RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

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On May 25th last, was celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Emerson. The lecture season of the Societ being over at the time, it was impossible for us to take proper note of this occasion, so I utilize the first opportunity after the occurrence of the anniversary, to add my note to the general chorus of eulogy.

Emerson was peculiarly a native product of America. As one points to the California redwood tree, the sequoia, and says, "This is an American tree, this is something distinctively out of our soil", so in the spiritual world, we point to this tall, marvelous, wonderful character, and say, "Look at him in all his grandeur and height; look at him in his peculiar distinctive nature, in the savour, the fragrance, that goes out from him; he is a product of America."

He was also a citizen of the world. It is wonderful what tributes came in his honor on this Centennial, from England, from Germany, from the continent of Europe. Mr. John Morley has written a highly eulogistic essay on Ralph Waldo Emerson; Matthew Arnold has written on Emerson; Grimm, the famous German critic, the writer of the Life of Michael Angelo, has written a beautiful essay on Emerson. His works have just been recently translated into German; his essays are read all over the world by little groups of believers and admirers. But he is an American. He would have been impossible in his development anywhere else.

Now, the tone of indiscriminate laudation, however, I wish very much to avoid. This panegyric, this indiscriminate

panegyric of great men, has the effect of leaving the mind of the hearer in a kind of golden haze, but without giving him a distinct image, anything that he can carry along with him, anything that will greatly profit him. I shall try to aim, therefore, at discrimination and distinctness in my address this morning. I realize how hard it is to do so, how hard it is to avoid excessive praise in his case, and how hard it is to be distinct, because Emerson's language is a kind of elixir of an elixir; he is a bird ever on the wing, almost impossible to seize and hold fast. Of his own meaning, it is true what he has somewhere said, "It is a fleeting existence, trembling always on the verge of non-existence." - the subtlest, keenest, most delicate ethers. And then the impression that he leaves on your mind is just this, of a sort of golden haze; he puts you into a state of golden haze, he leaves on you the impression of an indefinable greatness, of a superlative excellence to which is due rather the tribute of homage, of unquestioning homage, than the attitude of critical appreciation. How he affected people is evident from the way in which he was regarded by Carlyle. The sour and crabbed Carlyle stands at the door of his houseafter Emerson has paid him a visit, and as he tells us, remains there rooted to the spot, and declines to accompany his guest to the top of the hill, because, as he says, he does not wish to see him descend. The last picture which he wishes to have on his mind, is to see this angelic visitor of his fade, as it were, into the sky, on the top of the hill, disappear into the light. It cannot be said of Carlyle that he was usually given to such characterizations of his friends. Another English observer, Robinson, admits that before he met Emerson, he was filled with prejudice against him, but no sooner did he see him, he says, "than my prejudices

were completely disarmed, by that rare combination of intelligence and sweetness in his countenance." The countenance- just keep before your mind's eye , if you will, during this morning's hour, the countenance of Emerson, the picture of him. There is no better commentary on his life and on his teachings, than that marvelous face. As Robinson says, "that rare combination of intelligence and sweetness." Harriet Martineau says, "Without convincing the "reason of anyone, he exalts the reason of everyone." When he left Edinboro, there was in the crowd that assembled to bid him good-bye at the station, one canny Scotchman who pushed his way forward and begged for the privilege of kissing his hand. I have seen Germans do that, I have seen Poles do it, but it was a new thing to me that a Scotchman should ask the privilege of kissing a man's hand.

There can be no doubt that he was one of the holy ones, who from time to time visit this earth, one of those angels from the crystal coast, of which he sings, crystallized in spirit and in life , he lent a touch of sanctity to the persons and places that are associated with them, during their earthly pilgrimage.

Emerson himself, had the greatest passion for people. Somehow, instead of worshipping God directly, he worshipped the Divine Being in beautiful and excellent men and women. He was always looking for people in whom he might see this revelation of something higher and better. He is one of the few men himself, who can serve us in the same way. But then again, he has himself warned us that we are not to take the attitude of mere reverence and worship toward the great. There is nothing that he so insists upon, so constantly repeats, as that we must retain our self-possession, even in the presence of the princes and grandees of the earth, and of the princes and grandees of the world, of science, of art and literature. He challenges us to criticise him, he com-

mands us to do it; we are unfaithful to his command and teachings, if we do not attempt to see his limitations as well as his excellences. Quite apart from this challenge on his side, we can hardly avoid doing so, seeing the other side, because there are times when in the reading of his essays, one simply revolts. I have felt that revolt rising up within my breast against some things which he says, some opinions which he expresses.

