

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

FAME, WEALTH, LIFE, DEATH.

WHAT is fame?

'Tis the sun-gleam on the mountain,  
Spreading brightly ere it flies;  
'Tis the bubble on the fountain,  
Rising lightly ere it dies;  
Or if here and there a hero  
Be remembered through the years.  
Yet to him the gain is zero;  
If but only in the air  
May be heard some eager mention of their name,  
Though they hear it not themselves, 'tis much the same.

What is wealth?

'Tis a rainbow still receding  
As the panting fool pursues;  
Or a toy that youth, unheeding,  
Seeks the readier way to lose;  
But the wise man keeps due measure,  
Neither out of breath nor base;  
But he holds in trust his treasure  
For the welfare of the race.  
Yet what crimes some men will dare  
But to gain their slender share  
In some profit, though with loss of name or health:  
In some plunder spent on vices or by stealth!

What is life?

'Tis the earthly hour of trial  
For the life that's just begun;  
When the prize of self-denial  
May be quickly lost or won;  
'Tis the hour when love may burgeon  
To the everlasting flower;  
Or when lusts their victims urge on  
To defy immortal power.  
Yet how lightly men ignore  
All the future holds in store,  
Spending brief but golden moments all in strife,  
Or in suicidal madness grasp the knife!

What is death?

Past its dark, mysterious portal  
Human eyes may never roam;  
Yet the hope still springs immortal  
That it leads the wanderer home.  
Oh, the bliss that lies before us  
When the secret shall be known,  
And the vast, angelic chorus  
Sounds that hymn before the throne!  
What is fame, or wealth, or life?  
Past are praises, fortune, strife;  
All but love, that lives forever, cast beneath,  
When the good and faithful servant takes the wreath.

—The Academy.

EMERSON'S LIMITATIONS AS A POET.

It has always seemed to me (and I suppose it has been often said by others) that one of Emerson's distinguishing characteristics is that in almost all his prose he is a poet. Even when he deals mostly with facts, these facts find relations with an ideal conception. They are related to some broad principle, and illustrate it, and so become not only not dry and pale, but are full of juice and colour, like ripe fruits. What in the hands of some thinkers are as ordinary pebbles conventionally or scientifically arranged, become in his hands luminous gems—and still better for their setting. Everything he uses has a value in illustrating an idea. Each sentence wears a precious jewel in its head. Every fact has a leading into other facts, and all radiate out into principles; so that nothing is unimportant, but each in turn becomes the centre of a nurturing thought. Thus imagination, or the symbolizing faculty, is always present in his pages, and makes him, in a large sense, a poet and "prophet of the soul." This dual vision, which led him to give such value to Plato and Swedenborg, sets him outside of, if not above, most of the accredited thinkers of this century. Till we have this key to Emerson's genius, we fail to understand him completely. His essays are, in one sense, completer poems than many of those he has written in verse. For in his verse, especially when rhymed, he is cramped for space and for free movement in expressing and illustrating his idea. And a consequence of this want of elbow-room, and of the necessity imposed upon him by rhymes and metres which are sometimes rather unmanageable, is an occasional lapse into a dissonant oddity of phrase—often very piquant in prose, but jarring in poetry; or at other times into a condensation which is like that of the atmosphere, and tends to obscurity. It seems to me that, with Emerson, verse was not, as a general thing, so natural and congenial a form of expression that it drew him magnetically and irresistibly. I admit that marked exceptions must be made to this statement. And there are noble poems and parts of poems which seem the pure and spontaneous prompting of the Muse. Notably those where he is plainly swayed by a strong tide of emotion, or touched by some vivid fancy or natural picture—as in his "Threnody," the "Rhodora," "The Amulet," "Rubies," "Each and All," "The Snow-storm," and parts of the "Wood-notes." His poem, "The Problem"—almost matchless as it is—is less an outflow of lyric expression than a brilliant mosaic of

thoughts concisely and poetically expressed; a poem (in this respect, though not otherwise) like Gray's "Elegy," where many of the couplets, as there the quatrains, might change places without seriously dislocating the whole structure. Though, perhaps, never guilty of writing *invita Minerva*, he is naturally more epigrammatic than lyric. It is only in the fusion of an emotion or an ideal that he flows: and even then his stream is roughened and impeded by serious technical limitations. For such long, elemental wave-sweeps as Milton or Byron or Shelley or Keats delighted in, he was unfit. He lacked one essential element, the sensuous—and this includes the rhythmical sense. The form is slighted—the thought or the picture only prized. But every complete poet should be an artist too, and know how to wed beautiful thoughts to beautiful forms, and in the most harmonious union. Here, I think, was Emerson's deficiency. But what then? Shall we quarrel with our poet because he is not a complete rhythmical artist? Shall we not rather trust to the impression he makes by the rare thought and original diction shining through lines which are incomplete, which are halting, odd, extravagant or obscure, but which are so much a natural way he has of expressing himself that they may be said to be full of "an art that nature makes"? The imperfect structure of many of his poems can never hide from us those wonderfully graphic touches wherein he is so alive to nature—those memorable couplets or those "skyeey sentences" (a term he so felicitously applies to Shakespeare)—or those happy condensations of thoughts into phrases that have become as household words to us.—*The late C. P. Cranch, in the New York Critic.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF GRAMMAR.

