

Self-Reliance

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Ne te quaesiveris extra."

"Man is his own star; and the soul that can
Render an honest and a perfect man,
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early or too late.
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."

Epilogue to Beaumont and Fletcher's Honest Man's Fortune

Cast the bantling on the rocks,
Suckle him with the she-wolf's teat;
Wintered with the hawk and fox,
Power and speed be hands and feet.

I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional. The soul always hears an admonition in such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment that is of more value than any thought they may contain. To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, -- that is genius. Speak your latent conviction and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost,---- and our first thoughts are rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each of us, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is, that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men but what they thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of good which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages; dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no other affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-faith, without in the least yielding to compromise; inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be obliged to take with shame our own opinion from another.

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the 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 is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one finds that a character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is no preestablished harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify to that particular ray. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise, shall give him no peace. He desires deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no hope, no cheer.

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so.

confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolute trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being; and now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

What pretty oracles nature yields us on this text, in the face and behaviour of children, babes, and brutes! That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because our arithmetic has computed strength and means opposed to our purpose, these have not. Their mind being whole, their eye is unconquered, and when we look in their faces, we are disconcerted. Infancy conforms to nobody: conformity to it, so that one babe commonly makes four or five out of the adults who prattle and play. God has armed youth and puberty and manhood no less with its own piquancy and charm, and made it enviable and gracious and its claims not to be put by, if it will stand by itself. Do not think the youth a force, because he cannot speak to you and me. Hark! in the next room his voice is sufficiently clear and emphatic. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries. Bashful or bold, then, he will know how to make us seniors very unnecessary.

The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner, and would disdain as much as a lord to do or say to conciliate one, is the healthy attitude of human nature. A boy is in the parlour what the pit is in the playhouse; independent, irresponsible, looking out from his corner on such people and facts as pass before him, and tries and sentences them on their merits, in the swift, summary way of boys, as good, bad, interesting, or troublesome. He cumsers himself never about consequences, about interests: he gives an independent, genuine verdict. You must court him: he does not court you. But the man is, as it were, clapped into jail by his consciousness. As soon as he has once acted or spoken with éclat, he is a captive person, watched by the sympathy or the hatred of hundreds, whose affections must now enter into account. There is no Lethe for this. Ah, that he could pass again into his neutrality! Who can thus disengage himself, and having observed, observe again from the same unaffected, unbiased, unbribable, unimpeachable innocence, must always be formidable. He would utter opinions on all passing affairs, which being not private, but necessary, would sink like darts into the ear of men, and put them in fear.

These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is like a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.

Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make to a valued adviser, who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within? my friend suggested, -- "But these impulses come from below, not from above." I replied, "They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil, I will live then from the Devil." No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it. A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition, as if every thing that is titular and ephemeral but he. I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to societies and dead institutions. Every decent and well-spoken individual affects and sways me more than I ought. I ought to go upright and vital, and speak the rude truth in all ways. If malice and vanity wear a coat of philanthropy, shall that pass? If an angry bigot assumes this bountiful cause of Abolition, and comes to me with his last news from Barbadoes, why should I not say to him, 'Go love thy infant; love thy neighbor; love thy chopper: be good-natured and modest: have that grace; and never varnish your hard, uncharitable, narrow, unlovely, loathsome, ugly, self with this incredible tenderness for black folk a thousand miles off. Thy love afar is spite at home.' And graceless would be such greeting, but truth is handsomer than the affectation of love. Your go

must have some edge to it, -- else it is none. The doctrine of hatred must be preached as the counterpoise of the doctrine of love when that pulses and whines. I shun father and mother and wife and brother my genius calls me. I would write on the lintels of the door-post, *Whim*. I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation. Expect me not to show cause why I seek to exclude company. Then, again, do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put a man in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent, I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong. There are persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison, if not for but your miscellaneous popular charities; the education at college of fools; the building of meeting-houses to the vain end to which many now stand; alms to sots; and the thousandfold Relief Societies; -- till I confess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, it is a wicked dollar which by my giving has the manhood to withhold.