Now I want to try- it is a difficult task- this morning, to do justice to both sides, combining the two attitudes, and I can express my meaning, perhaps no better, than if I compare my attitude toward Emerson, to that of a good son to his father. At first, a good son, in the early days, when he is very young, simply sees his father as perfection; there can be no fault admitted by him in his father; that would destroy his sweet adoration of his his parent. The father knows everything and can do anything; the father is just the type of perfection. As the son grows into adolescence and early manhood, the palpable defects of his father begin to show themselves clearly to his mind, and often that is a period of great bitterness, when an idealistic son has to realize that his father is not the sort of paragon and perfect being that he supposed him to be, but the facts force themselves upon the attention of younger people. We, that are more advanced in life, are apt to think that our faults are hidden. That is not the case. What we secretly know about ourselves oozes out at every pore; without our knowing it, we are photographed on the minds of the younger generation. We cannot disguise the fact. Then comes a time often, of great and deep and real suffering for an idealistic boy. He'd like to keep up the old attitude, but he cannot; he does not say much, he is still outwardly filial, but in his heart, there has been a great revolution. Then later comes the new revolution, as he grows up and becomes sensible, and becomes ripe in his thinking,

he returns once more to the attitude of his childhood, in a modified way;he no longer expects perfection of any human being, of his father no more than of anyone else, and he begins to see that with all the faults, there is so much to reverence, and there is, above all, so much to love, to be thankful for, for he at least owes thanks and gratitude to his father. He has been the recipient of countlessbenefits at his father's hands; it is not for him to dwell on the faultsand so he returns once more to the old attitude. The father is no longer the demi-god, he is a good man, and above all, the man to whom the son owes the deep debt of everlasting gratitude.

Something of the kind we experience often with respect to the teachers and the great authors. When we are young, we think they are perfsction. Emerson is our God. Whatever Emerson says is gospel truth. Then as we grow older, and some things in Emerson do not seem true any more, do not fit our experience any more, we pass through the second stage, the stage of sadness and grief that our idol has been partly destroyed; than finally, we come into the third stage, back to our original attitude modified. We no longer expect perfection, but we see abundant reason and more than enough to reverence and to be grateful for the gifts which we have received at his hands. Do you not find that the case with many authors? There are periods of passionate admiration, and then of estrangement, and then finally, if chance puts us into the way of coming back- often the estrangements lasts for life, because somehow we never get back to our first loves- but if chance throws us into the way of coming back to those authors, we have set aside as no longer helpful to us, why we find that we can return to our first attitude in a modified way.

A few words about Emerson's life. There was nothing

that really calls for much comment. His life was uneventful. He was a child of the Puritans, of a long Puritan ancestry. Puritanism was his father, but the modern spirit was his mother. Of these two parents, he was the offspring: the Puritanical spirit, and the spirit that is embodied in Goethe. When a child, his health was precarious, as is often the case with men of genius, and for a time it was doubtful whether he would live. There was hereditary lung trouble in his family, and with this he had to contend until well-nigh his fortieth year, although he lived to be an old man. There was also a strain of insanity in the Emerson family. One of his brothers never developed, and another brother, Edward, whom other people and Ralph Waldo Emerson himself, considered to be the most brilliant of the family, fell a victim to a severe attack of mental derangement, and soon after died.

The fact is instructive that Emerson never allowed the fear of a possible similar fate awaiting him, to have the least influence upon him, and in that respect, the lesson of his life is a good example to anyone who is in a similar situation. Do not borrow trouble; keep the dark thoughts at a distance; live for great things, and wise and noble things to do, never mind the future. Live in the light; never mind the possible darkness. He held to that when living, so beautifully and so consistently. In a quaint, humorous way, he said that Nature had seasoned him against possible loss of his reason, because she had kindly mingled a grain of folly in his nature, which was sufficient to make him immune against the graver forms of the evil.

He was poor, and to earn a living, he taught school, which he detested. He was not particularly a bright boy, which may be a comfort to parents, whose boys are not particularly bright.

