


Memories
and
Studies

William James

新闻学与传播学经典丛书·英文原版系列

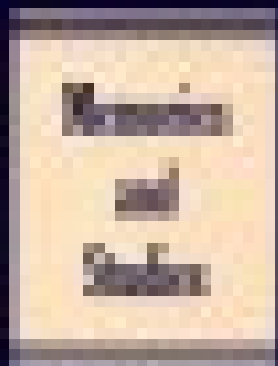


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回忆与研究

William James
〔美〕威廉·詹姆斯 著

中国传媒大学出版社



William G. Sumner

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WILLIAM G. SUMNER

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JAMES H. COOPER

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“新闻学与传播学经典丛书·英文原版系列”，选取了在新闻学与传播学历史上具有里程碑意义的大师经典名作。如传播学“四大奠基人”哈罗德·拉斯韦尔、保罗·拉扎斯菲尔德等及加布里埃尔·塔尔德、罗伯特·帕克、哈罗德·英尼斯、马歇尔·麦克卢汉、库尔特·卢因、卡尔·霍夫兰等这些学界耳熟能详的名家佳作。这些是传播学与新闻学的奠基之作，也是现代新闻学与传播学发展的基础。许多名作都多次再版，影响深远，历久不衰，成为新闻学与传播学的经典。此套丛书采用英文原版出版，使读者读到原汁原味的著作。

随着中国高等教育教学改革的推进，广大师生已不满足于仅仅阅读国外图书的翻译版，他们迫切希望能读到原汁原味的原版图书，希望能采用国外英文原版图书进行教学，从而保证所讲授的知识体系的完整性、系统性、科学性和文字描绘的准确性。此套丛书的出版便是满足了这种需求。亦可使学生在专业技术方面尽快掌握本学科相应的外语词汇和了解先进国家的学术发展的方向。

本系列丛书在原汁原味地引进英文原版图书的同时，将目录译为中文，作为对原版的一种导读，供读者阅读时参考。本系列丛书有些因为出版年代比较久远，也囿于当时印刷水平的限制，有些地方可能与现在的标准不太一致，在不影响读者阅读的前提下，我们未对其进行处理，以保证英文原版图书的原汁原味，

从事经典著作的出版，需要出版人付出不懈的努力，好在有全国新闻院系的专家教授们的大力扶持，为我们提供了备选书目并对英文目录进行了翻译，因此使我们得以在学术出版的道路上走得更远。我们自知本系列丛书也许会有很多缺陷，我们也将虚心接受读者提出的批评和建议。

中国传媒大学出版社

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Memories and Studies

I: LOUIS AGASSIZ

[1]

It would be unnatural to have such an assemblage as this meet in the Museum and Faculty Room of this University and yet have no public word spoken in honor of a name which must be silently present to the minds of all our visitors.

At some near future day, it is to be hoped some one of you who is well acquainted with Agassiz's scientific career will discourse here concerning it,—I could not now, even if I would, speak to you of that of which you have far more intimate knowledge than I. On this social occasion it has seemed that what Agassiz stood for in the way of character and influence is the more fitting thing to commemorate, and to that agreeable task I have been called. He made an impression that was unrivalled. He left a sort of popular myth—the Agassiz legend, as one might say—behind him in the air about us; and life comes kindlier to all of us, we get more recognition from the world, because we call ourselves naturalists,—and that was the class to which he also belonged.

The secret of such an extraordinarily effective influence lay in the equally extraordinary mixture of the animal and social gifts, the intellectual powers, and the desires and passions of the man. From his boyhood, he looked on the world as if it and he were made for each other, and on the vast diversity of living things as if he were there with authority to take mental possession of them all. His habit of collecting began in childhood, and during his long life knew no bounds save those that separate the things of Nature from those of human art. Already in his student years, in spite of the most stringent poverty, his whole scheme of existence was that of one predestined to greatness, who takes that fact for granted, and stands forth immediately as a scientific leader of men.

His passion for knowing living things was combined with a rapidity of observation, and a capacity to recognize them again and remember everything about them, which all his life it seemed an easy triumph and delight for him to exercise, and which never allowed him to waste a moment in doubts about the commensurability of his powers with his tasks. If ever a person lived by faith, he did. When a boy of twenty, with an allowance of two hundred and fifty dollars a year, he maintained an artist attached to his employ, a custom which never afterwards was departed from,—except when he maintained two or three. He lectured from the very outset to all those who would hear him. "I feel within myself the strength of a whole generation," he wrote to his father at that time, and launched himself upon the publication of his costly "Poissons Fossiles" with no clear vision of the quarter from whence the payment might be expected to come.

