

ON HEROES, HERO-WORSHIP, AND THE HEROIC IN HISTORY
By Thomas Carlyle

CONTENTS.

- I. THE HERO AS DIVINITY. ODIN. PAGANISM: SCANDINAVIAN MYTHOLOGY.
- II. THE HERO AS PROPHET. MAHOMET: ISLAM.
- III. THE HERO AS POET. DANTE: SHAKSPEARE.
- IV. THE HERO AS PRIEST. LUTHER; REFORMATION: KNOX; PURITANISM.
- V. THE HERO AS MAN OF LETTERS. JOHNSON, ROUSSEAU, BURNS.
- VI. THE HERO AS KING. CROMWELL, NAPOLEON: MODERN REVOLUTIONISM.

LECTURES ON HEROES.

[May 5, 1840.]

LECTURE I.

THE HERO AS DIVINITY. ODIN. PAGANISM: SCANDINAVIAN MYTHOLOGY.

We have undertaken to discourse here for a little on Great Men, their manner of appearance in our world's business, how they have shaped themselves in the world's history, what ideas men formed of them, what

work

they did; --on Heroes, namely, and on their reception and performance;

what

I call Hero-worship and the Heroic in human affairs. Too evidently this

is

a large topic; deserving quite other treatment than we can expect to give it at present. A large topic; indeed, an illimitable one; wide as Universal History itself. For, as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these. Too clearly it is a topic we shall do no justice

to

in this place!

One comfort is, that Great Men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. He is the living light-fountain, which it is good and pleasant to be near. The light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world; and this not as a kindled lamp

only,

but rather as a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven; a flowing light-fountain, as I say, of native original insight, of manhood and

heroic

nobleness; --in whose radiance all souls feel that it is well with them.

On

any terms whatsoever, you will not grudge to wander in such neighborhood for a while. These Six classes of Heroes, chosen out of widely distant countries and epochs, and in mere external figure differing altogether, ought, if we look faithfully at them, to illustrate several things for

us.

Could we see them well, we should get some glimpses into the very marrow of the world's history. How happy, could I but, in any measure, in such times as these, make manifest to you the meanings of Heroism; the divine relation (for I may well call it such) which in all times unites a Great Man to other men; and thus, as it were, not exhaust my subject, but so much as break ground on it! At all events, I must make the attempt.

It is well said, in every sense, that a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him. A man's, or a nation of men's. By religion I do not mean here the church-creed which he professes, the articles of faith which he will sign and, in words or otherwise, assert; not this wholly, in many cases not this at all. We see men of all kinds of professed creeds attain to almost all degrees of worth or worthlessness under each or any of them.

This is not what I call religion, this profession and assertion; which is often only a profession and assertion from the outworks of the man, from the mere argumentative region of him, if even so deep as that. But the thing a man does practically believe (and this is often enough without asserting it even to himself, much less to others); the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe, and his duty and destiny there,

that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest. That is his religion; or, it may be, his mere scepticism and no-religion: the manner it is in which he feels himself to be spiritually related to the Unseen World or No-World; and I say, if you

tell me what that is, you tell me to a very great extent what the man is, what the kind of things he will do is. Of a man or of a nation we inquire, therefore, first of all, What religion they had? Was it Heathenism, --plurality of gods, mere sensuous representation of this Mystery of Life, and for chief recognized element therein Physical Force? Was it Christianity; faith in an Invisible, not as real only, but as the only reality; Time, through every meanest moment of it, resting on Eternity; Pagan empire of Force displaced by a nobler supremacy, that of Holiness? Was it Scepticism, uncertainty and inquiry whether there was

an Unseen World, any Mystery of Life except a mad one; --doubt as to all

this, or perhaps unbelief and flat denial? Answering of this question is

giving us the soul of the history of the man or nation. The thoughts they had were the parents of the actions they did; their feelings were parents of their thoughts: it was the unseen and spiritual in them that determined the outward and actual; --their religion, as I say, was the great fact

about them. In these Discourses, limited as we are, it will be good to direct our survey chiefly to that religious phasis of the matter. That once

known well, all is known. We have chosen as the first Hero in our series Odin

the central figure of Scandinavian Paganism; an emblem to us of a most extensive province of things. Let us look for a little at the Hero as Divinity, the oldest primary form of Heroism.

Surely it seems a very strange-looking thing this Paganism; almost inconceivable to us in these days. A bewildering, inextricable jungle of delusions, confusions, falsehoods, and absurdities, covering the whole field of Life! A thing that fills us with astonishment, almost, if it

were possible, with incredulity, --for truly it is not easy to understand that sane men could ever calmly, with their eyes open, believe and live by

such a set of doctrines. That men should have worshipped their poor

fellow-man as a God, and not him only, but stocks and stones, and all manner of animate and inanimate objects; and fashioned for themselves such a distracted chaos of hallucinations by way of Theory of the Universe: all this looks like an incredible fable. Nevertheless it is a clear fact

that they did it. Such hideous inextricable jungle of misworships,

misbeliefs, men, made as we are, did actually hold by, and live at home in. This is strange. Yes, we may pause in sorrow and silence over the depths of darkness that are in man; if we rejoice in the heights of purer vision he has attained to. Such things were and are in man; in all men; in us too.

Some speculators have a short way of accounting for the Pagan religion: mere quackery, priestcraft, and dupery, say they; no sane man ever did believe it, --merely contrived to persuade other men, not worthy of the

name of sane, to believe it! It will be often our duty to protest against

this sort of hypothesis about men's doings and history; and I here, on the

very threshold, protest against it in reference to Paganism, and to all other isms by which man has ever for a length of time striven to walk in this world. They have all had a truth in them, or men would not have taken

them up. Quackery and dupery do abound; in religions, above all in the more advanced decaying stages of religions, they have fearfully abounded: but quackery was never the originating influence in such things; it was not

the health and life of such things, but their disease, the sure precursor of their being about to die! Let us never forget this. It seems to me a

most mournful hypothesis, that of quackery giving birth to any faith even in savage men. Quackery gives birth to nothing; gives death to all things. We shall not see into the true heart of anything, if we look merely at

the quackeries of it; if we do not reject the quackeries altogether; as mere diseases, corruptions, with which our and all men's sole duty is to have done with them, to sweep them out of our thoughts as out of our practice. Man everywhere is the born enemy of lies. I find Grand Lamaism itself to have a kind of truth in it. Read the candid, clear-sighted, rather sceptical Mr. Turner's Account of his Embassy to that country, and see. They have their belief, these poor Tibet people, that Providence sends down always an Incarnation of Himself into every generation. At bottom

some belief in a kind of Pope! At bottom still better, belief that there is a _Greatest_ Man; that _he_ is discoverable; that, once discovered, we ought to treat him with an obedience which knows no bounds! This is the truth of Grand Lamaism; the "discoverability" is the only error here.

The

Thibet priests have methods of their own of discovering what Man is Greatest, fit to be supreme over them. Bad methods: but are they so

much

worse than our methods, --of understanding him to be always the

eldest-born

of a certain genealogy? Alas, it is a difficult thing to find good

methods

for!--We shall begin to have a chance of understanding Paganism, when we first admit that to its followers it was, at one time, earnestly true.

Let

us consider it very certain that men did believe in Paganism; men with

open

eyes, sound senses, men made altogether like ourselves; that we, had we been there, should have believed in it. Ask now, What Paganism could

have

been?

Another theory, somewhat more respectable, attributes such things to Allegory. It was a play of poetic minds, say these theorists; a

shadowing

forth, in allegorical fable, in personification and visual form, of what such poetic minds had known and felt of this Universe. Which agrees, add they, with a primary law of human nature, still everywhere observably at work, though in less important things, That what a man feels intensely,

he

struggles to speak out of him, to see represented before him in visual shape, and as if with a kind of life and historical reality in it. Now doubtless there is such a law, and it is one of the deepest in human nature; neither need we doubt that it did operate fundamentally in this business. The hypothesis which ascribes Paganism wholly or mostly to

this

agency, I call a little more respectable; but I cannot yet call it the

true

hypothesis. Think, would _we_ believe, and take with us as our life-guidance, an allegory, a poetic sport? Not sport but earnest is

what

we should require. It is a most earnest thing to be alive in this world; to die is not sport for a man. Man's life never was a sport to him; it

was

a stern reality, altogether a serious matter to be alive!

I find, therefore, that though these Allegory theorists are on the way towards truth in this matter, they have not reached it either. Pagan Religion is indeed an Allegory, a Symbol of what men felt and knew about the Universe; and all Religions are symbols of that, altering always as that alters: but it seems to me a radical perversion, and even

inversion,

of the business, to put that forward as the origin and moving cause, when it was rather the result and termination. To get beautiful allegories, a perfect poetic symbol, was not the want of men; but to know what they

were
to believe about this Universe, what course they were to steer in it;
what,
in this mysterious Life of theirs, they had to hope and to fear, to do
and
to forbear doing. The Pilgrim's Progress is an Allegory, and a
beautiful, just and serious one: but consider whether Bunyan's Allegory
could have preceded the Faith it symbolizes! The Faith had to be

already
there, standing believed by everybody; --of which the Allegory could

then
become a shadow; and, with all its seriousness, we may say a sportful
shadow, a mere play of the Fancy, in comparison with that awful Fact and
scientific certainty which it poetically strives to emblem. The Allegory
is the product of the certainty, not the producer of it; not in Bunyan's
nor in any other case. For Paganism, therefore, we have still to

inquire,
Whence came that scientific certainty, the parent of such a bewildered

heap
of allegories, errors and confusions? How was it, what was it?

Surely it were a foolish attempt to pretend "explaining," in this place,

or
in any place, such a phenomenon as that far-distant distracted cloudy
imbroglio of Paganism, --more like a cloud-field than a distant continent

of
firm land and facts! It is no longer a reality, yet it was one. We

ought
to understand that this seeming cloud-field was once a reality; that not
poetic allegory, least of all that dupery and deception was the origin of
it. Men, I say, never did believe idle songs, never risked their soul's
life on allegories: men in all times, especially in early earnest times,
have had an instinct for detecting quacks, for detesting quacks. Let us
try if, leaving out both the quack theory and the allegory one, and
listening with affectionate attention to that far-off confused rumor of

the
Pagan ages, we cannot ascertain so much as this at least, That there was

a
kind of fact at the heart of them; that they too were not mendacious and
distracted, but in their own poor way true and sane!

You remember that fancy of Plato's, of a man who had grown to maturity in
some dark distance, and was brought on a sudden into the upper air to see
the sun rise. What would his wonder be, his rapt astonishment at the

sight
we daily witness with indifference! With the free open sense of a child,
yet with the ripe faculty of a man, his whole heart would be kindled by
that sight, he would discern it well to be Godlike, his soul would fall
down in worship before it. Now, just such a childlike greatness was in

the
primitive nations. The first Pagan Thinker among rude men, the first man
that began to think, was precisely this child-man of Plato's. Simple,

open

as a child, yet with the depth and strength of a man. Nature had as yet no name to him; he had not yet united under a name the infinite variety of sights, sounds, shapes and motions, which we now collectively name Universe, Nature, or the like, --and so with a name dismiss it from us.

To the wild deep-hearted man all was yet new, not veiled under names or formulas; it stood naked, flashing in on him there, beautiful, awful, unspeakable. Nature was to this man, what to the Thinker and Prophet it forever is, preternatural. This green flowery rock-built earth, the trees, the mountains, rivers, many-sounding seas; --that great deep sea of azure that swims overhead; the winds sweeping through it; the black cloud fashioning itself together, now pouring out fire, now hail and rain; what is it? Ay, what? At bottom we do not yet know; we can never know at all. It is not by our superior insight that we escape the difficulty; it is by our superior levity, our inattention, our want of insight. It is by not thinking that we cease to wonder at it. Hardened round us, encasing wholly every notion we form, is a wrappage of traditions, hearsays, mere words. We call that fire of the black thunder-cloud "electricity," and lecture learnedly about it, and grind the like of it

out of glass and silk: but what is it? What made it? Whence comes it? Whither goes it? Science has done much for us; but it is a poor science that would hide from us the great deep sacred infinitude of Nescience, whither we can never penetrate, on which all science swims as a mere superficial film. This world, after all our science and sciences, is

still a miracle; wonderful, inscrutable, magical and more, to whosoever will think of it.

