the deification of Jesus an evidence of lack of faith in the infinitude of the individual human soul. He sees in every gleam of human virtue not only the presence of God, but some atom of His nature. As a preacher he had no tone of authority. A true non-conformist himself, he had no desire to impose his views on anybody. Religious truth, like all other truth, was to his thought an unrolling picture, not a deposit made once for all in some sacred vessel. When people who were sure they had drained that vessel, and assimilated its contents, attacked him, he was irresponsive or impassive, and yielded to them no juicy thought; so they pronounced him dry or empty. Yet all of Emerson's religious teaching led straight to God,—not to a withdrawn creator, or anthropomorphic judge or king, but to the all-informing, all-sustaining soul of the universe.

It was a prophetic quality of Emerson's religious teaching that he sought to obliterate the distinction between secular and sacred. For him all things were sacred, just as the universe was religious. We see an interesting fruition of Emerson's sowing in the nature of the means of influence, which organized churches and devout people have, in these later days, been compelled to resort to. Thus the Catholic Church keeps its hold on its natural constituency quite as much by schools, gymnasiums, hospitals, entertainments, and social parades as it does by its rites and sacraments. The Protestant Churches maintain in city slums "settlements," which use the secular rather than the so-called sacred methods. The fight against drunkenness, and the sexual vice and crimes of violence which follow in its train, is most successfully maintained by eliminating its physical causes and providing mechanical and social protections.

For Emerson inspiration meant not the rare conveyance of supernatural power to an individual, but the constant incoming into each man of the "divine soul which also inspires all men." He believed in the worth of the present hour:—

"Future or Past no richer secret folds,
O friendless Present! than thy bosom holds."

He believed that the spiritual force of human character imaged the divine:—

"The sun set, but set not his hope:
Stars rose; his faith was earlier up:
Fixed on the enormous galaxy,
Deeper and older seemed his eye."

Yet man is not an order of nature, but a stupendous antagonism, because he chooses and acts in his soul. "So far as a man thinks, he is free." It is interesting to-day, after all the long discussion of the doctrine of evolution, to see how the much earlier conceptions of Emerson match the thoughts of the latest exponents of the philosophic results of evolution.



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The present generation of scholars and ministers has been passing through an important crisis in regard to the sacred books of Judaism and Christianity. All the features of the contest over “the higher criticism” are foretold by Emerson in “The American Scholar.” “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. Colleges are built on it; books are written on it.... Instantly the book becomes noxious; the guide is a tyrant.” This is exactly what has happened to Protestantism, which substituted for infallible Pope and Church an infallible Book; and this is precisely the evil from which modern scholarship is delivering the world.

In religion Emerson was only a nineteenth-century non-conformist instead of a fifteenth or seventeenth century one. It was a fundamental article in his creed that, although conformity is the virtue in most request, “Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist.” In the midst of increasing luxury, and of that easygoing, unbelieving conformity which is itself a form of luxury, Boston, the birthplace of Emerson, may well remember with honor the generations of non-conformists who made her, and created the intellectual and moral climate in which Emerson grew up. Inevitably, to conformists and to persons who still accept doctrines and opinions which he rejected, he seems presumptuous and consequential. In recent days we have even seen the word “insolent” applied to this quietest and most retiring of seers. But have not all prophets and ethical teachers had something of this aspect to their conservative contemporaries? We hardly expect the messages of prophets to be welcome; they imply too much dissatisfaction with the present.

The essence of Emerson’s teaching concerning man’s nature is compressed into the famous verse:—

“So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, Thou must,
The youth replies, I can.”

The cynic or the fall-of-man theologian replies—Grandeur indeed, say rather squalor and shame. To this ancient pessimism Emerson makes answer with a hard question—“We grant that human life is mean, but how did we find out that it was mean?” To this question no straight answer has been found, the common answer running in a circle. It is hard indeed to conceive of a measure which will measure depths but not heights; and besides, every measure implies a standard.

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I have endeavored to set before you some of the practical results of Emerson’s visions and intuitions, because, though quite unfit to expound his philosophical views, I am capable of appreciating some of the many instances in which his words have come true

in the practical experience of my own generation. My own work has been a contribution to the prosaic, concrete work of building, brick by brick, the new walls of

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old American institutions of education. As a young man I found the writings of Emerson unattractive, and not seldom unintelligible. I was concerned with physical science, and with routine teaching and discipline; and Emerson's thinking seemed to me speculative and visionary. In regard to religious belief, I was brought up in the old-fashioned Unitarian conservatism of Boston, which was rudely shocked by Emerson's excursions beyond its well-fenced precincts. But when I had got at what proved to be my lifework for education, I discovered in Emerson's poems and essays all the fundamental motives and principles of my own hourly struggle against educational routine and tradition, and against the prevailing notions of discipline for the young; so when I was asked to speak to you to-night about him, although I realized my unfitness in many respects for such a function, I could not refuse the opportunity to point out how many of the sober, practical undertakings of to-day had been anticipated in all their principles by this solitary, shrewd, independent thinker, who, in an inconsecutive and almost ejaculatory way, wrought out many sentences and verses which will travel far down the generations.

I was also interested in studying in this example the quality of prophets in general. We know a good deal about the intellectual ancestors and inspirers of Emerson; and we are sure that he drank deep at many springs of idealism and poetry. Plato, Confucius, Shakespeare, and Milton were of his teachers; Oken, Lamarck, and Lyell lent him their scientific theories; and Channing stirred the residuum which came down to him through his forbears from Luther, Calvin, and Edwards. All these materials he transmuted and moulded into lessons which have his own individual quality and bear his stamp. The precise limits of his individuality are indeterminable, and inquiry into them would be unprofitable. In all probability the case would prove to be much the same with most of the men that the world has named prophets, if we knew as much of their mental history as we know of Emerson's. With regard to the Semitic prophets and seers, it is reasonable to expect that as Semitic exploration and discovery advance, the world will learn much about the historical and poetical sources of their inspiration. Then the Jewish and Christian peoples may come nearer than they do now to Emerson's conceptions of inspiration and worship, of the naturalness of revelation and religion, and of the infinite capacities of man. Meantime, it is an indisputable fact that Emerson's thought has proved to be consonant with the most progressive and fruitful thinking and acting of two generations since his working time. This fact, and the sweetness, fragrance, and loftiness of his spirit, prophesy for him an enduring power in the hearts and lives of spiritually-minded men.