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with shadows on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow you think in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day. -- 'Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.' -- Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the sallies of his will are rounded in by the law of his nature. The inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh are insignificant in the curve of the sphere. Nor does it matter to you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic or Alexandrian stanza; -- read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing. In this pleasing, contrite wood-life which God allows me, I record day by day my honest thought without prospect or retrospect, and, I cannot doubt, it will be symmetrical, though I mean it not, and see it not. My book should smell of pines and resound with the hum of insects. The swallow over my window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his beak into my web also. We pass for what we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they can communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment.

There will be an agreement in whatever variety of actions, so they be each honest and natural in themselves. For of one will, the actions will be harmonious, however unlike they seem. These varieties are lost at a little distance, at a little height of thought. One tendency unites them all. The voyage of the boat is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency. Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain your other genuine actions; your conformity explains nothing. Act singly, and what you have already done singly will justify you now. Greatness appeals to the future. If I can be firm enough to-day to do right, and scorn eyes, I must look so much right before as to defend me now. Be it how it will, do right now. Always scorn appear as you always may. The force of character is cumulative. All the foregone days of virtue work their labor in this. What makes the majesty of the heroes of the senate and the field, which so fills the imagination with the consciousness of a train of great days and victories behind. They shed an united light on the advancing actor. He is attended as by a visible escort of angels. That is it which throws thunder into Chatham's speech and dignity into Washington's port, and America into Adams's eye. Honor is venerable to us because it is ephemeral. It is always ancient virtue. We worship it to-day because it is not of to-day. We love it because it is not a trap for our love and homage, but is self-dependent, self-derived, and the result of an old immaculate pedigree, even if shown in a young person.

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazetted henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife. We never bow and apologize more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment

times, and hurl in the face of custom, and trade, and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history: there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you, a man, and all events. Ordinarily, every body in society reminds us of somewhat else, or of some other person. Character, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. The man may be so much, that he must make all circumstances indifferent. Every true man is a cause, a country, an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design; -- and posterity follow his steps as a train of clients. A man Caesar is born, and for ages after we have a Roman Empire. When Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius, that he is confounded with the possible of man. An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man; as, Monachism, of the Middle Ages; the Reformation, of Luther; Quakerism, of Fox; Methodism, of Wesley; Abolition, of Clarkson; Scipio, Milton called "the height of Rome"; and all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.

Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep or steal, or skulk down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper, in the world which exists for him. Every man in the street, finding no worth in himself which corresponds to the force which built a tower or sculptured a marble god, feels poor when he looks on these. To him a palace, a statue, or a costly life, is an alien and forbidding air, much like a gay equipage, and seem to say like that, 'Who are you, Sir?' But they all are his, suitors for his notice, petitioners to his faculties that they will come out and take possession. The picture waits for my verdict: it is not to command me, but I am to settle its claims. That popular fable of the sot who was picked up dead drunk in the street, carried to the duke's house, washed and dressed and laid in the duke's bed, and, on his waking, treated with all obsequious ceremony like the duke, and assured that he had been insane, owes its popularity to the fact, that it symbolizes the state of man, who is in the world a sort of sot, but now and then wakes up, exercises his reason, and finds himself a true prince.

Our reading is mendicant and sycophantic. In history, our imagination plays us false. Kingdom and lordship, power and estate, are a gaudier vocabulary than private John and Edward in a small house. Common day's work; but the things of life are the same to both; the sum total of both is the same. What is this deference to Alfred, and Scanderbeg, and Gustavus? Suppose they were virtuous; did they we have more virtue? As great a stake depends on your private act to-day, as followed their public and renowned actions. When private men shall act with original views, the lustre will be transferred from the actions of kings to those of gentlemen.

The world has been instructed by its kings, who have so magnetized the eyes of nations. It has been by this colossal symbol the mutual reverence that is due from man to man. The joyful loyalty with which men have everywhere suffered the king, the noble, or the great proprietor to walk among them by his own right, make his own scale of men and things, and reverse theirs, pay for benefits not with money but with honor, and represent the law in his person, was the hieroglyphic by which they obscurely signified their consciousness of their own right and comeliness, the right of every man.