In fact, he speaks later on with a kind of awe of the mysteries of analytical geometry, which, to mathematicians, are not supposed to be so very difficult, but he was, as he says in his old age, "I was as a boy, and am to this day, hopelessly a mathematical "dunce." He has warned people against the mistake of imagining that because a man is great in a certain direction, therefore he must be great or even up to the normal level in other directions. He knew in his own case, that it was not so; for mathematics he had absolutely no gift. He wasnot particularly brilliant in other studies. He entered college, and pursued a rather irregular course there, on account of the state of his health. He finally became a Unitarian clergyman, and then gave, as everyone knows- gave up his charge, because he could not conscientiously administer the communion service.

That was, however, merely the outward occasion of his break with the Christian Church. Emerson was profoundly a religious man, but I am quite sure, he was not a Christian. He was not a Christian in his ethics, not a Christian in his religion, and not a Christian in his philosophy of life. I think it is just as well to state this plainly.

He was twice married. His first wife was the beautiful Ellen Tucker, who soon died, and whose grave he was in the habit of visiting every morning, going on foot to Roxbury. Later on he married Lydia Jackson, of Plymouth, who became the mother of his four children, and who survived him. He had a great grief in the loss of his eldest beautiful boy Waldo, a child of five years, and the evidence of his passionate and inconsolable sorrow we have in his poem, the threnody, in which at the same time, we find his

doctrine of consolation.

Emerson never fails to inveigh against travelling, but he was himself three times abroad, visiting England and Scotland and France, and finally extending his travels as far as Egypt and the Nile. He made the personal acquaintance, and was received with distinction by the great men of his time, Morley, and DeQuincey, and Carlyle, and Lord Palmerson in politics, and Gladstone, and Tennyson, and Browning, and the others. He was also the recipient of honors at the hands of members of the British Aristocracy, who came to hear his lectures, and to entertain him at their houses and so when he recommends plain living, rather than sumptuous living, he is not like one who speaks of what he has not known. He knew luxury and princely conditions, and when he recommends plain living, it is because after deliberately comparing the two kinds of living, he prefers the simple.

He came back from his trip to Europe, and immediately plunged into the work of lyceum lecturing in the Wild West, the West which was at that time very wild indeed. After his enjoyment of life, and the beautiful and sumptuous entertainments in England, he found himself at once in the squalor of Western inns, and amid the noise and glare of Western hotels, and speaking instead of to the most cultivated people in the world, speaking to farmers and small shopkeepers, and singing his transcendental song to minds absorbed in the most sordid pursuits. One would think that the effect of this sudden transplantation from England and culture to the Wild West, and all that it stood for in the 50's, would have disappointed him, but he was , on the contrary, so genuine a nature, that he took a mighty fancy to Western life, Western Democracy, felt at home with the common people, and as he puts it somewhere, he found that the passion for Europe which had been

kindled in his heart, was supplanted by the new passion for America.

He was not very much overloaded with honors at first. Harvard University did not take him up and bless him, and confer its titles on him in the years of struggle; afterwards, when he had made his way, when he was a man of distinction, then the outward distinctions came, as is usual. He was twice elected overseer of Harvard University afterthat; But what was worth very much more, he had the most tender affection and love of the people who immediately lived with him, his neighbors in Concord. That is always the best sign of what a man is worth; a man will often appear to be very different when seen on the platform or from a distance, but if you find out what the people who live with him think of him, then you have a good measure of his worth, or worthlessness. So if you ask what the people who lived with him, thought of him, I can only present to you this picture: On his return from his last voyage abroad, all the Concord neighbors came out to meet him at the station, and the public school children were there singing songs, and strewing flowers in his way, and the rest of them took him to the new home, which they had built for him in his absence, the old home having been burned down in his absence, they conducted him there in triumph.

He lived to a good old age, being seventy-nine years at his death, and what is earthly of him, lies buried under a noble pine-tree,-the tree which above all others, he loved,-on a high ridge in Concord Cemetery.

Now, we ask concerning Emerson, certain questions: In the first place, what was that quality which everybody notices in him, that superlative quality, that Harriet Martineau expressed, when she said that the man exalts our reason, even when he does not convince our reason; that somehow, disagreeing with him makes so

little difference to us. Usually when we disagree with a man, we put him aside, but with Emerson it is not so. What is it in him that makes this, produces this effect? Then again, we ask as to his limitations: Why is it that we resent, that we cannot agree, cannot assent to certain of his opinions. Why, do we find our Emerson in such ominous company. Why does Pobedonostseff, the persecutor, the head of the Holy Russian Synod, why does he always keep a copy of Emerson on his desk, as I have learned from authentic sources. What is there in common between P ... the persecutor of all who are not orthodox Russians, and our Emerson? What is there in common between Nietzsche, the scorner of the masses, of the multitude, and Emerson? Why does he attract such people? What is there in him that lays him open to the misfortune of attracting such persons?