That great mystery of TIME, were there no other; the illimitable, silent, never-resting thing called Time, rolling, rushing on, swift, silent, like an all-embracing ocean-tide, on which we and all the Universe swim like exhalations, like apparitions which are, and then are not: this is forever very literally a miracle; a thing to strike us dumb, --for we have no word to speak about it. This Universe, ah me--what could the wild man know of it; what can we yet know? That it is a Force, and thousand-fold Complexity of Forces; a Force which is not we. That is all; it is not we, it is altogether different from us. Force, Force, everywhere Force;

we ourselves a mysterious Force in the centre of that. "There is not a leaf rotting on the highway but has Force in it; how else could it rot?" Nay surely, to the Atheistic Thinker, if such a one were possible, it must be

a miracle too, this huge illimitable whirlwind of Force, which envelops us here; never-resting whirlwind, high as Immensity, old as Eternity. What

is it? God's Creation, the religious people answer; it is the Almighty

God's! Atheistic science babbles poorly of it, with scientific nomenclatures, experiments and what not, as if it were a poor dead thing, to be bottled

up in Leyden jars and sold over counters: but the natural sense of man, in all times, if he will honestly apply his sense, proclaims it to be a

living thing, --ah, an unspeakable, godlike thing; towards which the best

attitude

for us, after never so much science, is awe, devout prostration and humility of soul; worship if not in words, then in silence.

But now I remark farther: What in such a time as ours it requires a Prophet or Poet to teach us, namely, the stripping-off of those poor undevout wrappings, nomenclatures and scientific hearsays, --this, the ancient earnest soul, as yet unencumbered with these things, did for itself. The world, which is now divine only to the gifted, was then

divine

to whosoever would turn his eye upon it. He stood bare before it face to face. "All was Godlike or God: "--Jean Paul still finds it so; the giant Jean Paul, who has power to escape out of hearsays: but there then were

no

hearsays. Canopus shining down over the desert, with its blue diamond brightness (that wild blue spirit-like brightness, far brighter than we ever witness here), would pierce into the heart of the wild Ishmaelitic man, whom it was guiding through the solitary waste there. To his wild heart, with all feelings in it, with no _speech_ for any feeling, it

might

seem a little eye, that Canopus, glancing out on him from the great deep Eternity; revealing the inner Splendor to him. Cannot we understand how these men _worshipped_ Canopus; became what we call Sabeans, worshipping the stars? Such is to me the secret of all forms of Paganism. Worship

is

transcendent wonder; wonder for which there is now no limit or measure; that is worship. To these primeval men, all things and everything they

saw

exist beside them were an emblem of the Godlike, of some God.

And look what perennial fibre of truth was in that. To us also, through every star, through every blade of grass, is not a God made visible, if

we

will open our minds and eyes? We do not worship in that way now: but is it not reckoned still a merit, proof of what we call a "poetic nature," that we recognize how every object has a divine beauty in it; how every object still verily is "a window through which we may look into

Infinite

itself"? He that can discern the loveliness of things, we call him Poet! Painter, Man of Genius, gifted, lovable. These poor Sabeans did even

what

he does, --in their own fashion. That they did it, in what fashion

soever,

was a merit: better than what the entirely stupid man did, what the

horse

and camel did, --namely, nothing!

But now if all things whatsoever that we look upon are emblems to us of

the

Highest God, I add that more so than any of them is man such an emblem. You have heard of St. Chrysostom's celebrated saying in reference to the Shekinah, or Ark of Testimony, visible Revelation of God, among the Hebrews: "The true Shekinah is Man!" Yes, it is even so: this is no

vain

phrase; it is veritably so. The essence of our being, the mystery in us that calls itself "I," --ah, what words have we for such things? --is a breath of Heaven; the Highest Being reveals himself in man. This body,

these faculties, this life of ours, is it not all as a vesture for that Unnamed? "There is but one Temple in the Universe," says the devout Novalis, "and that is the Body of Man. Nothing is holier shall that high form. Bending before men is a reverence done to this Revelation in the Flesh. We touch Heaven when we lay our hand on a human body!" This

sounds

much like a mere flourish of rhetoric; but it is not so. If well meditated, it will turn out to be a scientific fact; the expression, in such words as can be had, of the actual truth of the thing. We are the miracle of miracles, --the great inscrutable mystery of God. We cannot understand it, we know not how to speak of it; but we may feel and know,

if

we like, that it is verily so.

Well; these truths were once more readily felt than now. The young generations of the world, who had in them the freshness of young

children,

and yet the depth of earnest men, who did not think that they had

finished

off all things in Heaven and Earth by merely giving them scientific

names,

but had to gaze direct at them there, with awe and wonder: they felt better what of divinity is in man and Nature; they, without being mad, could worship Nature, and man more than anything else in Nature.

Worship, that is, as I said above, admire without limit: this, in the

full

use of their faculties, with all sincerity of heart, they could do. I consider Hero-worship to be the grand modifying element in that ancient system of thought. What I called the perplexed jungle of Paganism

sprang,

we may say, out of many roots: every admiration, adoration of a star or natural object, was a root or fibre of a root; but Hero-worship is the deepest root of all; the tap-root, from which in a great degree all the rest were nourished and grown.

And now if worship even of a star had some meaning in it, how much more might that of a Hero! Worship of a Hero is transcendent admiration of a Great Man. I say great men are still admirable; I say there is, at

bottom,

nothing else admirable! No nobler feeling than this of admiration for

one

higher than himself dwells in the breast of man. It is to this hour, and at all hours, the vivifying influence in man's life. Religion I find

stand

upon it; not Paganism only, but far higher and truer religions, --all religion hitherto known. Hero-worship, heartfelt prostrate admiration, submission, burning, boundless, for a noblest godlike Form of Man, --is

not

that the germ of Christianity itself? The greatest of all Heroes is One--whom we do not name here! Let sacred silence meditate that sacred matter; you will find it the ultimate perfection of a principle extant throughout man's whole history on earth.

Or coming into lower, less unspeakable provinces, is not all Loyalty akin to religious Faith also? Faith is loyalty to some inspired Teacher, some spiritual Hero. And what therefore is loyalty proper, the life-breath of all society, but an effluence of Hero-worship, submissive admiration for the truly great? Society is founded on Hero-worship. All dignities of

rank, on which human association rests, are what we may call a

Heroarchy

(Government of Heroes), --or a Hierarchy, for it is "sacred" enough

withal!

The Duke means Dux, Leader; King is Kon-ning, Kan-ning, Man that knows or cans. Society everywhere is some representation, not insupportably inaccurate, of a graduated Worship of Heroes--reverence and obedience done to men really great and wise. Not insupportably

inaccurate,

I say! They are all as bank-notes, these social dignitaries, all representing gold; --and several of them, alas, always are forged notes. We can do with some forged false notes; with a good many even; but not

with

all, or the most of them forged! No: there have to come revolutions

then;

cries of Democracy, Liberty and Equality, and I know not what: --the notes being all false, and no gold to be had for them, people take to crying

in

their despair that there is no gold, that there never was any! "Gold," Hero-worship, is nevertheless, as it was always and everywhere, and cannot cease till man himself ceases.

I am well aware that in these days Hero-worship, the thing I call Hero-worship, professes to have gone out, and finally ceased. This, for reasons which it will be worth while some time to inquire into, is an age that as it were denies the existence of great men; denies the

desirableness

of great men. Show our critics a great man, a Luther for example, they begin to what they call "account" for him; not to worship him, but take

the

dimensions of him, --and bring him out to be a little kind of man! He was the "creature of the Time," they say; the Time called him forth, the Time did everything, he nothing--but what we the little critic could have done too! This seems to me but melancholy work. The Time call forth? Alas,

we

have known Times call loudly enough for their great man; but not find

him

when they called! He was not there; Providence had not sent him; the

Time,

calling its loudest, had to go down to confusion and wreck because he would not come when called.

For if we will think of it, no Time need have gone to ruin, could it have found a man great enough, a man wise and good enough: wisdom to

discern

truly what the Time wanted, valor to lead it on the right road thither; these are the salvation of any Time. But I liken common languid Times, with their unbelief, distress, perplexity, with their languid doubting characters and embarrassed circumstances, impotently crumbling down into ever worse distress towards final ruin; --all this I liken to dry dead

fuel,

waiting for the lightning out of Heaven that shall kindle it. The great man, with his free force direct out of God's own hand, is the lightning. His word is the wise healing word which all can believe in. All blazes round him now, when he has once struck on it, into fire like his own.

The
dry mouldering sticks are thought to have called him forth. They did
want
him greatly; but as to calling him forth--! Those are critics of small
vision, I think, who cry: "See, is it not the sticks that made the
fire?"
No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than
disbelief
in great men. There is no sadder symptom of a generation than such
general
blindness to the spiritual lightning, with faith only in the heap of
barren
dead fuel. It is the last consummation of unbelief. In all epochs of
the
world's history, we shall find the Great Man to have been the
indispensable
savior of his epoch; --the lightning, without which the fuel never would
have burnt. The History of the World, I said already, was the Biography
of
Great Men.

Such small critics do what they can to promote unbelief and universal
spiritual paralysis: but happily they cannot always completely succeed.
In all times it is possible for a man to arise great enough to feel that
they and their doctrines are chimeras and cobwebs. And what is notable,

in
no time whatever can they entirely eradicate out of living men's hearts a
certain altogether peculiar reverence for Great Men; genuine admiration,
loyalty, adoration, however dim and perverted it may be. Hero-worship
endures forever while man endures. Boswell venerates his Johnson, right
truly even in the Eighteenth century. The unbelieving French believe in
their Voltaire; and burst out round him into very curious Hero-worship,

in
that last act of his life when they "stifle him under roses." It has
always seemed to me extremely curious this of Voltaire. Truly, if
Christianity be the highest instance of Hero-worship, then we may find

here
in Voltaireism one of the lowest! He whose life was that of a kind of
Antichrist, does again on this side exhibit a curious contrast. No

people
ever were so little prone to admire at all as those French of Voltaire.
Persiflage was the character of their whole mind; adoration had nowhere

a
place in it. Yet see! The old man of Ferney comes up to Paris; an old,
tottering, infirm man of eighty-four years. They feel that he too is a
kind of Hero; that he has spent his life in opposing error and injustice,
delivering Calases, unmasking hypocrites in high places; --in short that
he too, though in a strange way, has fought like a valiant man. They
feel withal that, if _persiflage_ be the great thing, there never was

such
a _persifleur_. He is the realized ideal of every one of them; the thing
they are all wanting to be; of all Frenchmen the most French. He is
properly their god, --such god as they are fit for. Accordingly all
persons, from the Queen Antoinette to the Douanier at the Porte St.

Denis,
do they not worship him? People of quality disguise themselves as
tavern-waiters. The Maitre de Poste, with a broad oath, orders his
Postilion, "_Va bon train_"; thou art driving M. de Voltaire." At Paris

his
carriage is "the nucleus of a comet, whose train fills whole streets."

The
ladies pluck a hair or two from his fur, to keep it as a sacred relic.
There was nothing highest, beautifullest, noblest in all France, that did
not feel this man to be higher, beautifuler, nobler.

Yes, from Norse Odin to English Samuel Johnson, from the divine Founder

of
Christianity to the withered Pontiff of Encyclopedism, in all times and
places, the Hero has been worshipped. It will ever be so. We all love
great men; love, venerate and bow down submissive before great men: nay
can we honestly bow down to anything else? Ah, does not every true man
feel that he is himself made higher by doing reverence to what is really
above him? No nobler or more blessed feeling dwells in man's heart. And
to me it is very cheering to consider that no sceptical logic, or general
triviality, insincerity and aridity of any Time and its influences can
destroy this noble inborn loyalty and worship that is in man. In times

of
unbelief, which soon have to become times of revolution, much

down-rushing,
sorrowful decay and ruin is visible to everybody. For myself in these
days, I seem to see in this indestructibility of Hero-worship the
everlasting adamant lower than which the confused wreck of revolutionary
things cannot fall. The confused wreck of things crumbling and even
crashing and tumbling all round us in these revolutionary ages, will get
down so far; _no_ farther. It is an eternal corner-stone, from which

they
can begin to build themselves up again. That man, in some sense or other,
worships Heroes; that we all of us reverence and must ever reverence

Great
Men: this is, to me, the living rock amid all rushings-down
whatsoever; --the one fixed point in modern revolutionary history,

otherwise
as if bottomless and shoreless.