The magnetism which all original action exerts is explained when we inquire the reason of self-trust: what is the Trustee? What is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded? What is the nature and power of that science-baffling star, without parallax, without calculable elements, which casts a ray of beauty even into trivial and impure actions, if the least mark of independence appear? The answer leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneous Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuition. In that primary force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For, the self-being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence life and being also proceed. We first share the life by which things exist, and afterwards see them as appearances in nature, and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and of thought. Here are the lungs of that inspiration which giveth man wisdom, and which cannot be denied.

without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into that that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm. Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind, and his involuntary perceptions, and knows his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due. He may err in the expression of them, but he knows these things are so, like day and night, not to be disputed. My wilful actions and acquisitions are but roving; -- the idlest reverie, the faintest native emotion, command my curiosity and respect. Though people contradict as readily the statement of perceptions as of opinions, or rather much more readily they do not distinguish between perception and notion. They fancy that I choose to see this or that. But perception is not whimsical, but fatal. If I see a trait, my children will see it after me, and in due time, all mankind, -- although it may chance that no one has seen it before me. For my perception is as much a fact as the sun.

The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure, that it is profane to seek to interpose help; be that when God speaketh he should communicate, not one thing, but all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time, souls, from the centre of the present thought; and should create the whole. Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, old things pass away, -- means, teachers, texts, temples fall; it lives now, and absorbs past and future into the present. All things are made sacred by relation to it, -- one as much as another. All things are dissolved to their centre by their cause, and, in the universal miracle, petty and particular miracles disappear. If, then, a man claims to know and speak of God, and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Is the acorn better than the tree which is its fulness and completion? Is the parent better than the child into whom he has cast his life? Whence, then, this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul. Time and space are but physiological colors which the eye makes, but the soul is light; where it is, is day; where it was, is night; and history is an impertinence and an injury, if it be anything more than a cheerful apologue or parable of my being and becoming.

Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say 'I think,' 'I am,' but quotes some sage or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day and is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence. Before it has burst, its whole life acts; in the full-blown flower there is no more; in the leafless root there is its nature. Its nature is satisfied, and it satisfies nature, in all moments alike. But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time.

This should be plain enough. Yet see what strong intellects dare not yet hear God himself, unless I hear the phraseology of I know not what David, or Jeremiah, or Paul. We shall not always set so great a value on a few texts, on a few lives. We are like children who repeat by rote the sentences of grandames and, as they grow older, of the men of talents and character they chance to see, -- painfully recollect the exact words they spoke; afterwards, when they come into the point of view which those had who uttered these sayings, they understand them, and are willing to let the words go; for, at any time, they can find words as good when occasion comes. If we live truly, we shall see truly. It is as easy for the strong to be strong, as it is for the weak to be weak. When we have new perception, we shall gladly disburden our memory of its hoarded treasures as old rubbish. When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.

And now at last the highest truth on this subject remains unsaid; probably cannot be said; for all that is the far-off remembering of the intuition. That thought, by what I can now nearest approach to say, is this. When good is near you, when you have life in yourself, it is not by any known or accustomed way you shall not discern the foot-prints of any other; you shall not see the face of man; you shall not

Life only avails, not the having lived. Power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim. This one instant all beings live; the whole of us lies waiting outside the self as a world that hates, that the soul *becomes*; for that for ever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty, a reputation to a shame, confounds the saint with the rogue, shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside. What do we prate of self-reliance? Inasmuch as the soul is present, there will be power not confident but reverent. To talk of reliance is a poor external way of speaking. Speak rather of that which relies, because it moves and endures. Who has more obedience than I masters me, though he should not raise his finger. Round him all things revolve by the gravitation of spirits. We fancy it rhetoric, when we speak of eminent virtue. We do not see that virtue is Height, and that a man or a company of men, plastic and permeable to principles of the law of nature must overpower and ride all cities, nations, kings, rich men, poets, who are not.

Thus all concentrates: let us not rove; let us sit at home with the cause. Let us stun and astonish the intruding rabble of men and books and institutions, by a simple declaration of the divine fact. Bid invaders take the shoes from off their feet, for God is here within. Let our simplicity judge them, and our docility to our own law demonstrate the poverty of nature and fortune beside our native riches.