Then again, why is it that when we go to him for guidance, he stirs us up mightily, he puts us into the mood of going out and changing the world? Why is it when we go to him, and ask him, How shall we set about this work, which you have suggested to us, he leaves us utterly in the lurch. Why does he suggest no guidance? Why does he not guide us? And then, what are the great services which he rendered? These questions I wish to try to briefly take up in order and answer.

One thing we must always bear in mind in judging of characters, great or little, that no person is good or bad merely, that there is never merely light or merely shadow, but that somehow in every human character, there are the lights and the shadows, and we must be prepared for them.

But in the first place, what is the preciousness in him, the supreme preciousness? What is this superlative quality of electricity that thrills us the moment we touch circuit with his

thought? I think it is that we all feel in him that he is one of those genuine, those rare genuine natures, who know what we call the spiritual truths, at first hand. What Tennyson has said in his poem on "The Eagle" applies to him. In the poem "Near to the sun, in lonely lands, Ring'd with the azure world he stands", so this spiritual eagle Emerson, close to the sun, the sun of truth, in lonely lands, ring'd with his azure world, he stands, and he surveys that world.

He says the tone is everything in a man. Don't look so much at what a man says, but consider the tone in which he says it: the tone is the index of character. And people may be divided into two classes, those whose tone shows that they speak from within, from within the experience, as parties and possessors of it, and those whose tone shows that they talk from without, as spectators of it, or merely learning about it at second hand. There is one tone of having, and another tone of seeking, and Emerson's tone is that of having, speaking from within the experience.

What I mean is simply this: It is the commonplace of religious preachers to say that the world, that matter and force is not everything, but that there is something spiritual in us, something that is not material, not corruptible, and yet the tone in which they say it , is not convincing; we somehow feel that these same people who are speaking of this spiritual nature in man, have not experienced it, that their mind is pinned down to material things and thoughts, that they are bondsmen of the sense, or that at best, they have only got glimpses in rare moments, of something higher. Then there are people who will tell you that plain living is better than sumptuous living, "plain living with high thinking" but somehow the tone is not that of people who have really found

plain living to be better. Either they are not living plainly and are merely talking from the lips, or they do live plainly because they must, because they have not the means to live otherwise, and they are hankering all the time after the sumptuous living, they have not really discovered that plain living is really better, even if you can have the other thing. There are people who speak of self-sacrifice as being noble and bringing peace with it, but they have never made a great sacrifice in their life, and they are not really resigned in their life, they have not discovered the "peace that comes of resignation".

In Emerson's case, that is the preciousness of it, the wonder of it. You feel in every case, in every word, that he talks from within his experience, that he has found it true, that he merely reports in a perfectly natural way what he has discovered every day of his life. He lives the spiritual life; he would not have the other thing for the world. He would not live as the British peers, as noblemen do, he has been there, he would not stoop so far. Once in a great while, once in centuries, there visits this earth, such a being, such a creature, of whom we get in touching him, the feeling, the conviction that he is genuine down to the marrow of his bone. And that is the priceless quality in Emerson. You know in Verone, the women in the street pointed at Dante, and said, "That is the man who has actually been in the Inferno." They believed he had actually been in the scenes which he described. "That is the man who has actually been in the Inferno." So we may point to Emerson as he passes, and say, "That is the man who has actually been in the Paradeisos."

Now as to his limitations. Here too I wish to be perfectly explicit,- following his directions. One has a natural hesitation, almost a sense of outrage in minimizing something that is so great, in quarreling with manna, as it were. I suppose those

Israelites in the desert were God-forsaken people; they had heavenly bread, manna, they quarreled with it. So it seems a kind of outrage to quarrel with heavenly bread when it is sent down in the shape of such teachings and utterances, but whenever I have that feeling, I seem to see the benignant smile of Emerson, and as if his hand were laid upon me with a slight impact and slight impulse, saying "Go on."