So much of truth, only under an ancient obsolete vesture, but the spirit

of
it still true, do I find in the Paganism of old nations. Nature is still
divine, the revelation of the workings of God; the Hero is still
worshipable: this, under poor cramped incipient forms, is what all Pagan
religions have struggled, as they could, to set forth. I think
Scandinavian Paganism, to us here, is more interesting than any other.

It
is, for one thing, the latest; it continued in these regions of Europe

till
the eleventh century: eight hundred years ago the Norwegians were still
worshippers of Odin. It is interesting also as the creed of our fathers;
the men whose blood still runs in our veins, whom doubtless we still
resemble in so many ways. Strange: they did believe that, while we
believe so differently. Let us look a little at this poor Norse creed,

for

many reasons. We have tolerable means to do it; for there is another point of interest in these Scandi navi an mythologies: that they have been preserved so well.

In that strange island Iceland, --burst up, the geologists say, by fire from the bottom of the sea; a wild land of barrenness and lava; swallowed many months of every year in black tempests, yet with a wild gleaming beauty in summertime; towering up there, stern and grim, in the North Ocean with its snow jokuls, roaring geysers, sulphur-pools and horrid volcanic chasms, like the waste chaotic battle-field of Frost and Fire; --where of all

places we least looked for Literature or written memorials, the record of these things was written down. On the seabord of this wild land is a rim of grassy country, where cattle can subsist, and men by means of them and of what the sea yields; and it seems they were poetic men these, men who had deep thoughts in them, and uttered musically their thoughts. Much would be lost, had Iceland not been burst up from the sea, not been discovered by the Northmen! The old Norse Poets were many of them natives of Iceland.

Saemund, one of the early Christian Priests there, who perhaps had a lingering fondness for Paganism, collected certain of their old Pagan songs, just about becoming obsolete then, --Poems or Chants of a mythic, prophetic, mostly all of a religious character: that is what Norse

critics call the Elder or Poetic Edda. Edda, a word of uncertain

etymology, is thought to signify Ancestress. Snorro Sturluson, an Iceland gentleman, an extremely notable personage, educated by this Saemund's grandson, took in hand next, near a century afterwards, to put together, among several other books he wrote, a kind of Prose Synopsis of the whole Mythology; elucidated by new fragments of traditional verse. A work constructed really with great ingenuity, native talent, what one might

call unconscious art; altogether a perspicuous clear work, pleasant reading still: this is the Younger or Prose Edda. By these and the numerous other Sagas, mostly Icelandic, with the commentaries, Icelandic or not, which go on zealously in the North to this day, it is possible to gain

some direct insight even yet; and see that old Norse system of Belief, as it were, face to face. Let us forget that it is erroneous Religion; let us look at it as old Thought, and try if we cannot sympathize with it somewhat.

The primary characteristic of this old Northland Mythology I find to be Impersonation of the visible workings of Nature. Earnest simple recognition of the workings of Physical Nature, as a thing wholly miraculous, stupendous and divine. What we now lecture of as Science,

they wondered at, and fell down in awe before, as Religion The dark hostile Powers of Nature they figure to themselves as "Jotuns," Giants, huge shaggy beings of a demonic character. Frost, Fire, Sea-tempest; these

are

Jotuns. The friendly Powers again, as Summer-heat, the Sun, are Gods.

The
empire of this Universe is divided between these two; they dwell apart,
in
perennial internecine feud. The Gods dwell above in Asgard, the Garden
of
the Asen, or Divinities; Jotunheim, a distant dark chaotic land, is the
home of the Jotuns.

Curious all this; and not idle or inane, if we will look at the
foundation
of it! The power of Fire, or Flame, for instance, which we designate
by some trivial chemical name, thereby hiding from ourselves the

essential
character of wonder that dwells in it as in all things, is with these old
Northmen, Loke, a most swift subtle Demon, of the brood of the Jotuns.
The savages of the Ladrones Islands too (say some Spanish voyagers)

thought
Fire, which they never had seen before, was a devil or god, that bit you
sharply when you touched it, and that lived upon dry wood. From us too

no
Chemistry, if it had not Stupidity to help it, would hide that Flame is a
wonder. What is Flame?--Frost the old Norse Seer discerns to be a
monstrous hoary Jotun, the Giant Thrym, Hrym; or Rime, the old word
now nearly obsolete here, but still used in Scotland to signify

hoar-frost.

Rime was not then as now a dead chemical thing, but a living Jotun or
Devil; the monstrous Jotun Rime drove home his Horses at night, sat
"combing their manes,"--which Horses were Hail-Clouds, or fleet
Frost-Winds. His Cows--No, not his, but a kinsman's, the Giant Hymir's
Cows are Icebergs: this Hymir "looks at the rocks" with his devil-eye,
and they split in the glance of it.

Thunder was not then mere Electricity, vitreous or resinous; it was the

God
Donner (Thunder) or Thor,--God also of beneficent Summer-heat. The

thunder
was his wrath: the gathering of the black clouds is the drawing down of
Thor's angry brows; the fire-bolt bursting out of Heaven is the

all-rending

Hammer flung from the hand of Thor: he urges his loud chariot over the
mountain-tops,--that is the peal; wrathful he "blows in his red
beard,"--that is the rustling storm-blast before the thunder begins.
Balder again, the White God, the beautiful, the just and benignant (whom
the early Christian Missionaries found to resemble Christ), is the Sun,
beautifullest of visible things; wondrous too, and divine still, after

all

our Astronomies and Almanacs! But perhaps the notablist god we hear tell
of is one of whom Grimm the German Etymologist finds trace: the God
Wunsch, or Wish. The God Wish; who could give us all that we

wished!

Is not this the sincerest and yet rudest voice of the spirit of man? The
rudest ideal that man ever formed; which still shows itself in the

latest

forms of our spiritual culture. Higher considerations have to teach us

that the God Wish is not the true God.

Of the other Gods or Jotuns I will mention only for etymology's sake,

that

Sea-tempest is the Jotun Aegir, a very dangerous Jotun; --and now to

this

day, on our river Trent, as I learn, the Nottingham bargemen, when the River is in a certain flooded state (a kind of backwater, or eddying

swirl

it has, very dangerous to them), call it Eager; they cry out, "Have a

care,

there is the Eager coming!" Curious; that word surviving, like the peak of a submerged world! The oldest Nottingham bargemen had believed in

the

God Aegir. Indeed our English blood too in good part is Danish, Norse;

or

rather, at bottom, Danish and Norse and Saxon have no distinction, except

a

superficial one, --as of Heathen and Christian, or the like. But all over our Island we are mingled largely with Danes proper, --from the incessant invasions there were: and this, of course, in a greater proportion along the east coast; and greatest of all, as I find, in the North Country.

From

the Humber upwards, all over Scotland, the Speech of the common people is still in a singular degree Icelandic; its Germanism has still a peculiar Norse tinge. They too are "Normans," Northmen, --if that be any great beauty! --

Of the chief god, Odin, we shall speak by and by. Mark at present so

much;

what the essence of Scandinavian and indeed of all Paganism is: a recognition of the forces of Nature as godlike, stupendous, personal Agencies, --as Gods and Demons. Not inconceivable to us. It is the

infant

Thought of man opening itself, with awe and wonder, on this

ever-stupendous

Universe. To me there is in the Norse system something very genuine,

very

great and manlike. A broad simplicity, rusticity, so very different from the light gracefulness of the old Greek Paganism, distinguishes this Scandinavian System. It is Thought; the genuine Thought of deep, rude, earnest minds, fairly opened to the things about them; a face-to-face and heart-to-heart inspection of the things, --the first characteristic of all good Thought in all times. Not graceful lightness, half-sport, as in the Greek Paganism; a certain homely truthfulness and rustic strength, a

great

rude sincerity, discloses itself here. It is strange, after our

beautiful

Apollo statues and clear smiling mythuses, to come down upon the Norse

Gods

"brewing ale" to hold their feast with Aegir, the Sea-Jotun; sending out Thor to get the caldron for them in the Jotun country; Thor, after many adventures, clapping the Pot on his head, like a huge hat, and walking

off

with it, --quite lost in it, the ears of the Pot reaching down to his

heels!

A kind of vacant hugeness, large awkward gianthood, characterizes that Norse system; enormous force, as yet altogether untutored, stalking helpless with large uncertain strides. Consider only their primary

mythus

of the Creation. The Gods, having got the Giant Ymer slain, a Giant made by "warm wind," and much confused work, out of the conflict of Frost and Fire, --determined on constructing a world with him. His blood made the Sea; his flesh was the Land, the Rocks his bones; of his eyebrows they formed Asgard their Gods' -dwelling; his skull was the great blue vault of Immensity, and the brains of it became the Clouds. What a Hyper-Brobdignagian business! Untamed Thought, great, giantlike, enormous; --to be tamed in due time into the compact greatness, not giantlike, but godlike and stronger than gianthood, of the Shakspeares,

the

Goethes! --Spiritually as well as bodily these men are our progenitors.

I like, too, that representation they have of the tree Igdrasil. All

Life

is figured by them as a Tree. Igdrasil, the Ash-tree of Existence, has

its

roots deep down in the kingdoms of Hela or Death; its trunk reaches up heaven-high, spreads its boughs over the whole Universe: it is the Tree

of

Existence. At the foot of it, in the Death-kingdom, sit Three _Nornas_, Fates, --the Past, Present, Future; watering its roots from the Sacred

Well.

Its "boughs," with their buddings and disleafings?--events, things suffered, things done, catastrophes, --stretch through all lands and

times.

Is not every leaf of it a biography, every fibre there an act or word?

Its

boughs are Histories of Nations. The rustle of it is the noise of Human Existence, onwards from of old. It grows there, the breath of Human Passion rustling through it; --or storm tost, the storm-wind howling

through

it like the voice of all the gods. It is Igdrasil, the Tree of

Existence.

It is the past, the present, and the future; what was done, what is

doing,

what will be done; "the infinite conjugation of the verb _To do_." Considering how human things circulate, each inextricably in communion

with

all, --how the word I speak to you to-day is borrowed, not from Ulfila the Moesogoth only, but from all men since the first man began to speak, --I find no similitude so true as this of a Tree. Beautiful; altogether beautiful and great. The "_Machine_" of the Universe, "--alas, do but

think

of that in contrast!

Well, it is strange enough this old Norse view of Nature; different

enough

from what we believe of Nature. Whence it specially came, one would not like to be compelled to say very minutely! One thing we may say: It

came

from the thoughts of Norse men; --from the thought, above all, of the first Norse man who had an original power of thinking. The First Norse "man of genius," as we should call him! Innumerable men had passed by, across this Universe, with a dumb vague wonder, such as the very animals may feel; or with a painful, fruitlessly inquiring wonder, such as men

only

feel; --till the great Thinker came, the original man, the Seer; whose shaped spoken Thought awakes the slumbering capability of all into

Thought.

It is ever the way with the Thinker, the spiritual Hero. What he says,

all

men were not far from saying, were longing to say. The Thoughts of all start up, as from painful enchanted sleep, round his Thought; answering

to

it, Yes, even so! Joyful to men as the dawning of day from night; --is

it

not, indeed, the awakening for them from no-being into being, from death into life? We still honor such a man; call him Poet, Genius, and so

forth:

but to these wild men he was a very magician, a worker of miraculous unexpected blessing for them; a Prophet, a God! --Thought once awakened

does

not again slumber; unfolds itself into a System of Thought; grows, in man after man, generation after generation, --till its full stature is

reached,

and such System of Thought can grow no farther; but must give place to another.