If we cannot at once rise to the sanctities of obedience and faith, let us at least resist our temptation to enter into the state of war, and wake Thor and Woden, courage and constancy, in our Saxon breast to be done in our smooth times by speaking the truth. Check this lying hospitality and lying affect no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the law. I will have no covenants but proximities. I shall endeavour to nourish my parents, to support

family, to be the chaste husband of one wife, -- but these relations I must fill after a new and unprayed way. I appeal from your customs. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve it as I should. I will not hide my tastes or aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do before the sun and moon whatever inly rejoices me, and the heart appoints. If you are noble, I will follow you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly, but humbly and truly. It is alike your interest, and mine, and all men's, however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in truth. Does this sound harsh to-day? You will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and we follow the truth, it will bring us out safe at last. -- But so you may give these friends pain. Yes, I cannot sell my liberty and my power, to save their sensibility. Besides, all persons have their moral reason, when they look out into the region of absolute truth; then will they justify me, and do the same thing.

The populace think that your rejection of popular standards is a rejection of all standard, and mere antinomianism; and the bold sensualist will use the name of philosophy to gild his crimes. But the consciousness abides. There are two confessionals, in one or the other of which we must be shriven: we may fulfil your round of duties by clearing yourself in the *direct*, or in the *reflex* way. Consider whether you have satisfied your relations to father, mother, cousin, neighbour, town, cat, and dog; whether these can upbraid you. But I may also neglect this reflex standard, and absolve me to myself. I have my own stern claims and perfect circle. It denies the name of duty to many offices that are called duties. I can discharge its debts, it enables me to dispense with the popular code. If any one imagines that this is lax, let him keep its commandment one day.

And truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity, and ventured to trust himself for a taskmaster. High be his heart, faithful his will, clear his sight, that his good earnest be doctrine, society, law, to himself, that a simple purpose may be to him as strong a necessity is to others!

If any man consider the present aspects of what is called by distinction *society*, he will see the need of new ethics. The sinew and heart of man seem to be drawn out, and we are become timorous, desponding, and whimperers. We are afraid of truth, afraid of fortune, afraid of death, and afraid of each other. Our country yields no great and perfect persons. We want men and women who shall renovate life and our society; but we see that most natures are insolvent, cannot satisfy their own wants, have an ambition out of proportion to their practical force, and do lean and beg day and night continually. Our housekeeping is mendicant, our arts, our occupations, our marriages, our religion, we have not chosen, but society has chosen for us. We are parlour soldiers. We shun the rugged battle of fate, where strength is born.

If our young men miscarry in their first enterprises, they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, he is *ruined*. If the finest genius studies at one of our colleges, and is not installed in an office within a year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened, and in complaining the rest of his life. A sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who *teams it, farms it, peddles*, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years, and always clearing his cat, falls on his feet, is worth a hundred of these city dolls. He walks abreast with his days, and feels no shame in not 'studying a profession,' for he does not postpone his life, but lives already. He has not one chance, but a hundred chances. Let a Stoic open the resources of man, and tell men they are not like willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall be born; that a man is the word made flesh, born to shed healing to the nations, that he should be ashamed to beg compassion, and that the moment he acts from himself, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries, and traditions out of the window, we pity him no more, but thank and revere him, -- and that teacher shall restore the image of man to splendor, and make his name dear to all history.

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of human life; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their

in their speculative views.

1. In what prayers do men allow themselves! That which they call a holy office is not so much as manly. Prayer looks abroad and asks for some foreign addition to come through some foreign virtue. It loses itself in endless mazes of natural and supernatural, and mediatorial and miraculous. Prayer treats a particular commodity, -- any thing less than all good, -- is vicious. Prayer is the contemplation of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the soul pronouncing his works good. But prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and weakness. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God, he does not beg. He will then see prayer in all action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed and sow, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though they are cheap ends. Caratach, in Fletcher's *Bonduca*, when admonished to inquire the mind of the god Autolochus, replies, --

"His hidden meaning lies in our endeavours;
Our valors are our best gods."

Another sort of false prayers are our regrets. Discontent is the want of self-reliance: it is infirmity. Regret calamities, if you can thereby help the sufferer; if not, attend your own work, and already that begins to be repaired. Our sympathy is just as base. We come to them who weep foolishly, and sit and cry for company, instead of imparting to them truth and health in rough electric shocks, putting them more in communication with their own reason. The secret of fortune is joy in our hands. Welcome evermore to gods and men is the self-helping man. For him all doors are flung wide: him all tongues all honors crown, all eyes follow with desire. Our love goes out to him and embraces him, because he does not need it. We solicitously and apologetically caress and celebrate him, because he held on his way when we scorned our disapprobation. The gods love him because men hated him. "To the persevering mortals," Zoroaster, "the blessed Immortals are swift."