At Neuchatel (where between the ages of twenty-five and thirty he enjoyed a stipend that varied from four hundred to six hundred dollars) he organized a regular academy of natural history, with its museum, managing by one expedient or another to employ artists, secretaries, and assistants, and to keep a lithographic and printing establishment of his own employed with the work that he put forth. Fishes, fossil and living, echinoderms and glaciers, transfigured

themselves under his hand, and at thirty he was already at the zenith of his reputation, recognized by all as one of those naturalists in the unlimited sense, one of those folio copies of mankind, like Linnaeus and Cuvier, who aim at nothing less than an acquaintance with the whole of animated Nature. His genius for classifying was simply marvellous; and, as his latest biographer says, nowhere had a single person ever given so decisive an impulse to natural history.

Such was the human being who on an October morning fifty years ago disembarked at our port, bringing his hungry heart along with him, his confidence in his destiny, and his imagination full of plans. The only particular resource he was assured of was one course of Lowell Lectures. But of one general resource he always was assured, having always counted on it and never found it to fail,—and that was the good will of every fellow-creature in whose presence he could find an opportunity to describe his aims. His belief in these was so intense and unqualified that he could not conceive of others not feeling the furtherance of them to be a duty binding also upon them. *Velle non discitur*, as Seneca says:—Strength of desire must be born with a man, it can't be taught. And Agassiz came before one with such enthusiasm glowing in his countenance,—such a persuasion radiating from his person that his projects were the sole things really fit to interest man as man,—that he was absolutely irresistible. He came, in Byron's words, with victory beaming from his breast, and every one went down before him, some yielding him money, some time, some specimens, and some labor, but all contributing their applause and their godspeed. And so, living among us from month to month and from year to year, with no relation to prudence except his pertinacious violation of all her usual laws, he on the whole achieved the compass of his desires, studied the geology and fauna of a continent, trained a generation of zoologists, founded one of the chief museums of the world, gave a new impulse to scientific education in America, and died the idol of the public, as well as of his circle of immediate pupils and friends.

The secret of it all was, that while his scientific ideals were an integral part of his being, something that he never forgot or laid aside, so that wherever he went he came forward as "the Professor," and talked "shop" to every person, young or old, great or little, learned or unlearned, with whom he was thrown, he was at the same time so commanding a presence, so curious and inquiring, so responsive and expansive, and so generous and reckless of himself and of his own, that every one said immediately, "Here is no musty savant, but a man, a great man, a man on the heroic scale, not to serve whom is avarice and sin." He elevated the popular notion of what a student of Nature could be. Since Benjamin Franklin, we had never had among us a person of more popularly impressive type. He did not wait for students to come to him: he made inquiry for promising youthful collectors, and when he heard of one, he wrote, inviting and urging him to come. Thus there is hardly one now of the American naturalists of my generation whom Agassiz did not train. Nay, more; he said to every one that a year or two of natural history, studied as he understood it, would give the best training for any kind of mental work. Sometimes he was amusingly naïf in this regard, as when he offered to put his whole Museum at the disposition of the Emperor of Brazil if he would but come and labor there. And I well remember how certain officials of the Brazilian empire smiled at the cordiality with which he pressed upon them a similar invitation. But it had a great effect. Natural history must indeed be a godlike pursuit, if such a man as this can so adore it, people said; and the very definition and meaning of the word naturalist underwent a favorable alteration in the common mind.

Certain sayings of Agassiz's, as the famous one that he "had no time for making money," and his habit of naming his occupation simply as that of "teacher," have caught the public fancy, and are permanent benefactions. We all enjoy more consideration for the fact that he manifested himself here thus before us in his day.

He was a splendid example of the temperament that looks forward and not backward, and never wastes a moment in regrets for the irrevocable. I had the privilege of admission to his society during the Thayer expedition to Brazil. I well remember at night, as we all swung in our hammocks in the fairy-like moonlight, on the deck of the steamer that throbbed its way up the Amazon between the forests guarding the stream on either side, how he turned and whispered, "James, are you awake?" and continued, "I cannot sleep; I am too happy; I keep thinking of these glorious plans." The plans contemplated following the Amazon to its headwaters, and penetrating the Andes in Peru. And yet, when he arrived at the Peruvian frontier and learned that that country had broken into revolution, that his letters to officials would be useless, and that that part of the project must be given up, although he was indeed bitterly chagrined and excited for part of an hour, when the hour had passed over it seemed as if he had quite forgotten the disappointment, so enthusiastically was he occupied already with the new scheme substituted by his active mind.