For the Norse people, the Man now named Odin, and Chief Norse God, we fancy, was such a man. A Teacher, and Captain of soul and of body; a

Hero,

of worth immeasurable; admiration for whom, transcending the known

bounds,

became adoration. Has he not the power of articulate Thinking; and many other powers, as yet miraculous? So, with boundless gratitude, would the rude Norse heart feel. Has he not solved for them the sphinx-enigma of this Universe; given assurance to them of their own destiny there? By

him

they know now what they have to do here, what to look for hereafter. Existence has become articulate, melodious by him; he first has made Life alive! --We may call this Odin, the origin of Norse Mythology: Odin, or whatever name the First Norse Thinker bore while he was a man among men. His view of the Universe once promulgated, a like view starts into being

in

all minds; grows, keeps ever growing, while it continues credible there. In all minds it lay written, but invisibly, as in sympathetic ink; at his word it starts into visibility in all. Nay, in every epoch of the world, the great event, parent of all others, is it not the arrival of a Thinker in the world! --

One other thing we must not forget; it will explain, a little, the confusion of these Norse Eddas. They are not one coherent System of

Thought; but properly the summation of several successive systems. All this of the old Norse Belief which is flung out for us, in one level of distance in the Edda, like a picture painted on the same canvas, does not at all stand so in the reality. It stands rather at all manner of distances and depths, of successive generations since the Belief first began. All Scandinavian thinkers, since the first of them, contributed

to that Scandinavian System of Thought; in ever-new elaboration and

addition, it is the combined work of them all. What history it had, how it changed from shape to shape, by one thinker's contribution after another, till it got to the full final shape we see it under in the Edda, no man will now ever know: its Councils of Trebizond, Councils of Trent, Athanasiuses, Dantes, Luthers, are sunk without echo in the dark night! Only that it

had such a history we can all know. Wheresoever a thinker appeared, there in the thing he thought of was a contribution, accession, a change or revolution made. Alas, the grandest "revolution" of all, the one made by the man Odin himself, is not this too sunk for us like the rest! Of Odin what history? Strange rather to reflect that he had a history! That this Odin, in his wild Norse vesture, with his wild beard and eyes, his rude Norse speech and ways, was a man like us; with our sorrows, joys,

with our limbs, features; --intrinsicly all one as we: and did such a work! But the work, much of it, has perished; the worker, all to the name. "Wednesday," men will say to-morrow; Odin's day! Of Odin there exists

no history; no document of it; no guess about it worth repeating.

Snorro indeed, in the quietest manner, almost in a brief business style, writes down, in his Heimskringla, how Odin was a heroic Prince, in the Black-Sea region, with Twelve Peers, and a great people straitened for room. How he led these Asen (Asiatics) of his out of Asia; settled

them in the North parts of Europe, by warlike conquest; invented Letters,

Poetry and so forth, --and came by and by to be worshipped as Chief God by these Scandinavians, his Twelve Peers made into Twelve Sons of his own, Gods

like himself: Snorro has no doubt of this. Saxo Grammaticus, a very curious Northman of that same century, is still more unhesitating; scruples not

to find out a historical fact in every individual mythus, and writes it down as a terrestrial event in Denmark or elsewhere. Torfaeus, learned and cautious, some centuries later, assigns by calculation a date for it: Odin, he says, came into Europe about the Year 70 before Christ. Of all which, as grounded on mere uncertainties, found to be untenable now, I

need say nothing. Far, very far beyond the Year 70! Odin's date, adventures, whole terrestrial history, figure and environment are sunk from us

forever into unknown thousands of years.

Nay Grimm, the German Antiquary, goes so far as to deny that any man Odin ever existed. He proves it by etymology. The word Wuotan, which is

the original form of Odin, a word spread, as name of their chief Divinity,

over all the Teutonic Nations everywhere; this word, which connects
itself,
according to Grimm, with the Latin vadere, with the English wade and
such like, --means primarily Movement, Source of Movement, Power; and is

the
fit name of the highest god, not of any man. The word signifies

Divinity,
he says, among the old Saxon, German and all Teutonic Nations; the
adjectives formed from it all signify divine, supreme, or something
pertaining to the chief god. Like enough! We must bow to Grimm in

matters
etymological. Let us consider it fixed that Wuotan means Wading,

force
of Movement. And now still, what hinders it from being the name of a
Heroic Man and Mover, as well as of a god? As for the adjectives, and
words formed from it, --did not the Spaniards in their universal

admiration
for Lope, get into the habit of saying "a Lope flower," "a Lope dama,"

if
the flower or woman were of surpassing beauty? Had this lasted, Lope
would have grown, in Spain, to be an adjective signifying godlike also.
Indeed, Adam Smith, in his Essay on Language, surmises that all

adjectives
whatsoever were formed precisely in that way: some very green thing,
chiefly notable for its greenness, got the appellative name Green, and
then the next thing remarkable for that quality, a tree for instance, was
named the green tree, --as we still say "the steam coach," "four-horse
coach," or the like. All primary adjectives, according to Smith, were
formed in this way; were at first substantives and things. We cannot
annihilate a man for etymologies like that! Surely there was a First
Teacher and Captain; surely there must have been an Odin, palpable to the
sense at one time; no adjective, but a real Hero of flesh and blood! The
voice of all tradition, history or echo of history, agrees with all that
thought will teach one about it, to assure us of this.

How the man Odin came to be considered a god, the chief god?--that

surely
is a question which nobody would wish to dogmatize upon. I have said,

his
people knew no limits to their admiration of him; they had as yet no
scale to measure admiration by. Fancy your own generous heart's-love of
some greatest man expanding till it transcended all bounds, till it
filled and overflowed the whole field of your thought! Or what if this

man
Odin, --since a great deep soul, with the afflatus and mysterious tide of
vision and impulse rushing on him he knows not whence, is ever an enigma,

a
kind of terror and wonder to himself, --should have felt that perhaps he
was divine; that he was some effluence of the "Wuotan," "Movement,"
Supreme Power and Divinity, of whom to his rapt vision all Nature was the
awful Flame-image; that some effluence of Wuotan dwelt here in him! He

was
not necessarily false; he was but mistaken, speaking the truest he knew.

A
great soul, any sincere soul, knows not what he is, --alternates between

the
highest height and the lowest depth; can, of all things, the least
measure--Himself! What others take him for, and what he guesses that he
may be; these two items strangely act on one another, help to determine

one
another. With all men reverently admiring him; with his own wild soul

full
of noble ardors and affections, of whirlwind chaotic darkness and

glorious
new light; a divine Universe bursting all into godlike beauty round him,
and no man to whom the like ever had befallen, what could he think

himself
to be? "Wuotan?" All men answered, "Wuotan!"--

And then consider what mere Time will do in such cases; how if a man was
great while living, he becomes tenfold greater when dead. What an

enormous
camera-obscura magnifier is Tradition! How a thing grows in the human
Memory, in the human Imagination, when love, worship and all that lies in
the human Heart, is there to encourage it. And in the darkness, in the
entire ignorance; without date or document, no book, no Arundel-marble;
only here and there some dumb monumental cairn. Why, in thirty or forty
years, were there no books, any great man would grow _mythic_, the
contemporaries who had seen him, being once all dead. And in three

hundred
years, and in three thousand years--! To attempt _theorizing_ on such
matters would profit little: they are matters which refuse to be
theoremed and diagramed; which Logic ought to know that she _cannot_
speak of. Enough for us to discern, far in the uttermost distance, some
gleam as of a small real light shining in the centre of that enormous
camera-obscure image; to discern that the centre of it all was not a
madness and nothing, but a sanity and something.

This light, kindled in the great dark vortex of the Norse Mind, dark but
living, waiting only for light; this is to me the centre of the whole.

How
such light will then shine out, and with wondrous thousand-fold expansion
spread itself, in forms and colors, depends not on _it_, so much as on

the
National Mind recipient of it. The colors and forms of your light will

be
those of the _cut-glass_ it has to shine through. --Curious to think how,
for every man, any the truest fact is modelled by the nature of the man!

I
said, The earnest man, speaking to his brother men, must always have

stated
what seemed to him a _fact_, a real Appearance of Nature. But the way in
which such Appearance or fact shaped itself, --what sort of _fact_ it

became
for him, --was and is modified by his own laws of thinking; deep, subtle,
but universal, ever-operating laws. The world of Nature, for every man,

is
the Fantasy of Himself. this world is the multiplex "Image of his own
Dream." Who knows to what unnamable subtleties of spiritual law all

these
Pagan Fables owe their shape! The number Twelve, divisiblest of all,

which
could be halved, quartered, parted into three, into six, the most
remarkable number, --this was enough to determine the _Signs of the

Zodiac_,
the number of Odin's _Sons_, and innumerable other Twelves. Any vague
rumor of number had a tendency to settle itself into Twelve. So with
regard to every other matter. And quite unconsciously too, --with no

notion
of building up " Allegories " ! But the fresh clear glance of those First
Ages would be prompt in discerning the secret relations of things, and
wholly open to obey these. Schiller finds in the _Cestus of Venus_ an
everlasting aesthetic truth as to the nature of all Beauty; curious: --but
he is careful not to insinuate that the old Greek Mythists had any notion
of lecturing about the "Philosophy of Criticism"! --On the whole, we must
leave those boundless regions. Cannot we conceive that Odin was a

reality?
Error indeed, error enough: but sheer falsehood, idle fables, allegory
aforethought, --we will not believe that our Fathers believed in these.

Odin's _Runes_ are a significant feature of him. Runes, and the miracles
of "magic" he worked by them, make a great feature in tradition. Runes

are
the Scandinavian Alphabet; suppose Odin to have been the inventor of
Letters, as well as "magic," among that people! It is the greatest
invention man has ever made! this of marking down the unseen thought

that
is in him by written characters. It is a kind of second speech, almost

as
miraculous as the first. You remember the astonishment and incredulity

of
Atahualpa the Peruvian King; how he made the Spanish Soldier who was
guarding him scratch _Dios_ on his thumb-nail, that he might try the next
soldier with it, to ascertain whether such a miracle was possible. If

Odin
brought Letters among his people, he might work magic enough!

Writing by Runes has some air of being original among the Norsemen: not

a
Phoenician Alphabet, but a native Scandinavian one. Snorro tells us
farther that Odin invented Poetry; the music of human speech, as well as
that miraculous runic marking of it. Transport yourselves into the early
childhood of nations; the first beautiful morning-light of our Europe,

when
all yet lay in fresh young radiance as of a great sunrise, and our Europe
was first beginning to think, to be! Wonder, hope; infinite radiance of
hope and wonder, as of a young child's thoughts, in the hearts of these
strong men! Strong sons of Nature; and here was not only a wild Captain
and Fighter; discerning with his wild flashing eyes what to do, with his
wild lion-heart daring and doing it; but a Poet too, all that we mean by

a
Poet, Prophet, great devout Thinker and Inventor, --as the truly Great Man
ever is. A Hero is a Hero at all points; in the soul and thought of him
first of all. This Odin, in his rude semi-articulate way, had a word to
speak. A great heart laid open to take in this great Universe, and man's

Life here, and utter a great word about it. A Hero, as I say, in his own rude manner; a wise, gifted, noble-hearted man. And now, if we still admire such a man beyond all others, what must these wild Norse souls, first awakened into thinking, have made of him! To them, as yet without names for it, he was noble and noblest; Hero, Prophet, God; _Wuotan_, the greatest of all. Thought is Thought, however it speak or spell itself. Intrinsically, I conjecture, this Odin must have been of the same sort of stuff as the greatest kind of men. A great thought in the wild deep

heart
of him! The rough words he articulated, are they not the rudimental

roots
of those English words we still use? He worked so, in that obscure element. But he was as a _light_ kindled in it; a light of Intellect,

rude
Nobleness of heart, the only kind of lights we have yet; a Hero, as I

say:
and he had to shine there, and make his obscure element a little lighter, --as is still the task of us all.

We will fancy him to be the Type Norseman; the finest Teuton whom that

race
had yet produced. The rude Norse heart burst up into _boundless_ admiration round him; into adoration. He is as a root of so many great things; the fruit of him is found growing from deep thousands of years, over the whole field of Teutonic Life. Our own Wednesday, as I said, is

it
not still Odin's Day? Wednesbury, Wansborough, Wanstead, Wandsworth:

Odin
grew into England too, these are still leaves from that root! He was the Chief God to all the Teutonic Peoples; their Pattern Norseman; --in such

way
did _they_ admire their Pattern Norseman; that was the fortune he had in the world.