Well, the great limitation is, that he was a pantheist- two points- he was a pantheist and an individualist. He was a pantheist because he was a poet. The poetic view, and the pantheistic view, are very close together. Goethe was a pantheist, and Browning was a pantheist, and a great many poets are pantheists. Emerson was a poet. He said "I am born a poet, of a low order indeed, but still a poet. That is my vocation." That was the truth. He was not primarily a philosopher, he was primarily a poet. And somewhere else in contrasting himself with Horace Greeley during a visit to New York, he says, I am a poet in my theories, in my politics, in my ethics; I am of no more use in your New York, than the rainbow or a fire-fly, whereas he thought that Horace Greeley was of more use, being a practical man, a man of action. Well, it is a blessed thing to remember that Emerson walked on this island, in these streets, and if he were living now, we should convince him that he has been of vastly more use even in New York, than the mere rainbow or a fire-fly. But still, he was a poet, that was true. And he took the poetic view of things. The poetic view of things is the harmonizing, the unifying, the synthetic view. Now then, pantheism endeavors to unify, to harmonize the world as it presents itself to us, presents itself under two aspects, good and evil. There is the rose, there is also the weed, there is the venomous snake, there is the tiger crunching his vic-

tim, and there is malignity and treachery among men. And there is sorrow for the dead, and there is sin, and worst of all, the remembrance of sin. Now the pantheist is disposed to blur and obliterate the sharp distinctions between good and evil. He says, "God is flooding, the Divine Being floods the earth; God is in everything; God is in the serpent's tooth, God is in the tiger's fang, God permits affliction, bereavement, God permits sin, therefore, somehow, these things also must be good." So the pantheist is disposed to confuse our moral judgments and to shake our moral standard.

The sane attitude, to my mind, is indeed to hope for an ultimate reconcilitation of these contrasts of good and ill. We cannot help believing somehow in the ultimate reality of things, that which appears to us evil, will be found to be capable of a construction which makes it harmonious and accordant with the good, but that lies beyond us in a world to which we cannot penetrate, we may hope for it, we may believe in it, but we must not try ourselves to understand the reconcilitation or the terms of the reconcilitation. For us the sane view is to call a spade a spade, to say evil is evil, to say that badness in man is bad and cannot be interpreted as somehow good, and bereavement and loss, and all these things are evils, and the sane attitude is for us to fight the evil, to bring about a reconcilitation as far as possible by crushing the bad and making the good dominant, and in the case of those evils which we cannot crush, which are beyond our control, such as affliction, at least to do our best to console and to alleviate the sufferings of the afflicted with human sympathy and human kindness. That is my sense, my view of the attitude that

a man should take toward the question of good and evil, not try to blur the sharp distinctions, but rather keep those distinctions sharp.

Now, Emerson is a pantheist, and one of his favorite themes in his essay on Compensation and elsewhere, is that he has found a way of showing you that bad is not bad. But I do not think he succeeded. That is the poet's view. His poetry gives a mystic charm to his writings, but it is a fault in his philosophy. He tries to construe a poetry of the universe when we are butting our heads against the hardest kind of facts.

And the second of his limitations, is what I have called his individualism. If I should say that Emerson was a Pantheist, and an impressionist and an anarchist, I should be using words which ~~your~~ would suggest to your minds very base connotations, and which for that reason I ought not to use, and yet they are strictly and literally true. He was an impressionist in his thinking, for instance: Emerson had the idea that every thought that comes into a man's mind, so far as it is clearly thought, is true. His whole conception of things is atomic, ~~xxxxx~~ atomistic, so in his thinking, every thought that enter the mind, if it is very clearly thought, is true, every impression so far is correct, if it is distinct. It is for that reason that he launches his curious philippics against consistency. "Consistency" he says, "is the hobgoblin of little minds". With consistency, a great mind has simply nothing to do, because the fact that is in your mind now, if it is only clear, is true, and will somehow square with the thought that will be in your mind tomorrow, if that is true, so pay no attention at all to consistency, so let every thought come to you, and every impulse come to you, and if it is deep and clear, follow it. That

is impressionism, that is anarchism in the intellectual world, and that leads to all sorts of dangerous consequences.