IN fact, grammar is the natural focus and centre of all philological study, and it is easy to see that this must necessarily be so. For as the spring of all language is predication, and as with the progress of development the act of predication becomes highly complex and elaborate, some habit of analysis is requisite if the mind is to keep pace with its own creations. Grammar is the psychological analysis of predication. We are too prone to hold elementary grammar cheap, merely because it is elementary, and because it is supposed to be common knowledge; but it is in reality the first condition of our bringing a scientific mind to bear upon the phenomena of language. Whatever we learn by comparative philology goes but to constitute a periphery which revolves, or ought to revolve, round this central "hub" of linguistic science. When we have found out a new etymology, what is it but a new instance of the recovery of an old and forgotten predication? When, for example, we learn that "umpire" has dropped an initial *n*, and that the word represents *non-par* ("odd, single"), we find that the fact of his standing between two discordant parties as a single arbitrator was the predication of which this functionary was the subject. There is a notion abroad that philology is superior to grammar, that it is in a commanding position over grammar, and that it has a natural right to supervise the arrangements and terminology of grammar. The consequence has been that of late years almost every author who has come forward as a grammarian has done so, more or less, in the guise of a philologist, as if this character invested him with higher authority, and gave him power to innovate upon the time-honoured institutes of grammar. By this avenue some confused and hybrid doctrines have found their way into current school-books.—*Prof. John Farley, in the Forum.*

CHARITY AND THE CREEDS.

OUR country has witnessed of late years unerring signs of the new era of human fellowship; but none is more cheering to contemplate than the association of men and women of different creeds for the advancement of mankind. These charitable organization societies, in particular, seem providential in furnishing a common platform and working field for Christian, Jew and Agnostic. Here the walls of denominationalism become the faintest possible lines, the borderline between the religions grows larger and larger, and in the mighty hand of fellowship which unites all for humanity's sake, the bonds of ecclesiasticism burst asunder, sectarian differences are cast in the background, and the lovely outlines of the New Temple of Brotherhood, in which Jew and Gentile alike are worshippers, can be distinctly traced. No dissonances there, no harsh warring notes. To uplift the fallen, feed the hungry, comfort the weary, make the world more glad, is the creed which all repeat; and hand in hand, they pave the way for the new era. Charity without distinction of creed—that means substantial progress. The religions are not rivals or opponents. They are soldiers in the same grand army, wearing different uniforms, it may be, and belonging to different regiments and corps; but marching under One and the same commander, whatever the name given Him, fighting evil, wrong, foulness, crime. If it be not so, if we are to regard the denominations as just so many warring animals with sharp teeth and remorseless claws, maintaining the old quarrels and prejudices, what a sad mockery is religion and how the creeds caricature the Being they worship! Judaism hails every effort to make humanity one. It joins gladly, devoutly, in any movement which aims at human betterment. It has no frowning dogmas, no harsh statutes, no unkindly decrees to forbid. Nay, its essence impels such action. The spirit of its legislation and tradition commands the broader impulse, the generous

endeavour. The spectacle of a narrow Jew, a bigoted Jew, a Jew wholly wrapped up in himself and his little clan, has no existence. The Jew mingles in the broader current and strives to realize the prophetic ideal. Let the Christian meet him on the same broad platform and all will be well. Christian and Jew shall fade away, but humanity will survive.—*Jewish Messenger.*

For a number of years Sheffield, England, has been making experiments in new methods and new materials in street-paving. The latest is composed of steel and wood. Pavements of somewhat similar design were laid in the above city some three years ago, using cast iron and wood, but the advantages of steel over cast iron were so great that the former material has been decided upon for use in the future. The pavement has been in use for some months, while the cast iron and wood design has been laid for three years at a point where the traffic is heavy, and as yet has shown little or no sign of wear.

SOME idea of the enormous export trade of Great Britain may be gathered from the fact that the daily average at the London Clearing House amounts to about £22,250,000. If these transactions for a single day were settled in coin, it would require 175 tons of gold or 2,781 tons of silver to meet the requirements. This gold loaded in carts, to each of which is allowed twenty-five feet of space, and in each of which is placed one ton of coin, would form a procession more than four-fifths of a mile in length, while it would require more than thirteen miles of carts to treat the silver in the same manner. Or taking a whole year of 300 days, the processions would be 246 and 3,950 miles respectively. The thought is perfectly appalling.

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