Thus if the man Odin himself have vanished utterly, there is this huge Shadow of him which still projects itself over the whole History of his People. For this Odin once admitted to be God, we can understand well

that
the whole Scandinavian Scheme of Nature, or dim No-scheme, whatever it might before have been, would now begin to develop itself altogether differently, and grow thenceforth in a new manner. What this Odin saw into, and taught with his runes and his rhymes, the whole Teutonic People laid to heart and carried forward. His way of thought became their way

of
thought: --such, under new conditions, is the history of every great

thinker
still. In gigantic confused lineaments, like some enormous

camera-obscure
shadow thrown upwards from the dead deeps of the Past, and covering the whole Northern Heaven, is not that Scandinavian Mythology in some sort

the
Portraiture of this man Odin? The gigantic image of _his_ natural face, legible or not legible there, expanded and confused in that manner! Ah, Thought, I say, is always Thought. No great man lives in vain. The History of the world is but the Biography of great men.

To me there is something very touching in this primeval figure of
 Heroism;
 in such artless, helpless, but hearty entire reception of a Hero by his
 fellow-men. Never so helpless in shape, it is the noblest of feelings,
 and
 a feeling in some shape or other perennial as man himself. If I could
 show
 in any measure, what I feel deeply for a long time now, That it is the
 vital element of manhood, the soul of man's history here in our
 world, --it
 would be the chief use of this discoursing at present. We do not now
 call
 our great men Gods, nor admire _without_ limit; ah no, _with_ limit
 enough!
 But if we have no great men, or do not admire at all, --that were a still
 worse case.

This poor Scandinavian Hero-worship, that whole Norse way of looking at
 the
 Universe, and adjusting oneself there, has an indestructible merit for
 us.
 A rude childlike way of recognizing the divineness of Nature, the
 divineness of Man; most rude, yet heartfelt, robust, giantlike;
 betokening
 what a giant of a man this child would yet grow to! --It was a truth, and
 is
 none. Is it not as the half-dumb stifled voice of the long-buried
 generations of our own Fathers, calling out of the depths of ages to us,
 in
 whose veins their blood still runs: "This then, this is what we made of
 the world: this is all the image and notion we could form to ourselves
 of
 this great mystery of a Life and Universe. Despise it not. You are
 raised
 high above it, to large free scope of vision; but you too are not yet at
 the top. No, your notion too, so much enlarged, is but a partial,
 imperfect one; that matter is a thing no man will ever, in time or out of
 time, comprehend; after thousands of years of ever-new expansion, man
 will
 find himself but struggling to comprehend again a part of it: the thing
 is
 larger shall man, not to be comprehended by him; an Infinite thing!"

The essence of the Scandinavian, as indeed of all Pagan Mythologies, we
 found to be recognition of the divineness of Nature; sincere communion of
 man with the mysterious invisible Powers visibly seen at work in the
 world
 round him. This, I should say, is more sincerely done in the
 Scandinavian
 than in any Mythology I know. Sincerity is the great characteristic of

it.

Superior sincerity (far superior) consoles us for the total want of old Grecian grace. Sincerity, I think, is better than grace. I feel that these old Northmen were looking into Nature with open eye and soul: most earnest, honest; childlike, and yet manlike; with a great-hearted simplicity and depth and freshness, in a true, loving, admiring,

unfearing

way. A right valiant, true old race of men. Such recognition of Nature one finds to be the chief element of Paganism; recognition of Man, and

his

Moral Duty, though this too is not wanting, comes to be the chief element only in purer forms of religion. Here, indeed, is a great distinction

and

epoch in Human Beliefs; a great landmark in the religious development of Mankind. Man first puts himself in relation with Nature and her Powers, wonders and worships over those; not till a later epoch does he discern that all Power is Moral, that the grand point is the distinction for him

of

Good and Evil, of Thou shalt and Thou shalt not.

With regard to all these fabulous delineations in the Edda, I will remark, moreover, as indeed was already hinted, that most probably they must have been of much newer date; most probably, even from the first,

were

comparatively idle for the old Norsemen, and as it were a kind of Poetic sport. Allegory and Poetic Delineation, as I said above, cannot be religious Faith; the Faith itself must first be there, then Allegory

enough

will gather round it, as the fit body round its soul. The Norse Faith, I can well suppose, like other Faiths, was most active while it lay mainly

in

the silent state, and had not yet much to say about itself, still less to sing.

Among those shadowy Edda matters, amid all that fantastic congeries of assertions, and traditions, in their musical Mythologies, the main practical belief a man could have was probably not much more than this:

of

the Valkyrs and the Hall of Odin; of an inflexible Destiny; and

that

the one thing needful for a man was to be brave. The Valkyrs are Choosers of the Slain: a Destiny inexorable, which it is useless trying

to

bend or soften, has appointed who is to be slain; this was a fundamental point for the Norse believer; --as indeed it is for all earnest men everywhere, for a Mahomet, a Luther, for a Napoleon too. It lies at the basis this for every such man; it is the woof out of which his whole

system

of thought is woven. The Valkyrs; and then that these Choosers lead the brave to a heavenly Hall of Odin; only the base and slavish being thrust elsewhither, into the realms of Hela the Death-goddess: I take

this

to have been the soul of the whole Norse Belief. They understood in

their

heart that it was indispensable to be brave; that Odin would have no

favor

for them, but despise and thrust them out, if they were not brave. Consider too whether there is not something in this! It is an

everlasting

duty, valid in our day as in that, the duty of being brave. Valor is still value. The first duty for a man is still that of subduing

Fear.

We must get rid of Fear; we cannot act at all till then. A man's acts

are

slavish, not true but specious; his very thoughts are false, he thinks

too

as a slave and coward, till he have got Fear under his feet. Odin's

creed,

if we disentangle the real kernel of it, is true to this hour. A man

shall

and must be valiant; he must march forward, and quit himself like a man, --trusting imperturbably in the appointment and choice of the upper Powers; and, on the whole, not fear at all. Now and always, the completeness of his victory over Fear will determine how much of a man he is.

It is doubtless very savage that kind of valor of the old Northmen.

Snorro

tells us they thought it a shame and misery not to die in battle; and if natural death seemed to be coming on, they would cut wounds in their

flesh,

that Odin might receive them as warriors slain. Old kings, about to die, had their body laid into a ship; the ship sent forth, with sails set and slow fire burning it; that, once out at sea, it might blaze up in flame, and in such manner bury worthily the old hero, at once in the sky and in the ocean! Wild bloody valor; yet valor of its kind; better, I say, than none. In the old Sea-kings too, what an indomitable rugged energy!

Silent, with closed lips, as I fancy them, unconscious that they were specially brave; defying the wild ocean with its monsters, and all men

and

things; --progenitors of our own Blakes and Nelsons! No Homer sang these Norse Sea-kings; but Agamemnon's was a small audacity, and of small fruit in the world, to some of them; --to Hrolf's of Normandy, for instance! Hrolf, or Rollo Duke of Normandy, the wild Sea-king, has a share in governing England at this hour.

Nor was it altogether nothing, even that wild sea-roving and battling, through so many generations. It needed to be ascertained which was the strongest kind of men; who were to be ruler over whom. Among the Northland Sovereigns, too, I find some who got the title Wood-cutter; Forest-felling Kings. Much lies in that. I suppose at bottom many of

them

were forest-fellers as well as fighters, though the Skalds talk mainly of the latter, --misleading certain critics not a little; for no nation of

men

could ever live by fighting alone; there could not produce enough come

out

of that! I suppose the right good fighter was oftenest also the right

good

forest-feller, --the right good improver, discernor, doer and worker in every kind; for true valor, different enough from ferocity, is the basis

of
all. A more legitimate kind of valor that; showing itself against the
untamed Forests and dark brute Powers of Nature, to conquer Nature for

us.
In the same direction have not we their descendants since carried it far?
May such valor last forever with us!

That the man Odin, speaking with a Hero's voice and heart, as with an
impressiveness out of Heaven, told his People the infinite importance of
Valor, how man thereby became a god; and that his People, feeling a
response to it in their own hearts, believed this message of his, and
thought it a message out of Heaven, and him a Divinity for telling it

them:
this seems to me the primary seed-grain of the Norse Religion, from which
all manner of mythologies, symbolic practices, speculations, allegories,
songs and sagas would naturally grow. Grow, --how strangely! I called it

a
small light shining and shaping in the huge vortex of Norse darkness.

Yet
the darkness itself was alive; consider that. It was the eager
inarticulate uninstructed Mind of the whole Norse People, longing only to
become articulate, to go on articulating ever farther! The living

doctrine
grows, grows; --like a Banyan-tree; the first seed is the essential

thing:
any branch strikes itself down into the earth, becomes a new root; and

so,
in endless complexity, we have a whole wood, a whole jungle, one seed the
parent of it all. Was not the whole Norse Religion, accordingly, in some
sense, what we called "the enormous shadow of this man's likeness"?
Critics trace some affinity in some Norse mythuses, of the Creation and
such like, with those of the Hindoos. The Cow Adumbla, "licking the rime
from the rocks," has a kind of Hindoo look. A Hindoo Cow, transported

into
frosty countries. Probably enough; indeed we may say undoubtedly, these
things will have a kindred with the remotest lands, with the earliest
times. Thought does not die, but only is changed. The first man that
began to think in this Planet of ours, he was the beginner of all. And
then the second man, and the third man; --nay, every true Thinker to this
hour is a kind of Odin, teaches men his way of thought, spreads a

shadow
of his own likeness over sections of the History of the World.

Of the distinctive poetic character or merit of this Norse Mythology I

have
not room to speak; nor does it concern us much. Some wild Prophecies we
have, as the Voluspa in the Elder Edda; of a rapt, earnest, sibylline
sort. But they were comparatively an idle adjunct of the matter, men who
as it were but toyed with the matter, these later Skalds; and it is

their
songs chiefly that survive. In later centuries, I suppose, they would go
on singing, poetically symbolizing, as our modern Painters paint, when it
was no longer from the innermost heart, or not from the heart at all.

This
is everywhere to be well kept in mind.

Gray's fragments of Norse Lore, at any rate, will give one no notion of it;--any more than Pope will of Homer. It is no square-built gloomy

palace

of black ashlar marble, shrouded in awe and horror, as Gray gives it us: no; rough as the North rocks, as the Iceland deserts, it is; with a heartiness, homeliness, even a tint of good humor and robust mirth in the middle of these fearful things. The strong old Norse heart did not go

upon

theatrical sublimities; they had not time to tremble. I like much their robust simplicity; their veracity, directness of conception. Thor "draws down his brows" in a veritable Norse rage; "grasps his hammer till the _knuckles grow white_." Beautiful traits of pity too, an honest pity. Balder "the white God" dies; the beautiful, benignant; he is the Sungod. They try all Nature for a remedy; but he is dead. Frigga, his mother, sends Hermoder to seek or see him: nine days and nine nights he rides through gloomy deep valleys, a labyrinth of gloom; arrives at the Bridge with its gold roof: the Keeper says, "Yes, Balder did pass here; but the Kingdom of the Dead is down yonder, far towards the North." Hermoder

rides

on; leaps Hell-gate, Hela's gate; does see Balder, and speak with him: Balder cannot be delivered. Inexorable! Hela will not, for Odin or any God, give him up. The beautiful and gentle has to remain there. His

Wife

had volunteered to go with him, to die with him. They shall forever

remain

there. He sends his ring to Odin; Nanna his wife sends her _thimble_ to Frigga, as a remembrance.--Ah me!--

For indeed Valor is the fountain of Pity too;--of Truth, and all that is great and good in man. The robust homely vigor of the Norse heart

attaches

one much, in these delineations. Is it not a trait of right honest strength, says Uhland, who has written a fine _Essay_ on Thor, that the

old

Norse heart finds its friend in the Thunder-god? That it is not

frightened

away by his thunder; but finds that Summer-heat, the beautiful noble summer, must and will have thunder withal! The Norse heart _loves_ this Thor and his hammer-bolt; sports with him. Thor is Summer-heat: the god of Peaceable Industry as well as Thunder. He is the Peasant's friend;

his

true henchman and attendant is Thialfi, _Manual Labor_. Thor himself engages in all manner of rough manual work, scorns no business for its plebeianism; is ever and anon travelling to the country of the Jotuns, harrying those chaotic Frost-monsters, subduing them, at least

straitening

and damaging them. There is a great broad humor in some of these things.

