

the meditative, unpractical life of a scholar and a poet. Sheltered on all sides from the adverse winds that blight so many lives, with a heredity of many generations of pure, saintly, and cultured men and women, to lessen the evil tendencies in his own nature, dwelling in an extremely narrow social circle of noble and congenial natures, he felt neither the sin nor the woe of the world. Against political and social wrongs he wielded all the strong weapons of his genius, but the real cruelty of sin he never saw, and the fierce hand and heart struggle against evil he was never engaged in. The deep, scorching misery and need of mankind he knew not, with his lofty nature and religion of culture. And therein he fails to satisfy the hungry heart.

The written works of Emerson hold a unique place in literature. His essays are like no others, made up of concentrated, often abrupt, sentences, each standing for a whole thought. One of his chief characteristics is a rigid economy of words. His language is pruned and condensed until every idea is conveyed in the smallest possible vehicle.

His quick, compact sentences are strung together with very little regard to logical order, and he wastes no words on transitions. Each sentence must stand by itself, and the reader must make his own connections. But, oh! the brilliancy, the intense vitality, the suggestiveness of these sharp, hard sentences, every one of which contains a thesis to engage the closest attention, and arouse the most vigorous, sustained thought of which the reader is capable. In his writings, to his wide sweep in the realms of the ideal, Emerson adds an element of downright, practical, hard common sense, producing a combination as singular as it is delightful.

He also took an interest in the live questions of his times. He threw his soul into the anti-slavery struggle. He believed in woman's suffrage, and thought it "a very cheap wit that finds it so droll that a woman should vote." He takes the homely side of life, the everyday concerns of manners, society, and institutions, deals with them from the standpoint of worldly wisdom, and at the same time breathes into them a living soul and stamps them with a seal divine. And through all runs a keen sense of humour, a fine pervasive wit, that was both a restraining and wholesome element in his own constitution, and a valuable and vivifying one in his writings. He sees and exhibits the incongruities which betray pretence and discord.

His language, while fluency is not to be thought of in connection with it, is forceful, exact and beautiful. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in a letter to Motley, says: "If you have seen a cat picking her footsteps in wet weather, you have seen a picture of Emerson's exquisite intelligence feeling for its phrase or epithet. Sometimes I think of an ant-eater singling out his insects, as I see him looking about, and at last seizing his noun or adjective, the best, the only one which would serve the need of his thought." He has a strong tendency to the use of metaphor, and sometimes employs startling figures. But these often have the effect of imprinting an idea on the memory so that one feels that it must remain forever. The element of surprise is a favourite one with him, and he seems to delight in giving his thoughts an unexpected turn. His style is direct, spontaneous, and in perfect harmony with his own habit of thought.

The most distinctive element in all his writings is their intense moral purpose. The light that he flashes upon any truth is with the