Agassiz's influence on methods of teaching in our community was prompt and decisive,—all the more so that it struck people's imagination by its very excess. The good old way of committing printed abstractions to memory seems never to have received such a shock as it encountered at his hands. There is probably no public school teacher now in New England who will not tell you how Agassiz used to lock a student up in a room full of turtle shells, or lobster shells, or oyster shells, without a book or word to help him, and not let him out till he had discovered all the truths which the objects contained. Some found the truths after weeks and months of lonely sorrow; others never found them. Those who found them were already made into naturalists thereby—the failures were blotted from the book of honor and of life. "Go to Nature; take the facts into your own hands; look, and see for yourself!"—these were the maxims which Agassiz preached wherever he went, and their effect on pedagogy was electric. The extreme rigor of his devotion to this concrete method of learning was the natural consequence of his own peculiar type of intellect, in which the capacity for abstraction and causal reasoning and tracing chains of consequences from hypotheses was so much less developed than the genius for acquaintance with vast volumes of detail, and for seizing upon analogies and relations of the more proximate and concrete kind. While on the Thayer expedition, I remember that I often put questions to him about the facts of our new tropical habitat, but I doubt if he ever answered one of these questions of mine outright. He always said: "There, you see you have a definite problem; go and look and find the answer for yourself." His severity in this line was a living rebuke to all abstractionists and would-be biological philosophers. More than once have I heard him quote with deep feeling the lines from Faust:

"Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie.
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum."

The only man he really loved and had use for was the man who could bring him facts. To see facts, not to argue or *raisonniren*, was what life meant for him; and I think he often positively loathed the ratiocinating type of mind. "Mr. Blank, you are totally uneducated!" I heard him once

say to a student who propounded to him some glittering theoretic generality. And on a similar occasion he gave an admonition that must have sunk deep into the heart of him to whom it was addressed. "Mr. X, some people perhaps now consider you a bright young man: but when you are fifty years old, if they ever speak of you then, what they will say will be this: 'That X,—oh, yes, I know him; he used to be a very bright young man!'" Happy is the conceited youth who at the proper moment receives such salutary cold water therapeutics as this from one who, in other respects, is a kind friend. We cannot all escape from being abstractionists. I myself, for instance, have never been able to escape; but the hours I spent with Agassiz so taught me the difference between all possible abstractionists and all liveries in the light of the world's concrete fulness, that I have never been able to forget it. Both kinds of mind have their place in the infinite design, but there can be no question as to which kind lies the nearer to the divine type of thinking.

Agassiz's view of Nature was saturated with simple religious feeling, and for this deep but unconventional religiosity he found at Harvard the most sympathetic possible environment. In the fifty years that have sped since he arrived here our knowledge of Nature has penetrated into joints and recesses which his vision never pierced. The causal elements and not the totals are what we are now most passionately concerned to understand; and naked and poverty-stricken enough do the stripped-out elements and forces occasionally appear to us to be. But the truth of things is after all their living fulness, and some day, from a more commanding point of view than was possible to any one in Agassiz's generation, our descendants, enriched with the spoils of all our analytic investigations, will get round again to that higher and simpler way of looking at Nature. Meanwhile as we look back upon Agassiz, there floats up a breath as of life's morning, that makes the work seem young and fresh once more. May we all, and especially may those younger members of our association who never knew him, give a grateful thought to his memory as we wander through that Museum which he founded, and through this University whose ideals he did so much to elevate and define.

Footnotes

[1] Words spoken at the reception of the American Society of Naturalists by the President and Fellows of Harvard College at Cambridge, December 30, 1896. Printed in *Science*, N. S. V. 285.