Thor, as we saw above, goes to Jotun-land, to seek Hymir's Caldron, that the Gods may brew beer. Hymir the huge Giant enters, his gray beard all full of hoar-frost; splits pillars with the very glance of his eye; Thor, after much rough tumult, snatches the Pot, claps it on his head; the "handles of it reach down to his heels." The Norse Skald has a kind of loving sport with Thor. This is the Hymir whose cattle, the critics have discovered, are Icebergs. Huge untutored Brobdingnag genius,--needing

only

to be tamed down; into Shakspeares, Dantes, Goethes! It is all gone now,

that old Norse work, --Thor the Thunder-god changed into Jack the Giant-killer: but the mind that made it is here yet. How strangely

things

grow, and die, and do not die! There are twigs of that great world-tree

of

Norse Belief still curiously traceable. This poor Jack of the Nursery, with his miraculous shoes of swiftness, coat of darkness, sword of sharpness, he is one. _Hynde Etin_, and still more decisively _Red Etin

of

Ireland_, _in_ the Scottish Ballads, these are both derived from

Norseland;

Etin is evidently a _Jotun_. Nay, Shakspeare's _Hamlet_ is a twig too

of

this same world-tree; there seems no doubt of that. Hamlet, _Amleth_ I find, is really a mythic personage; and his Tragedy, of the poisoned Father, poisoned asleep by drops in his ear, and the rest, is a Norse mythus! Old Saxo, as his wont was, made it a Danish history; Shakspeare, out of Saxo, made it what we see. That is a twig of the world-tree that has _grown_, I think; --by nature or accident that one has grown!

In fact, these old Norse songs have a _truth_ in them, an inward

perennial

truth and greatness, --as, indeed, all must have that can very long

preserve

itself by tradition alone. It is a greatness not of mere body and

gigantic

bulk, but a rude greatness of soul. There is a sublime uncomplaining melancholy traceable in these old hearts. A great free glance into the very deeps of thought. They seem to have seen, these brave old Northmen, what Meditation has taught all men in all ages, That this world is after all but a show, --a phenomenon or appearance, no real thing. All deep

souls

see into that, --the Hindoo Mythologist, the German Philosopher, --the Shakspeare, the earnest Thinker, wherever he may be:

"We are such stuff as Dreams are made of!"

One of Thor's expeditions, to Utgard (the _Outer_ Garden, central seat of Jotun-land), is remarkable in this respect. Thialfi was with him, and Loke. After various adventures, they entered upon Giant-land; wandered over plains, wild uncultivated places, among stones and trees. At nightfall they noticed a house; and as the door, which indeed formed one whole side of the house, was open, they entered. It was a simple habitation; one large hall, altogether empty. They stayed there.

Suddenly

in the dead of the night loud noises alarmed them. Thor grasped his hammer; stood in the door, prepared for fight. His companions within ran hither and thither in their terror, seeking some outlet in that rude

hall;

they found a little closet at last, and took refuge there. Neither had Thor any battle: for, lo, in the morning it turned out that the noise

had

been only the _snoring_ of a certain enormous but peaceable Giant, the Giant Skrymir, who lay peaceably sleeping near by; and this that they

took

for a house was merely his _Glove_, thrown aside there; the door was the

Glove-wrist; the little closet they had fled into was the Thumb! Such a glove; --I remark too that it had not fingers as ours have, but only a thumb, and the rest undivided: a most ancient, rustic glove!

Skrymir now carried their portmanteau all day; Thor, however, had his own suspicions, did not like the ways of Skrymir; determined at night to put

an end to him as he slept. Raising his hammer, he struck down into the Giant's face a right thunder-bolt blow, of force to rend rocks. The

Giant merely awoke; rubbed his cheek, and said, Did a leaf fall? Again Thor struck, so soon as Skrymir again slept; a better blow than before; but

the Giant only murmured, Was that a grain of sand? Thor's third stroke was with both his hands (the "knuckles white" I suppose), and seemed to dint deep into Skrymir's visage; but he merely checked his snore, and

remarked, There must be sparrows roosting in this tree, I think; what is that they have dropt?--At the gate of Utgard, a place so high that you had to

"strain your neck bending back to see the top of it," Skrymir went his ways.

Thor and his companions were admitted; invited to take share in the games

going on. To Thor, for his part, they handed a Drinking-horn; it was a common feat, they told him, to drink this dry at one draught. Long and

fiercely, three times over, Thor drank; but made hardly any impression. He was a weak child, they told him: could he lift that Cat he saw there? Small

as the feat seemed, Thor with his whole godlike strength could not; he bent

up the creature's back, could not raise its feet off the ground, could at

the utmost raise one foot. Why, you are no man, said the Utgard people;

there is an Old Woman that will wrestle you! Thor, heartily ashamed, seized

this haggard Old Woman; but could not throw her.

And now, on their quitting Utgard, the chief Jotun, escorting them

politely a little way, said to Thor: "You are beaten then: --yet be not so much ashamed; there was deception of appearance in it. That Horn you tried to drink was the Sea; you did make it ebb; but who could drink that, the bottomless! The Cat you would have lifted, --why, that is the Midgard-snake, the Great World-serpent, which, tail in mouth, girds and keeps up the whole created world; had you torn that up, the world must have rushed to ruin! As for the Old Woman, she was Time, Old Age, Duration: with her what can wrestle? No man nor no god with her; gods or men, she prevails over all! And then those three strokes you struck, --look at

these three valleys; your three strokes made these!" Thor looked at his attendant Jotun: it was Skrymir; --it was, say Norse critics, the old

chaotic rocky _Earth_ in person, and that glove-_house_ was some Earth-cavern! But Skrymir had vanished; Utgard with its sky-high gates, when Thor grasped his hammer to smite them, had gone to air; only the Giant's voice was heard mocking: "Better come no more to Jotunheim!"--

This is of the allegoric period, as we see, and half play, not of the prophetic and entirely devout: but as a mythus is there not real antique Norse gold in it? More true metal, rough from the Mimer-stithy, than in many a famed Greek Mythus _shaped_ far better! A great broad Brobdignag grin of true humor is in this Skrymir; mirth resting on earnestness and sadness, as the rainbow on black tempest: only a right valiant heart is capable of that. It is the grim humor of our own Ben Jonson, rare old

Ben;

runs in the blood of us, I fancy; for one catches tones of it, under a still other shape, out of the American Backwoods.

That is also a very striking conception that of the _Ragnarok_, Consummation, or _Twilight of the Gods_. It is in the _Voluspa_ Song; seemingly a very old, prophetic idea. The Gods and Jotuns, the divine Powers and the chaotic brute ones, after long contest and partial victory by the former, meet at last in universal world-embracing wrestle and

duel;

World-serpent against Thor, strength against strength; mutually

extinctive;

and ruin, "twilight" sinking into darkness, swallows the created

Universe.

The old Universe with its Gods is sunk; but it is not final death: there is to be a new Heaven and a new Earth; a higher supreme God, and Justice

to

reign among men. Curious: this law of mutation, which also is a law written in man's inmost thought, had been deciphered by these old earnest Thinkers in their rude style; and how, though all dies, and even gods

die,

yet all death is but a phoenix fire-death, and new-birth into the Greater and the Better! It is the fundamental Law of Being for a creature made

of

Time, living in this Place of Hope. All earnest men have seen into it;

may

still see into it.

And now, connected with this, let us glance at the _last_ mythus of the appearance of Thor; and end there. I fancy it to be the latest in date

of

all these fables; a sorrowing protest against the advance of Christianity, --set forth reproachfully by some Conservative Pagan. King Olaf has been harshly blamed for his over-zeal in introducing

Christianity;

surely I should have blamed him far more for an under-zeal in that! He paid dear enough for it; he died by the revolt of his Pagan people, in battle, in the year 1033, at Stichelstad, near that Drontheim, where the chief Cathedral of the North has now stood for many centuries, dedicated gratefully to his memory as _Saint_ Olaf. The mythus about Thor is to

this

effect. King Olaf, the Christian Reform King, is sailing with fit escort along the shore of Norway, from haven to haven; dispensing justice, or doing other royal work: on leaving a certain haven, it is found that a stranger, of grave eyes and aspect, red beard, of stately robust figure, has stepped in. The courtiers address him; his answers surprise by their

pertinency and depth: at length he is brought to the King. The stranger's conversation here is not less remarkable, as they sail along the beautiful shore; but after some time, he addresses King Olaf thus: "Yes, King Olaf, it is all beautiful, with the sun shining on it there; green, fruitful, a right fair home for you; and many a sore day had Thor, many a wild fight with the rock Jotuns, before he could make it so. And now you seem minded to put away Thor. King Olaf, have a care!" said the stranger, drawing down his brows; --and when they looked again, he was nowhere to be found. --This is the last appearance of Thor on the stage of this world!

Do we not see well enough how the Fable might arise, without unveracity on the part of any one? It is the way most Gods have come to appear among men: thus, if in Pindar's time "Neptune was seen once at the Nemean Games," what was this Neptune too but a "stranger of noble grave aspect," --fit to be "seen"! There is something pathetic, tragic for me in this last voice of Paganism. Thor is vanished, the whole Norse world has vanished; and will not return ever again. In like fashion to that, pass away the highest things. All things that have been in this world, all things that are or will be in it, have to vanish: we have our sad farewell to give them.

That Norse Religion, a rude but earnest, sternly impressive _Consecration of Valor_ (so we may define it), sufficed for these old valiant Northmen. Consecration of Valor is not a bad thing! We will take it for good, so

far as it goes. Neither is there no use in _knowing_ something about this old Paganism of our Fathers. Unconsciously, and combined with higher things, it is in us yet, that old Faith withal! To know it consciously, brings us into closer and clearer relation with the Past, --with our own possessions in the Past. For the whole Past, as I keep repeating, is the possession of the Present; the Past had always something _true_, and is a precious possession. In a different time, in a different place, it is always some other _side_ of our common Human Nature that has been developing itself. The actual True is the sum of all these; not any one of them by itself constitutes what of Human Nature is hitherto developed. Better to know them all than misknow them. "To which of these Three Religions do you specially adhere?" inquires Meister of his Teacher. "To all the Three!" answers the other: "To all the Three; for they by their union first constitute the True Religion."

[May 8, 1840.]
LECTURE II.
THE HERO AS PROPHET. MAHOMET: ISLAM.

From the first rude times of Paganism among the Scandinavians in the

North,
we advance to a very different epoch of religion, among a very different
people: Mahometanism among the Arabs. A great change; what a change and
progress is indicated here, in the universal condition and thoughts of
men!

The Hero is not now regarded as a God among his fellowmen; but as one
God-inspired, as a Prophet. It is the second phasis of Hero-worship:

the
first or oldest, we may say, has passed away without return; in the
history
of the world there will not again be any man, never so great, whom his
fellowmen will take for a god. Nay we might rationally ask, Did any set
of
human beings ever really think the man they _saw_ there standing beside
them a god, the maker of this world? Perhaps not: it was usually some
man
they remembered, or _had_ seen. But neither can this any more be. The
Great Man is not recognized henceforth as a god any more.

It was a rude gross error, that of counting the Great Man a god. Yet let
us say that it is at all times difficult to know _what_ he is, or how to
account of him and receive him! The most significant feature in the
history of an epoch is the manner it has of welcoming a Great Man. Ever,
to the true instincts of men, there is something godlike in him. Whether
they shall take him to be a god, to be a prophet, or what they shall take
him to be? that is ever a grand question; by their way of answering

that,
we shall see, as through a little window, into the very heart of these
men's spiritual condition. For at bottom the Great Man, as he comes from
the hand of Nature, is ever the same kind of thing: Odin, Luther,

Johnson,
Burns; I hope to make it appear that these are all originally of one

stuff;
that only by the world's reception of them, and the shapes they assume,

are
they so immeasurably diverse. The worship of Odin astonishes us, --to

fall
prostrate before the Great Man, into _deliquium_ of love and wonder over
him, and feel in their hearts that he was a denizen of the skies, a god!
This was imperfect enough: but to welcome, for example, a Burns as we

did,
was that what we can call perfect? The most precious gift that Heaven

can
give to the Earth; a man of "genius" as we call it; the Soul of a Man
actually sent down from the skies with a God's-message to us, --this we
waste away as an idle artificial firework, sent to amuse us a little, and
sink it into ashes, wreck and ineffectuality: _such_ reception of a

Great
Man I do not call very perfect either! Looking into the heart of the
thing, one may perhaps call that of Burns a still uglier phenomenon,
betokening still sadder imperfections in mankind's ways, than the
Scandinavian method itself! To fall into mere unreasoning _deliquium_ of
love and admiration, was not good; but such unreasoning, nay irrational
supercilious no-love at all is perhaps still worse! --It is a thing

forever
changing, this of Hero-worship: different in each age, difficult to do
well in any age. Indeed, the heart of the whole business of the age, one
may say, is to do it well.