As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect. They say with foolish Israelites, 'Let not God speak to us, lest we die. Speak thou, speak any man with us, and we will obey.' Everywhere I am hindered of meeting God in my brother, because he has shut his own temple and recites fables merely of his brother's, or his brother's brother's God. Every new mind is a new classification. If it prove a mind of uncommon activity and power, a Locke, a Lavoisier, a Hutton, a Bentham, a Fourier, it imposes its classification on other men, and lo! a new system. In proportion to the depth of the thought, and so to the number of the objects it touches and brings within reach of the mind, is the complacency. But chiefly is this apparent in creeds and churches, which are also classifications of a powerful mind acting on the elemental thought of duty, and man's relation to the Highest. Such is Calvinism, Quakerism, Swedenborgism. The pupil takes the same delight in subordinating every thing to the new terminology, as a girl who has just learned botany in seeing a new earth and new seasons. It will happen for a time, that the pupil will find his intellectual power has grown by the study of his master's mind. But in all unbalanced minds, the classification is idolized, passes for the end, and not for a speedily exhaustible means, so that the walls of the system blend to their eye in the remote horizon. The walls of the universe; the luminaries of heaven seem to them hung on the arch their master built. They cannot imagine how you aliens have any right to see, -- how you can see; 'It must be somehow that they stole the light from us.' They do not yet perceive, that light, unsystematic, indomitable, will break through every cabin, even into theirs. Let them chirp awhile and call it their own. If they are honest and do well, their neat new pinfold will be too strait and low, will crack, will lean, will rot and vanish, and the light, all young and joyful, million-orbed, million-colored, will beam over the universe as on the first morning.

2. It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of Travelling, whose idols are Italy, England, France, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In many hours, that duty is our place. The soul is no traveller; the wise man stays at home, and when his necessities call him from his house, or into foreign lands, he is at home still, and shall

men sensible by the expression of his countenance, that he goes the missionary of wisdom and visits cities and men like a sovereign, and not like an interloper or a valet.

I have no churlish objection to the circumnavigation of the globe, for the purposes of art, of study, benevolence, so that the man is first domesticated, or does not go abroad with the hope of finding somewhat greater than he knows. He who travels to be amused, or to get somewhat which he does carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. In Thebes, in Pa will and mind have become old and dilapidated as they. He carries ruins to ruins.

Travelling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places. At home that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty, and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern fact self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I seek the Vatican, and the palaces. I affect to be intoxicated with sights and suggestions, but I am not intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go.

3. But the rage of travelling is a symptom of a deeper unsoundness affecting the whole intellect. The intellect is vagabond, and our system of education fosters restlessness. Our minds travel when bodies are forced to stay at home. We imitate; and what is imitation but the travelling of the mind? Our houses are built with foreign taste; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments; our opinions are foreign tastes, our faculties, lean, and follow the Past and the Distant. The soul created the arts wherever it flourished. It was in his own mind that the artist sought his model. It was an application of his own mind to the thing to be done and the conditions to be observed. And why need we copy the Doric or the Ionic model? Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought, and quaint expression are as near to us as to an American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, considering climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government. He will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also.

Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, temporary possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what he can do, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master who could have taught Shakspeare? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great talent is unique. The Scipionism of Scipio is precisely that part he could not borrow. Shakspeare will never be made by the study of Shakspeare. Do that which is assigned you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too much. There is at this moment for you an utterance brave and grand as that of the colossal chisel or trowel of the Egyptians, or the pen of Moses, or Dante, but different from all these. Not possible for a soul all rich, all eloquent, with thousand-cloven tongue, deign to repeat itself; but if you can hear what these patriarchs say, surely you can reply to them in the same pitch of voice; for the ear and the tongue are two organs of one nature. Abide in the simple and noble regions of thy life, obey thy heart, and thou shalt reproduce the Foreworld again.