II: ADDRESS AT THE EMERSON CENTENARY IN CONCORD

[1]

The pathos of death is this, that when the days of one's life are ended, those days that were so crowded with business and felt so heavy in their passing, what remains of one in memory should usually be so slight a thing. The phantom of an attitude, the echo of a certain mode of thought, a few pages of print, some invention, or some victory we gained in a brief critical hour, are all that can survive the best of us. It is as if the whole of a man's significance had now shrunk into the phantom of an attitude, into a mere musical note or phrase suggestive of his singularity—happy are those whose singularity gives a note so clear as to be victorious over the inevitable pity of such a diminution and abridgment.

An ideal wraith like this, of Emerson's personality, hovers over all Concord to-day, taking, in the minds of those of you who were his neighbors and intimates a somewhat fuller shape, remaining

more abstract in the younger generation, but bringing home to all of us the notion of a spirit indescribably precious. The form that so lately moved upon these streets and country roads, or awaited in these fields and woods the beloved Muse's visits, is now dust; but the soul's note, the spiritual voice, rises strong and clear above the uproar of the times, and seems securely destined to exert an ennobling influence over future generations.

What gave a flavor so matchless to Emerson's individuality was, even more than his rich mental gifts, their singularly harmonious combination. Rarely has a man so accurately known the limits of his genius or so unflinchingly kept within them. "Stand by your order," he used to say to youthful students; and perhaps the paramount impression one gets of his life is of his loyalty to his own personal type and mission. The type was that of what he liked to call the scholar, the perceiver of pure truth; and the mission was that of the reporter in worthy form of each perception. The day is good, he said, in which we have the most perceptions. There are times when the cawing of a crow, a weed, a snowflake, or a farmer planting in his field become symbols to the intellect of truths equal to those which the most majestic phenomena can open. Let me mind my own charge, then, walk alone, consult the sky, the field and forest, sedulously waiting every morning for the news concerning the structure of the universe which the good Spirit will give me.

This was the first half of Emerson, but only half; for genius, as he said, is insatiate for expression, and truth has to be clad in the right verbal garment. The form of the garment was so vital with Emerson that it is impossible to separate it from the matter. They form a chemical combination—thoughts which would be trivial expressed otherwise, are important through the nouns and verbs to which he married them. The style is the man, it has been said; the man Emerson's mission culminated in his style, and if we must define him in one word, we have to call him Artist. He was an artist whose medium was verbal and who wrought in spiritual material.

This duty of spiritual seeing and reporting determined the whole tenor of his life. It was to shield this duty from invasion and distraction that he dwelt in the country, that he consistently declined to entangle himself with associations or to encumber himself with functions which, however he might believe in them, he felt were duties for other men and not for him. Even the care of his garden, "with its stoopings and fingerings in a few yards of space," he found "narrowing and poisoning," and took to long free walks and saunterings instead, without apology. "Causes" innumerable sought to enlist him as their "worker"—all got his smile and word of sympathy, but none entrapped him into service. The struggle against slavery itself, deeply as it appealed to him, found him firm: "God must govern his own world, and knows his way out of this pit without my desertion of my post, which has none to guard it but me. I have quite other slaves to face than those Negroes, to wit, imprisoned thoughts far back in the brain of man, and which have no watchman or lover or defender but me." This in reply to the possible questions of his own conscience. To hot-blooded moralists with more objective ideas of duty, such a fidelity to the limits of his genius must often have made him seem provokingly remote and unavailable; but we, who can see things in more liberal perspective, must unqualifiably approve the results. The faultless tact with which he kept his safe limits while he so dauntlessly asserted himself within them, is an example fitted to give heart to other theorists and artists the world over.

The insight and creed from which Emerson's life followed can be best summed up in his own verses:

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man!"

Through the individual fact there ever shone for him the effulgence of the Universal Reason. The great Cosmic Intellect terminates and houses itself in mortal men and passing hours. Each of us is an angle of its eternal vision, and the only way to be true to our Maker is to be loyal to ourselves. "O rich and various Man!" he cries, "thou palace of sight and sound, carrying in thy senses the morning and the night and the unfathomable galaxy; in thy brain the geometry of the city of God; in thy heart the bower of love and the realms of right and wrong."