We have chosen Mahomet not as the most eminent Prophet; but as the one we
are freest to speak of. He is by no means the truest of Prophets; but I

do
esteem him a true one. Farther, as there is no danger of our becoming,

any
of us, Mahometans, I mean to say all the good of him I justly can. It is
the way to get at his secret: let us try to understand what he meant
with the world; what the world meant and means with him, will then be a
more answerable question. Our current hypothesis about Mahomet, that he
was a scheming Impostor, a Falsehood incarnate, that his religion is a

mere
mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to any

one.
The lies, which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are
disgraceful to ourselves only. When Pococke inquired of Grotius, Where

the
proof was of that story of the pigeon, trained to pick peas from

Mahomet's
ear, and pass for an angel dictating to him? Grotius answered that there
was no proof! It is really time to dismiss all that. The word this man
spoke has been the life-guidance now of a hundred and eighty millions of
men these twelve hundred years. These hundred and eighty millions were
made by God as well as we. A greater number of God's creatures believe

in
Mahomet's word at this hour, than in any other word whatever. Are we to
suppose that it was a miserable piece of spiritual legerdemain, this

which
so many creatures of the Almighty have lived by and died by? I, for my
part, cannot form any such supposition. I will believe most things

sooner
than that. One would be entirely at a loss what to think of this world

at
all, if quackery so grew and were sanctioned here.

Alas, such theories are very lamentable. If we would attain to knowledge
of anything in God's true Creation, let us disbelieve them wholly! They
are the product of an Age of Scepticism: they indicate the saddest
spiritual paralysis, and mere death-life of the souls of men: more

godless
theory, I think, was never promulgated in this Earth. A false man found

a
religion? Why, a false man cannot build a brick house! If he do not

know
and follow truly the properties of mortar, burnt clay and what else be
works in, it is no house that he makes, but a rubbish-heap. It will not
stand for twelve centuries, to lodge a hundred and eighty millions; it

will
fall straightway. A man must conform himself to Nature's laws, be

verily

in communion with Nature and the truth of things, or Nature will answer him, No, not at all! Speciosities are specious--ah me!--a Cagliostro,

many

Cagliostros, prominent world-leaders, do prosper by their quackery, for a day. It is like a forged bank-note; they get it passed out of their worthless hands: others, not they, have to smart for it. Nature bursts

up

in fire-flames, French Revolutions and such like, proclaiming with

terrible

veracity that forged notes are forged.

But of a Great Man especially, of him I will venture to assert that it is incredible he should have been other than true. It seems to me the

primary

foundation of him, and of all that can lie in him, this. No Mirabeau, Napoleon, Burns, Cromwell, no man adequate to do anything, but is first

of

all in right earnest about it; what I call a sincere man. I should say sincerity, a deep, great, genuine sincerity, is the first

characteristic

of all men in any way heroic. Not the sincerity that calls itself

sincere;

ah no, that is a very poor matter indeed; --a shallow braggart conscious sincerity; oftenest self-conceit mainly. The Great Man's sincerity is of the kind he cannot speak of, is not conscious of: nay, I suppose, he is conscious rather of insincerity; for what man can walk accurately by the law of truth for one day? No, the Great Man does not boast himself sincere, far from that; perhaps does not ask himself if he is so: I

would

say rather, his sincerity does not depend on himself; he cannot help

being

sincere! The great Fact of Existence is great to him. Fly as he will,

he

cannot get out of the awful presence of this Reality. His mind is so

made;

he is great by that, first of all. Fearful and wonderful, real as Life, real as Death, is this Universe to him. Though all men should forget its truth, and walk in a vain show, he cannot. At all moments the

Flame-image

glares in upon him; undeniable, there, there!--I wish you to take this as my primary definition of a Great Man. A little man may have this, it is competent to all men that God has made: but a Great Man cannot be

without

it.

Such a man is what we call an original man; he comes to us at

first-hand.

A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us. We

may

call him Poet, Prophet, God; --in one way or other, we all feel that the words he utters are as no other man's words. Direct from the Inner Fact

of

things; --he lives, and has to live, in daily communion with that.

Hearsays

cannot hide it from him; he is blind, homeless, miserable, following hearsays; it glares in upon him. Really his utterances, are they not a kind of "revelation;" --what we must call such for want of some other

name?

It is from the heart of the world that he comes; he is portion of the primal reality of things. God has made many revelations: but this man too, has not God made him, the latest and newest of all? The

"inspiration

of the Almighty giveth him understanding:" we must listen before all to him.

This Mahomet, then, we will in no wise consider as an Inanity and Theatricality, a poor conscious ambitious schemer; we cannot conceive him so. The rude message he delivered was a real one withal; an earnest confused voice from the unknown Deep. The man's words were not false,

nor

his workings here below; no Inanity and Simulacrum; a fiery mass of Life cast up from the great bosom of Nature herself. To kindle the world;

the

world's Maker had ordered it so. Neither can the faults, imperfections, insincerities even, of Mahomet, if such were never so well proved against him, shake this primary fact about him.

On the whole, we make too much of faults; the details of the business

hide

the real centre of it. Faults? The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none. Readers of the Bible above all, one would

think,

might know better. Who is called there "the man according to God's own heart"? David, the Hebrew King, had fallen into sins enough; blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer

and

ask, Is this your man according to God's heart? The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life; if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? "It is

not

in man that walketh to direct his steps." Of all acts, is not, for a

man,

repentance the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin; --that is death; the heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility and fact; is dead: it is "pure" as dead dry sand is pure. David's life and history, as written

for

us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given

of

a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will

ever

discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, sore baffled, down as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended; ever, with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose, begun anew. Poor human nature! Is not a

man's walking, in truth, always that: "a succession of falls"? Man can do no other. In this wild element of a Life, he has to struggle onwards; now fallen, deep-abased; and ever, with tears, repentance, with bleeding

heart, he has to rise again, struggle again still onwards. That his struggle

be a faithful unconquerable one: that is the question of questions. We

will put up with many sad details, if the soul of it were true. Details by themselves will never teach us what it is. I believe we misestimate Mahomet's faults even as faults: but the secret of him will never be got by dwelling there. We will leave all this behind us; and assuring ourselves that he did mean some true thing, ask candidly what it was or might be.

These Arabs Mahomet was born among are certainly a notable people. Their country itself is notable; the fit habitation for such a race. Savage inaccessible rock-mountains, great grim deserts, alternating with

beautiful strips of verdure: wherever water is, there is greenness, beauty; odoriferous balm-shrubs, date-trees, frankincense-trees. Consider that wide waste horizon of sand, empty, silent, like a sand-sea, dividing habitable place from habitable. You are all alone there, left alone with the Universe; by day a fierce sun blazing down on it with intolerable radiance; by night the great deep Heaven with its stars. Such a country

is fit for a swift-handed, deep-hearted race of men. There is something

most agile, active, and yet most meditative, enthusiastic in the Arab

character. The Persians are called the French of the East; we will call the Arabs Oriental Italians. A gifted noble people; a people of wild strong feelings, and of iron restraint over these: the characteristic of noble-mindedness, of genius. The wild Bedouin welcomes the stranger to

his tent, as one having right to all that is there; were it his worst enemy,

he will slay his foal to treat him, will serve him with sacred hospitality

for three days, will set him fairly on his way; --and then, by another law as sacred, kill him if he can. In words too as in action. They are not a loquacious people, taciturn rather; but eloquent, gifted when they do speak. An earnest, truthful kind of men. They are, as we know, of

Jewish kindred: but with that deadly terrible earnestness of the Jews they seem to combine something graceful, brilliant, which is not Jewish. They had "Poetic contests" among them before the time of Mahomet. Sale says, at Ocadh, in the South of Arabia, there were yearly fairs, and there, when

the merchandising was done, Poets sang for prizes: --the wild people gathered

to hear that.

One Jewish quality these Arabs manifest; the outcome of many or of all

high

qualities: what we may call religiosity. From of old they had been zealous worshippers, according to their light. They worshipped the

stars,

as Sabeans; worshipped many natural objects, --recognized them as symbols, immediate manifestations, of the Maker of Nature. It was wrong; and yet not wholly wrong. All God's works are still in a sense symbols of God.

Do

we not, as I urged, still account it a merit to recognize a certain inexhaustible significance, "poetic beauty" as we name it, in all natural objects whatsoever? A man is a poet, and honored, for doing that, and speaking or singing it, --a kind of diluted worship. They had many Prophets, these Arabs; Teachers each to his tribe, each according to the light he had. But indeed, have we not from of old the noblest of proofs, still palpable to every one of us, of what devoutness and

noble-mindedness

had dwelt in these rustic thoughtful peoples? Biblical critics seem

agreed

that our own Book of Job was written in that region of the world. I

call

that, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism,

reigns

in it. A noble Book; all men's Book! It is our first, oldest statement

of

the never-ending Problem, --man's destiny, and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free flowing outlines; grand in its

sincerity,

in its simplicity; in its epic melody, and repose of reconciliation.

There

is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So true every way; true eyesight and vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual: the Horse, --"hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" --he "laughs at the shaking of the spear!" Such living likenesses were

never

since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral

melody

as of the heart of mankind; --so soft, and great; as the summer midnight,

as

the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit. --

To the idolatrous Arabs one of the most ancient universal objects of worship was that Black Stone, still kept in the building called Caabah,

at

Mecca. Diodorus Siculus mentions this Caabah in a way not to be

mistaken,

as the oldest, most honored temple in his time; that is, some

half-century

before our Era. Silvestre de Sacy says there is some likelihood that the Black Stone is an aerolite. In that case, some man might see it fall

out
of Heaven! It stands now beside the Well Zemzem; the Caabah is built

over
both. A Well is in all places a beautiful affecting object, gushing out like life from the hard earth; --still more so in those hot dry countries, where it is the first condition of being. The Well Zemzem has its name from the bubbling sound of the waters, _zem-zem_; they think it is the

Well
which Hagar found with her little Ishmael in the wilderness: the

aerolite
and it have been sacred now, and had a Caabah over them, for thousands of years. A curious object, that Caabah! There it stands at this hour, in the black cloth-covering the Sultan sends it yearly; "twenty-seven cubits high;" with circuit, with double circuit of pillars, with festoon-rows of lamps and quaint ornaments: the lamps will be lighted again _this_ night, --to glitter again under the stars. An authentic fragment of the oldest Past. It is the _Keblah_ of all Moslem: from Delhi all onwards

to
Morocco, the eyes of innumerable praying men are turned towards it, five times, this day and all days: one of the notabest centres in the Habitation of Men.

It had been from the sacredness attached to this Caabah Stone and Hagar's Well, from the pilgrimings of all tribes of Arabs thither, that Mecca

took
its rise as a Town. A great town once, though much decayed now. It has

no
natural advantage for a town; stands in a sandy hollow amid bare barren hills, at a distance from the sea; its provisions, its very bread, have

to
be imported. But so many pilgrims needed lodgings: and then all places

of
pilgrimage do, from the first, become places of trade. The first day pilgrims meet, merchants have also met: where men see themselves

assembled
for one object, they find that they can accomplish other objects which depend on meeting together. Mecca became the Fair of all Arabia. And thereby indeed the chief staple and warehouse of whatever Commerce there was between the Indian and the Western countries, Syria, Egypt, even

Italy.
It had at one time a population of 100,000; buyers, forwarders of those Eastern and Western products; importers for their own behoof of

provisions
and corn. The government was a kind of irregular aristocratic republic, not without a touch of theocracy. Ten Men of a chief tribe, chosen in

some
rough way, were Governors of Mecca, and Keepers of the Caabah. The

Koreish
were the chief tribe in Mahomet's time; his own family was of that tribe. The rest of the Nation, fractioned and cut asunder by deserts, lived

under
similar rude patriarchal governments by one or several: herdsmen, carriers, traders, generally robbers too; being oftenest at war one with another, or with all: held together by no open bond, if it were not this meeting at the Caabah, where all forms of Arab Idolatry assembled in

common
adoration; --held mainly by the inward_ indissoluble bond of a common
blood
and language. In this way had the Arabs lived for long ages, unnoticed
by
the world; a people of great qualities, unconsciously waiting for the day
when they should become notable to all the world. Their idolatries
appear
to have been in a tottering state; much was getting into confusion and
fermentation among them. Obscure tidings of the most important Event
ever
transacted in this world, the Life and Death of the Divine Man in Judea,
at
once the symptom and cause of immeasurable change to all people in the
world, had in the course of centuries reached into Arabia too; and could
not but, of itself, have produced fermentation there.