And here it is that I can point out why our scholar Emerson attracted Pop[illegible] the head of the Holy Synod, and men like Nietzsche, because he vindicates, he seeks to justify by this doctrine, the gigantic self-assertion of the individual, and his impulses, and his haphazard thoughts. All these men who believe in the over-man, the super-man, who believe in magnifying the individual, and who believe in the coincidence of might and right, all these men find something akin to their own theories in this side of Emerson's doctrine, his impressionism, his individualism. Not that he is really their congener in any sense; he does not belong to their species; he is as far from them as the poles; he is deep down in his nature, a man saturated with moral ideas. If he proclaims individualism, if he says to a man, Do what your impulse bids you, every deep impulse is holy, act it out, - what he really means is, Do not confine yourself in your morality to the weak and narrow moral code of the day, but act out those impulses which bid you aspire to a higher morality. He wishes the individual to deviate from the beaten track, not on the side of laxness, but of sternness,; nevertheless, his doctrine as he expresses it, lends itself to interpretation as anti-nomianism. He was an individualist in this: Every thought that comes to you, every impulse, if it is deep, is so far valid and true; accept it; follow it. And often he says, just put yourself into the waiting attitude, don't try to doanything, think anything, just let these thoughts and these impulses come up, well up and lead you.

He was above all an individualist in his notion of social reform. He profoundly desired that society be changed, the laws of property be changed, that the condition of woman be changed, and

the conditions of labor be changed. He was profoundly in sympathy with the reform movements, and yet when we go to him and ask him for guidance, and say, How shall we act, we get no guidance from him in specific directions whatever. And why is this? It is because of his individualism. His position is that all that is necessary in order to accomplish social reform is for every man to sweep before his own door, as the homely proverb says. You reform yourself, sir, that is all that you need care for, and then if everybody does the same, the whole world will be reformed. That is his doctrine of social reform, the individivualist doctrine, that doctrine that builds everything on the reform of the individual, and does not look to the change of outward conditions. What he says is perfectly true, but it is only half the truth, and the other half of the truth is overlooked. It was this attitude that led him to remain indifferent to the Abolition Movement during its early phases. In fact, he was in the habit of roundly scolding the Abolitionist. He would say, Do you be a good father to your own children, do you please be a considerate employer to the man who chops wood for you, and do not be so tender about the sufferings of the negro a thousand miles away. Such language he used. And that is all true, but it is only half the truth. It was not until he himself was attacked in the citadel of his individualism, that he changed his attitude; it was not until the Fugitive Slave Laws passed, and he as a citizen of Massachusetts, together with every other citizen was to be compelled not merely to suffer wrong being done in South Carolina and in Georgia, but he is to assist in doing the wrong, namely, in catching slaves. It was not until the pistol was put to his own breast, until he was asked himself to do the wrongthat he began those eloquent and indignant protests against slavery, which have placed him in the foremost rank of the leaders

of the Emancipation Cause. Formerly, he used to say, A man can cease to be a slave-holder the moment he chooses; it is not necessary to abolish slavery. He can cease to be a slave-holder. Why not? Can he not cease to treat his slaves as slaves, can he not treat them as human beings? Or, the slave can be free in the midst of his chains, if he takes the right philosophical view of things, if he has the right attitude towards the world. Now, that is all very true, but the flaw in it is that the slave-holder cannot cease to be a slave-holder so long as he is a slave-holder; he may feed his slaves on golden dishes, if you please, or he may entertain them with Beethoven in his parlor, or he may address them, if he will, as equals, yet if underneath it all, there remains the sinister fact that the slave cannot stir from the house, cannot go out of the grounds, cannot leave the plantation, because he is bought and paid for, there remains ~~there remains~~ the sinister fact that the man has not got his liberty, then he is not being treated as a human being, because one of the first elements of humanity is personal liberty. A man deprived of his personal liberty is not a true human being. The habit of buying men like cattle does not breed that attitude of which Emerson speaks; those we have bought and paid for, we are not in the habit of looking upon as our equals. So in regard to slaves, it may be true that here and there, there may be an Uncle Tom among the slaves, there may be a slave who has the philosophical view of life that makes him free in the midst of chains, but the conditions of slavery are not such as to be propitious to philosophical calm and piety in the mind of the slave. The ignorance in which he is left, the brutalizing conditions which constantly are before him, do not predispose him to take this lofty view of life, so that the fact