If the individual open thus directly into the Absolute, it follows that there is something in each and all of us, even the lowliest, that ought not to consent to borrowing traditions and living at second hand. "If John was perfect, why are you and I alive?" Emerson writes; "As long as any man exists there is some need of him; let him fight for his own." This faith that in a life at first hand there is something sacred is perhaps the most characteristic note in Emerson's writings. The hottest side of him is this non-conformist persuasion, and if his temper could ever verge on common irascibility, it would be by reason of the passionate character of his feelings on this point. The world is still new and untried. In seeing freshly, and not in hearing of what others saw, shall a man find what truth is. "Each one of us can bask in the great morning which rises out of the Eastern Sea, and be himself one of the children of the light." "Trust thyself, every heart vibrates to that iron string. There is a time in each man's education when he must arrive at the conviction that imitation is suicide; when he must take himself for better or worse as his portion; and know that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which it was given him to till."

The matchless eloquence with which Emerson proclaimed the sovereignty of the living individual electrified and emancipated his generation, and this bugle-blast will doubtless be regarded by future critics as the soul of his message. The present man is the aboriginal reality, the Institution is derivative, and the past man is irrelevant and obliterate for present issues. "If anyone would lay an axe to your tree with a text from I John, v. 7, or a sentence from Saint Paul, say to him," Emerson wrote, "'My tree is Yggdrasil, the tree of life.' Let him know by your security that your conviction is clear and sufficient, and, if he were Paul himself, that you also are here and with your Creator." "Cleave ever to God," he insisted, "against the name of God;"—and so, in spite of the intensely religious character of his total thought, when he began his career it seemed to many of his brethren in the clerical profession that he was little more than an iconoclast and desecrator.

Emerson's belief that the individual must in reason be adequate to the vocation for which the Spirit of the world has called him into being, is the source of those sublime pages, hearteners and sustainers of our youth, in which he urges his hearers to be incorruptibly true to their own private conscience. Nothing can harm the man who rests in his appointed place and character. Such a man is invulnerable; he balances the universe, balances it as much by keeping small when he is small, as by being great and spreading when he is great. "I love and honor Epaminondas," said Emerson, "but I do not wish to be Epaminondas. I hold it more just to love the world of this hour

than the world of his hour. Nor can you, if I am true, excite me to the least uneasiness by saying, 'He acted and thou sittest still.' I see action to be good when the need is, and sitting still to be also good. Epaminondas, if he was the man I take him for, would have sat still with joy and peace, if his lot had been mine. Heaven is large, and affords space for all modes of love and fortitude." "The fact that I am here certainly shows me that the Soul has need of an organ here, and shall I not assume the post?"

The vanity of all superserviceableness and pretence was never more happily set forth than by Emerson in the many passages in which he develops this aspect of his philosophy. Character infallibly proclaims itself. "Hide your thoughts!—hide the sun and moon. They publish themselves to the universe. They will speak through you though you were dumb. They will flow out of your actions, your manners and your face. . . . Don't say things: What you are stands over you the while and thunders so that I cannot say what you say to the contrary. . . . What a man is engraves itself upon him in letters of light. Concealment avails him nothing, boasting nothing. There is confession in the glances of our eyes; in our smiles; in salutations; and the grasp of hands. His sin bedaubes him, mars all his good impression. Men know not why they do not trust him, but they do not trust him. His vice glasses the eye, casts lines of mean expression in the cheek, pinches the nose, sets the mark of the beast upon the back of the head, and writes, O fool! fool! on the forehead of a king. If you would not be known to do a thing, never do it; a man may play the fool in the drifts of a desert, but every grain of sand shall seem to see.—How can a man be concealed? How can he be concealed?"

On the other hand, never was a sincere word or a sincere thought utterly lost. "Never a magnanimity fell to the ground but there is some heart to greet and accept it unexpectedly. . . . The hero fears not that if he withstood the avowal of a just and brave act, it will go unwitnessed and unloved. One knows it,—himself,—and is pledged by it to sweetness of peace and to nobleness of aim, which will prove in the end a better proclamation than the relating of the incident."

The same indefeasible right to be exactly what one is, provided one only be authentic, spreads itself, in Emerson's way of thinking, from persons to things and to times and places. No date, no position is insignificant, if the life that fills it out be only genuine:—