4. As our Religion, our Education, our Art look abroad, so does our spirit of society. All men plunge themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves.

Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given, something is taken. Society acquires new arts, and loses old instincts. What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil, and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat, and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under! But compare the health of the two, and you shall see that the white man has lost his aboriginal strength. If the traveller tell us truly, that the savage with a broad axe, and in a day or two the flesh shall unite and heal as if you struck the blow in the pitch, and the same blow shall send the white to his grave.

The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but so much support of muscle. He has a fine Geneva watch, but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by it. A Greenwich nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe; the equinox he knows and the whole bright calendar of the year is without a dial in his mind. His note-books impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit; the insurance-office increases the number of accidents; and it may be questioned whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy of Christianity entrenched in establishments and forms, some vigor of wild virtue. For every Stoic was a Stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?

There is no more deviation in the moral standard than in the standard of height or bulk. No greater now than ever were. A singular equality may be observed between the great men of the first and of our ages; nor can all the science, art, religion, and philosophy of the nineteenth century avail to educate men more than Plutarch's heroes, three or four and twenty centuries ago. Not in time is the race progressed. Phocion, Socrates, Anaxagoras, Diogenes, are great men, but they leave no class. He who is really of a great class will not be called by their name, but will be his own man, and, in his turn, the founder of a school. The arts and inventions of each period are only its costume, and do not invigorate men. The harm of the improved machinery may compensate its good. Hudson and Behring accomplished so much in the fishing-boats, as to astonish Parry and Franklin, whose equipment exhausted the resources of science and art. Galileo, with an opera-glass, discovered a more splendid series of celestial phenomena than any since. Columbus found the New World in an undecked boat. It is curious to see the periodical disappearance of means and machinery, which were introduced with loud laudation a few years or centuries before. The great genius returns to essential man. We reckoned the improvements of the art of war by the triumphs of science, and yet Napoleon conquered Europe by the bivouac, which consisted of nothing but back on naked valor, and disencumbering it of all aids. The Emperor held it impossible to make a great army, says Las Casas, "without abolishing our arms, magazines, commissaries, and carriages, until the imitation of the Roman custom, the soldier should receive his supply of corn, grind it in his hand-mill, and bake his bread himself."

Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The sand-particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who compose a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience with them.

And so the reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the weakness of our reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long, that they have come to esteem religious, learned, and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these institutions, though they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is. But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, out of new respect for himself and nature. Especially he hates what he has, if he see that it is accidental, -- came to him by inheritance or crime; then he feels that it is not his; it does not belong to him, has no root in him, and may be taken away there, because no revolution or no robber takes it away. But that which a man is does always by itself, and what the man acquires is living property, which does not wait the beck of rulers, or mobs, or revolutions, or fire, or storm, or bankruptcies, but perpetually renews itself wherever the man breathes. "Thy lot or portion of life," said the Caliph Ali, "is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking it." Our dependence on these foreign goods leads us to our slavish respect for numbers. The political meetings meet in numerous conventions; the greater the concourse, and with each new uproar of announcement from Essex! The Democrats from New Hampshire! The Whigs of Maine! the young patriot feels himself stronger than before by a new thousand of eyes and arms. In like manner the reformers sue for aid in conventions, and vote and resolve in multitude. Not so, O friends! will the God deign to enter and dwell with you, but by a method precisely the reverse. It is only as a man puts off all foreign support, and stands on his own feet, that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner. Is not a man weaker than a town? Ask nothing of men, and in the endless mutation, thou only firm column must preserve thyself; appear the upholder of all that surrounds thee. He who knows that power is inborn, that he is wealthy by himself, he has looked for good out of him and elsewhere, and so perceiving, throws himself unhesitatingly

thought, instantly rights himself, stands in the erect position, commands his limbs, works miracles: man who stands on his feet is stronger than a man who stands on his head.

So use all that is called Fortune. Most men gamble with her, and gain all, and lose all, as her wheel turns. But do thou leave as unlawful these winnings, and deal with Cause and Effect, the chancellors of the Will work and acquire, and thou hast chained the wheel of Chance, and shalt sit hereafter out of her rotations. A political victory, a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick, or the return of your friend, or some other favorable event, raises your spirits, and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the stillness of principles.

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