remains that while character is to a certain degree independent of circumstances, nevertheless it is for the sake of moral progress indispensable that circumstances be changed, that conditions be changed, and conditions cannot be changed by us as individuals; there must be concerted effort, there must be organization. The ~~cur~~ cure for imperfect organization is not individualism, but more perfect organization, but from organized and concerted effort, individualists like Emerson shrink. And hence it is that if you go to him and ask him, How shall society be reformed? a certain speechlessness, a certain aphasia takes possession of him, and there remains the gap between his teachings and the practice of it, as he himself realized too, but excused himself on the ground that it is his part to stand guard over central soundness and not to concern himself with what he calls "superficial applications." As a matter of fact, he is not capable of furnishing the superficial applications, because his theory is not of such a nature as to grapple with the problems of social organization, and without organization there can be no changed conditions, and without changed conditions, there can be no permanent improvement. True, everybody must reform himself , but the conditions must be supplied which will enable this desire for self-reform to express itself in adequate results.

But it is time that we pass to the last division of the subject, and that we consider now briefly, What are the great and inestimable services which he rendered, and why, despite these limitations and drawbacks, we nevertheless feel like taking him up in our arms, and placing him on the pedestal of his glory--No, I will not say that, because for glory he had a certain contempt. He was a shy nature, so modest and humble; he distrusted and hated praise. One characteristic things about this humility, just to

mention it in passing, is that in the very last years of his life, when he was an old man, near eighty, and was travelling in the State of New York, he went out of his way and subjected himself to great trouble and really great hardship for a man of his age, in trying to hunt up a certain mechanic, a workingman, who had written him a letter dissenting from his views on Compensation, from his optimistic view of good and evil, and he went a long distance for hours and hours, trying to discover this man and to get what advantage he could, what profit he could, from conversation with him, reasoning the matter out and listening to to his argument. Such was his humility, his genuine humbleness, and his distaste of anything like praise. So we must not use the ordinary word "glory" in connection with him. But nevertheless, what were the great services ? We shall mention briefly three:

First, that he took off our shoulders, the load of the past. Here is this Hebrew religion that has existed for three thousand years. How dare anyone set himself up against the tradition of three thousand years, a religion which has satisfied and sufficed for ninty generations. Shall this modern generation revolt against it? Here is Christianity, with hundreds of millions of adherers. Shall a little knot of free-thinkers or free religionists in New York or in Boston, have the effrontery to set up themselves against the authority of these hundreds of millions What has been good enough for hundreds of millions- isn't it good enough for you? Who are you who set yourself up against this vast accumulation of authority? Comes Emerson, and as with the waving of his enchanter's rod, he dispels all this mist. He says, "All the things that the best have accomplished, all the great achievements- what are they? Nothing but first essays in the flight of

that tremendous soul that is capable of far greater performances than any that have yet been witnessed. Instead of turning backward, turn forward. In one of his essays, he describes the evening sun on the river at Concord, and in sight of the river, he likens it to what he calls, "the river of God's life flowing out of the gray past into a green future." Those adjectives are significant. The past to him is gray, green forever is the future. He is the prophet of the future, and of the present day. He asserts the rights of the hour, of the day in which we live. His teachings are especially applicable and welcome to a new generation, a new people like ours, to a people who are face to face with problems, which the past did not know, and whom the methods of the past and traditions of the past, cannot serve in their attempt to solve their problem. He gives them courage and confidence in themselves, he takes off their back the load of the past.

And he is perfectly pitiless in his statements. Emerson is the most radical of men; he rolls forth his paradoxes with the sweetness of love. His language is courteous and sweet, but as for the meat of what he says, there never has been radicalism as radical as his, and that is often overlooked because of the gentleness and the beauty of the form.

So for instance, before the immense possibilities of man, all mere experience, all past biography, no matter how unspotted and saintly, shrinks. He has been speaking of Jesus, and has Jesus in mind,- "Not only have we no great men, but absolutely speaking, we never have had." There is not on record a character so perfect that it can wholly content. This he says plainly in answer to the Unitarian contention that if Jesus was not divine, that he was a perfect man. There never has been a character perfect. No matter how great the men of the past were, we must look for still greater excellence in the future. That is the one ster-

ling service. We do not feel after reading him, that we reverenced Plato and Jesus less, only that we reverenced more that over-soul of which he speaks, of which these and others were the admirable, yet by no means, final expositors.