"In solitude, in a remote village, the ardent youth loiters and mourns. With inflamed eye, in this sleeping wilderness, he has read the story of the Emperor, Charles the Fifth, until his fancy has brought home to the surrounding woods the faint roar of cannonades in the Milanese, and marches in Germany. He is curious concerning that man's day. What filled it? The crowded orders, the stern decisions, the foreign despatches, the Castilian etiquette? The soul answers—Behold his day here! In the sighing of these woods, in the quiet of these gray fields, in the cool breeze that sings out of these northern mountains; in the workmen, the boys, the maidens you meet,—in the hopes of the morning, the ennui of noon, and sauntering of the afternoon; in the disquieting comparisons; in the regrets at want of vigor; in the great idea and the puny execution,—behold Charles the Fifth's day; another, yet the same; behold Chatham's, Hampden's, Bayard's, Alfred's, Scipio's, Pericles's day,—day of all that are born of women. The difference of circumstance is merely costume. I am tasting the self-same life,—its sweetness, its greatness, its pain, which I so admire in other men. Do not foolishly ask of the inscrutable.

obliterated past what it cannot tell,—the details of that nature, of that day, called Byron or Burke;—but ask it of the enveloping Now. . . . Be lord of a day, and you can put up your history books."

"The deep to-day which all men scorn," receives thus from Emerson superb revindication. "Other world! there is no other world." All God's life opens into the individual particular, and here and now, or nowhere, is reality. "The present hour is the decisive hour, and every day is doomsday."

Such a conviction that Divinity is everywhere may easily make of one an optimist of the sentimental type that refuses to speak ill of anything. Emerson's drastic perception of differences kept him at the opposite pole from this weakness. After you have seen men a few times, he could say, you find most of them as alike as their barns and pantries, and soon as musty and as dreary. Never was such a fastidious lover of significance and distinction, and never an eye so keen for their discovery. His optimism had nothing in common with that indiscriminate hurraing for the Universe with which Walt Whitman has made us familiar. For Emerson, the individual fact and moment were indeed suffused with absolute radiance, but it was upon a condition that saved the situation—they must be worthy specimens,—sincere, authentic, archetypal; they must have made connection with what he calls the Moral Sentiment, they must in some way act as symbolic mouthpieces of the Universe's meaning. To know just which thing does act in this way, and which thing fails to make the true connection, is the secret (somewhat incommunicable, it must be confessed) of seership, and doubtless we must not expect of the seer too rigorous a consistency. Emerson himself was a real seer. He could perceive the full squalor of the individual fact, but he could also see the transfiguration. He might easily have found himself saying of some present-day agitator against our Philippine conquest what he said of this or that reformer of his own time. He might have called him, as a private person, a tedious bore and canter. But he would infallibly have added what he then added: "It is strange and horrible to say this, for I feel that under him and his partiality and exclusiveness is the earth and the sea, and all that in them is, and the axis round which the Universe revolves passes through his body where he stands."

Be it how it may, then, this is Emerson's revelation:—The point of any pen can be an epitome of reality; the commonest person's act, if genuinely actuated, can lay hold on eternity. This vision is the head-spring of all his outpourings; and it is for this truth, given to no previous literary artist to express in such penetratingly persuasive tones, that posterity will reckon him a prophet, and, perhaps neglecting other pages, piously turn to those that convey this message. His life was one long conversation with the invisible divine, expressing itself through individuals and particulars:—"So nigh is grandeur to our dust, so near is God to man!"

I spoke of how shrunken the wraith, how thin the echo, of men is after they are departed? Emerson's wraith comes to me now as if it were but the very voice of this victorious argument. His words to this effect are certain to be quoted and extracted more and more as time goes on, and to take their place among the Scriptures of humanity. "'Gainst death and all oblivious enmity, shall you pace forth," beloved Master. As long as our English language lasts men's hearts will be cheered and their souls strengthened and liberated by the noble and musical pages with which you have enriched it.

Footnotes

[1] An Address delivered at the Centenary of the Birth of Ralph Waldo Emerson in Concord, May 25, 1903, and printed in the published proceedings of that meeting.

III: ROBERT GOULD SHAW

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Your Excellency, your Honor, Soldiers, and Friends: In these unveiling exercises the duty falls to me of expressing in simple words some of the feelings which have actuated the givers of St. Gaudens' noble work of bronze, and of briefly recalling the history of Robert Shaw and of his regiment to the memory of this possibly too forgetful generation.

The men who do brave deeds are usually unconscious of their picturesqueness. For two nights previous to the assault upon Fort Wagner, the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment had been afoot, making forced marches in the rain; and on the day of the battle the men had had no food since early morning. As they lay there in the evening twilight, hungry and wet, against the cold sands of Morris Island, with the sea-fog drifting over them, their eyes fixed on the huge bulk of the fortress looming darkly three-quarters of a mile ahead against the sky, and their hearts beating in expectation of the word that was to bring them to their feet and launch them on their desperate charge, neither officers nor men could have been in any holiday mood of contemplation. Many and different must have been the thoughts that came and went in them during that hour of bodeful reverie; but however free the flights of fancy of some of them may have been, it is improbable that any one who lay there had so wild and whirling an imagination as to foresee in prophetic vision this morning of a future May, when we, the people of a richer and more splendid Boston, with mayor and governor, and troops from other States, and every circumstance of ceremony, should meet together to celebrate their conduct on that evening, and do their memory this conspicuous honor.

How, indeed, comes it that out of all the great engagements of the war, engagements in many of which the troops of Massachusetts had borne the most distinguished part, this officer, only a young colonel, this regiment of black men and its maiden battle,—a battle, moreover, which was lost,—should be picked out for such unusual commemoration?

The historic significance of an event is measured neither by its material magnitude, nor by its immediate success. Thermopylae was a defeat; but to the Greek imagination, Leonidas and his few Spartans stood for the whole worth of Grecian life. Bunker Hill was a defeat; but for our people, the fight over that breastwork has always seemed to show as well as any victory that our forefathers were men of a temper not to be finally overcome. And so here. The war for our Union, with all the constitutional questions which it settled, and all the military lessons which it gathered in, has throughout its dilatory length but one meaning in the eye of history. And nowhere was that meaning better symbolized and embodied than in the constitution of this first Northern negro regiment.

Look at the monument and read the story;—see the mingling of elements which the sculptor's genius has brought so vividly before the eye. There on foot go the dark outcasts, so true to nature that one can almost hear them breathing as they march. State after State by its laws had denied them to be human persons. The Southern leaders in congressional debates, insolent in their security, loved most to designate them by the contemptuous collective epithet of "this peculiar kind of property." There they march, warm-blooded champions of a better day for man. There on horseback, among them, in his very habit as he lived, sits the blue-eyed child of fortune, upon whose happy youth every divinity had smiled. Onward they move together, a single resolution kindled in their eyes, and animating their otherwise so different frames. The bronze that makes their memory eternal betrays the very soul and secret of those awful years.

Since the 'thirties the slavery question been the only question, and by the end of 'fifties our land lay sick and shaking with it like a traveller who has thrown himself down at night beside a pestilential swamp, and in the morning finds the fever through the marrow of his bones. "Only muzzle the Abolition fanatics," said the South, "and all will be well again!" But the Abolitionists would not be muzzled,—they were the voice of the world's conscience, they were a part of destiny. Weak as they were, they drove the South to madness. "Every step she takes in her blindness," said Wendell Phillips, "is one more step towards ruin." And when South Carolina took the final step in battering down Fort Sumter, it was the fanatics of slavery themselves who called upon their idolized institution ruin swift and complete. What law and reason were unable to accomplish, had now to be done by that uncertain and dreadful dispenser of God's judgments, War—War, with its abominably casual, inaccurate methods, destroying good and bad together, but at last able to hew a way out of intolerable situations, when through man's delusion of perversity every better way is blocked.

Our great western republic had from its origin been a singular anomaly. A land of freedom, boastfully so-called, with human slavery enthroned at the heart of it, and at last dictating terms of unconditional surrender to every other organ of its life, what was it but a thing of falsehood and horrible self-contradiction? For three-quarters of a century it had nevertheless endured, kept together by policy, compromise, and concession. But at the last that republic was torn in two; and truth was to be possible under the flag. Truth, thank God, truth! even though for the moment it must be truth written in hell-fire.

And this, fellow-citizens, is why, after the great generals have had their monuments, and long after the abstract soldier's-monuments have been reared on every village green, we have chosen to take Robert Shaw and his regiment as the subjects of the first soldier's-monument to be raised to a particular set of comparatively undistinguished men. The very lack of external complication in the history of these soldiers is what makes them represent with such typical purity the profounder meaning of the Union cause.

Our nation had been founded in what we may call our American religion, baptized and reared in the faith that a man requires no master to take care of him, and that common people can work out their salvation well enough together if left free to try. But the founders had not dared to touch the great intractable exception; and slavery had wrought until at last the only alternative for the nation was to fight or die. What Shaw and his comrades stand for and show us is that in such an emergency Americans of all complexions and conditions can go forth like brothers, and meet