Then the next service is that he gives us an experience which you have , as well as I, and which I think everybody has who reads Emerson, he gives us a feeling as if we were really great. He invests us with a certain grandeur. After reading a page of Emerson, one rises and walks as if on air, with head erect, and just as if one might feel on whom the patent of nobility had been conferred, or who received an honorary degree from some great University, or who had been elected to some high office- a new sense of distinction, and that is especially upon obscure persons and upon young people. Emerson is a perfect godsend to young people and to obscure people, to (?) millhands and tenants, to women who are unloved though perhaps they are not unlovely. He has this art of giving us a sense of grandeur, because he measures us not by the standard of performance but of possibilities. Measured by the standard of performance, the young merchant says to himself, Today I am nobody; nobody pays any attention to me; I am a mere clerk, and they are right, because what have I accomplished? But some day, when I shall have amassed a great fortune, then I will be somebody, and have dignity; men will bow to me and salute me , and persons of note will come to my house, I will be somebody. The young scholar says to himself, Today I am nothing; what have I done? Ah, but ten years from now, when I have written my magnum opus, when I shall have contributed some notable addition to the stock of knowledge, then I will be somebody; and so the young politician says, when I shall have set my foot on the ladder of preferment, then I shall be someone. Emerson, in his sweet way, says.Why, you are someone now if you

only knew it. You are great. Yes, you are greater than you ever will be, if you soil your fingers in the race for wealth or power. Nay, even if you keep clean and honorable, the utmost performance of your later life will after all not match or exhaust that something that is in you now, that infinite possibility that is buried in your finite present. He makes us all feel like persons who are sons of some great lord of the soil, or some monarch of a splendid kingdom; we are not lords ourselves, we have not yet ascended our throne, but we are heirs, and some day the heir will come into his own.

And connected with this is the other thought upon which he never fails to harp, namely, that there is some talent which nature has bestowed on each of us, some peculiar gift, and that it is the mission of our life to bring that to fruition.

One thing that helps young men more than anything is this doctrine of genuineness and of avoiding imitation. We are all disposed too much to imitate other people, and to think we are nothing unless we can be like them, to set up standards of admirations and try to live up to them, copy them. Emerson constantly says, It is infinitely better for you to develop the talent that you have, the gift that you have, however small, in your own way; please do something distinctive; do not imitate; do not try to be a washed-out second best copy of somebody else's perfection, but be faithful to your own nature and your gift.

And so, lastly, he is the bard and prophet of democracy. Strange that in the age of democracy, so many of the great writers are anti-democratic. Carlyle is an aristocrat, Ruskin, Goethe is an aristocrat- wherever you turn almost among the great writers, you find anti-democratic spirits. Life is in one direction, the flood of opinion is in another. Emerson with only a few others, is the great expositor of democracy. And that not because he is

blind to the follies of the masses, because he overlooks their blunders, because he fails to see their turbulent passions and the little reason that is often in their actions. No! But because despite it all, he sees the glint of gold in the seeming pebble, the ray divine that pierces the ugly mask, because of his unflinching faith in human nature, that faith which is apt to work in part at least, the miracle in which it believes. Emerson has done a great deal for young men. He did a great deal for me. At this time, personal testimony is in order, and so a personal word in conclusion may not seem egotistical.

He helped me to take the load of authority off of my shoulders, to make me feel as against these mighty religions and churches, that I had a right to live my own life in my own way, and to hold to my own convictions, no matter what authority might be arrayed against them. He helped me to feel at the time when I returned from abroad, and was homesick for that refined and high European culture, which I had been permitted to share and from which, here in this mercantile city, I found myself an exile, he helped me to feel that that attitude was wrong, and he drew from my heart as he had drawn from his, the passion for Europe, and substituted for it, the passion for America.

He is the friend of our youth, he still remains our friend as we grow older. We dip our aging spirits in the well-springs of his writings, and so we remain young. He helped me above all by the mere fact of his existence, he helped me to realize that the people to whom I belong, the American people, are not merely materialistic, not merely dollar men, not merely wedded to ignoble ends of pelf and power, he helped me to realize this, because he lived, because he was the son of his people, because the soil that had produced an Emerson has virtue in it.

I bring my tribute today at his shrine and celebrate

him, this Emerson, this wildflower of the New England hills, is far more to me than all the exotics of the European garden, with all their bright colors and their perfumes,- next to Abraham Lincoln, I know of no one who has more fitly and sublimely expressed the genius of America than RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

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Delivered by Prof. Felix Adler, at Carnegie Hall,
Oct. 18th, 1903.