It was among this Arab people, so circumstanced, in the year 570 of our
Era, that the man Mahomet was born. He was of the family of Hashem, of

the
Koreish tribe as we said; though poor, connected with the chief persons

of
his country. Almost at his birth he lost his Father; at the age of six
years his Mother too, a woman noted for her beauty, her worth and sense:
he fell to the charge of his Grandfather, an old man, a hundred years

old.
A good old man: Mahomet's Father, Abdallah, had been his youngest

favorite
son. He saw in Mahomet, with his old life-worn eyes, a century old, the
lost Abdallah come back again, all that was left of Abdallah. He loved

the
little orphan Boy greatly; used to say, They must take care of that
beautiful little Boy, nothing in their kindred was more precious than he.
At his death, while the boy was still but two years old, he left him in
charge to Abu Thaleb the eldest of the Uncles, as to him that now was

head
of the house. By this Uncle, a just and rational man as everything
betokens, Mahomet was brought up in the best Arab way.

Mahomet, as he grew up, accompanied his Uncle on trading journeys and

such
like; in his eighteenth year one finds him a fighter following his Uncle

in
war. But perhaps the most significant of all his journeys is one we find
noted as of some years' earlier date: a journey to the Fairs of Syria.
The young man here first came in contact with a quite foreign

world, --with
one foreign element of endless moment to him: the Christian Religion. I
know not what to make of that "Sergius, the Nestorian Monk," whom Abu
Thaleb and he are said to have lodged with; or how much any monk could

have
taught one still so young. Probably enough it is greatly exaggerated,

this
of the Nestorian Monk. Mahomet was only fourteen; had no language but

his
own: much in Syria must have been a strange unintelligible whirlpool to
him. But the eyes of the lad were open; glimpses of many things would
doubtless be taken in, and lie very enigmatic as yet, which were to ripen
in a strange way into views, into beliefs and insights one day. These
journeys to Syria were probably the beginning of much to Mahomet.

One other circumstance we must not forget: that he had no

school-learning;
of the thing we call school-learning none at all. The art of writing was
but just introduced into Arabia; it seems to be the true opinion that
Mahomet never could write! Life in the Desert, with its experiences, was
all his education. What of this infinite Universe he, from his dim

place,
with his own eyes and thoughts, could take in, so much and no more of it
was he to know. Curious, if we will reflect on it, this of having no
books. Except by what he could see for himself, or hear of by uncertain
rumor of speech in the obscure Arabian Desert, he could know nothing.

The
wisdom that had been before him or at a distance from him in the world,

was
in a manner as good as not there for him. Of the great brother souls,
flame-beacons through so many lands and times, no one directly

communicates
with this great soul. He is alone there, deep down in the bosom of the
Wilderness; has to grow up so, --alone with Nature and his own Thoughts.

But, from an early age, he had been remarked as a thoughtful man. His
companions named him "_Al Amin_", The Faithful." A man of truth and
fidelity; true in what he did, in what he spake and thought. They noted
that _he_ always meant something. A man rather taciturn in speech;

silent
when there was nothing to be said; but pertinent, wise, sincere, when he
did speak; always throwing light on the matter. This is the only sort of
speech _worth_ speaking! Through life we find him to have been regarded

as
an altogether solid, brotherly, genuine man. A serious, sincere

character;
yet amiable, cordial, companionable, jocose even; --a good laugh in him
withal: there are men whose laugh is as untrue as anything about them;

who
cannot laugh. One hears of Mahomet's beauty: his fine sagacious honest
face, brown florid complexion, beaming black eyes; --I somehow like too

that
vein on the brow, which swelled up black when he was in anger: like the
"_horseshoe_ vein" in Scott's _Redgauntlet_. It was a kind of feature in
the Hashem family, this black swelling vein in the brow; Mahomet had it
prominent, as would appear. A spontaneous, passionate, yet just,
true-meaning man! Full of wild faculty, fire and light; of wild worth,

all
uncultured; working out his life-task in the depths of the Desert there.

How he was placed with Kadajah, a rich Widow, as her Steward, and

travelled
in her business, again to the Fairs of Syria; how he managed all, as one
can well understand, with fidelity, adroitness; how her gratitude, her
regard for him grew: the story of their marriage is altogether a

graceful
intelligible one, as told us by the Arab authors. He was twenty-five;

she
forty, though still beautiful. He seems to have lived in a most
affectionate, peaceable, wholesome way with this wedded benefactress;
loving her truly, and her alone. It goes greatly against the impostor
theory, the fact that he lived in this entirely unexceptionable, entirely
quiet and commonplace way, till the heat of his years was done. He was
forty before he talked of any mission from Heaven. All his

irregularities,
real and supposed, date from after his fiftieth year, when the good

Kadijah
died. All his "ambition," seemingly, had been, hitherto, to live an

honest
life; his "fame," the mere good opinion of neighbors that knew him, had
been sufficient hitherto. Not till he was already getting old, the
prurient heat of his life all burnt out, and _peace_ growing to be the
chief thing this world could give him, did he start on the "career of
ambition;" and, belying all his past character and existence, set up as a
wretched empty charlatan to acquire what he could now no longer enjoy!

For
my share, I have no faith whatever in that.

Ah no: this deep-hearted Son of the Wilderness, with his beaming black
eyes and open social deep soul, had other thoughts in him than ambition.

A
silent great soul; he was one of those who cannot _but_ be in earnest;

whom
Nature herself has appointed to be sincere. While others walk in

formulas
and hearsays, contented enough to dwell there, this man could not screen
himself in formulas; he was alone with his own soul and the reality of
things. The great Mystery of Existence, as I said, glared in upon him,
with its terrors, with its splendors; no hearsays could hide that
unspeakable fact, "Here am I!" Such _sincerity_, as we named it, has in
very truth something of divine. The word of such a man is a Voice direct
from Nature's own Heart. Men do and must listen to that as to nothing
else; --all else is wind in comparison. From of old, a thousand thoughts,
in his pilgrimings and wanderings, had been in this man: What am I?

What
is this unfathomable Thing I live in, which men name Universe? What is
Life; what is Death? What am I to believe? What am I to do? The grim
rocks of Mount Hara, of Mount Sinai, the stern sandy solitudes answered
not. The great Heaven rolling silent overhead, with its blue-glancing
stars, answered not. There was no answer. The man's own soul, and what

of
God's inspiration dwelt there, had to answer!

It is the thing which all men have to ask themselves; which we too have

to
ask, and answer. This wild man felt it to be of _infinite_ moment; all
other things of no moment whatever in comparison. The jargon of
argumentative Greek Sects, vague traditions of Jews, the stupid routine

of
Arab Idolatry: there was no answer in these. A Hero, as I repeat, has this first distinction, which indeed we may call first and last, the

Alpha
and Omega of his whole Heroism, That he looks through the shows of things into things. Use and wont, respectable hearsay, respectable formula: all these are good, or are not good. There is something behind and

beyond
all these, which all these must correspond with, be the image of, or they are--Idolatries; "bits of black wood pretending to be God;" to the earnest soul a mockery and abomination. Idolatries never so gilded,

waited
on by heads of the Koreish, will do nothing for this man. Though all men walk by them, what good is it? The great Reality stands glaring there

upon
him. He there has to answer it, or perish miserably. Now, even now,

or
else through all Eternity never! Answer it; thou must find an answer.--Ambition? What could all Arabia do for this man; with the crown of Greek Heraclius, of Persian Chosroes, and all crowns in the

Earth;--what
could they all do for him? It was not of the Earth he wanted to hear

tell;
it was of the Heaven above and of the Hell beneath. All crowns and sovereignties whatsoever, where would they in a few brief years be? To be Sheik of Mecca or Arabia, and have a bit of gilt wood put into your hand,--will that be one's salvation? I decidedly think, not. We will leave it altogether, this impostor hypothesis, as not credible; not very tolerable even, worthy chiefly of dismissal by us.

Mahomet had been wont to retire yearly, during the month Ramadhan, into solitude and silence; as indeed was the Arab custom; a praiseworthy

custom,
which such a man, above all, would find natural and useful. Communing

with
his own heart, in the silence of the mountains; himself silent; open to

the
"small still voices:" it was a right natural custom! Mahomet was in his fortieth year, when having withdrawn to a cavern in Mount Hara, near

Mecca,
during this Ramadhan, to pass the month in prayer, and meditation on

those
great questions, he one day told his wife Kadajah, who with his household was with him or near him this year, That by the unspeakable special favor of Heaven he had now found it all out; was in doubt and darkness no

longer,
but saw it all. That all these Idols and Formulas were nothing,

miserable
bits of wood; that there was One God in and over all; and we must leave

all
Idols, and look to Him. That God is great; and that there is nothing

else

great! He is the Reality. Wooden Idols are not real; He is real. He
 made
 us at first, sustains us yet; we and all things are but the shadow of
 Him;
 a transitory garment veiling the Eternal Splendor. "_Allah akbar_", God
 is
 great; "--and then also "_Islam_", " That we must submit to God. That our
 whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever He do to
 us.
 For this world, and for the other! The thing He sends to us, were it
 death
 and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best; we resign ourselves
 to
 God. --"If this be _Islam_", says Goethe, "do we not all live in _Islam_?"
 Yes, all of us that have any moral life; we all live so. It has ever
 been
 held the highest wisdom for a man not merely to submit to
 Necessity, --Necessity will make him submit, --but to know and believe well
 that the stern thing which Necessity had ordered was the wisest, the
 best,
 the thing wanted there. To cease his frantic pretension of scanning this
 great God's-World in his small fraction of a brain; to know that it _had_
 verily, though deep beyond his soundings, a Just Law, that the soul of it
 was Good; --that his part in it was to conform to the Law of the Whole,
 and
 in devout silence follow that; not questioning it, obeying it as
 unquestionable.
 I say, this is yet the only true morality known. A man is right and
 invincible, virtuous and on the road towards sure conquest, precisely
 while
 he joins himself to the great deep Law of the World, in spite of all
 superficial laws, temporary appearances, profit-and-loss calculations; he
 is victorious while he co-operates with that great central Law, not
 victorious otherwise: --and surely his first chance of co-operating with
 it,
 or getting into the course of it, is to know with his whole soul that it
 is; that it is good, and alone good! This is the soul of Islam; it is
 properly the soul of Christianity; --for Islam is definable as a confused
 form of Christianity; had Christianity not been, neither had it been.
 Christianity also commands us, before all, to be resigned to God. We are
 to take no counsel with flesh and blood; give ear to no vain cavils, vain
 sorrows and wishes: to know that we know nothing; that the worst and
 cruellest to our eyes is not what it seems; that we have to receive
 whatsoever befalls us as sent from God above, and say, It is good and
 wise,
 God is great! "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Islam means
 in its way Denial of Self, Annihilation of Self. This is yet the highest
 Wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our Earth.
 Such light had come, as it could, to illuminate the darkness of this wild
 Arab soul. A confused dazzling splendor as of life and Heaven, in the
 great darkness which threatened to be death: he called it revelation and
 the angel Gabriel; --who of us yet can know what to call it? It is the
 "inspiration of the Almighty" that giveth us understanding. To _know_;
 to

get into the truth of anything, is ever a mystic act, --of which the best Logics can but babble on the surface. "Is not Belief the true god-announcing Miracle?" says Novalis. --That Mahomet's whole soul, set in flame with this grand Truth vouchsafed him, should feel as if it were important and the only important thing, was very natural. That

Providence had unspeakably honored him by revealing it, saving him from death and darkness; that he therefore was bound to make known the same to all creatures: this is what was meant by "Mahomet is the Prophet of God;"

this too is not without its true meaning. --

The good Kadajah, we can fancy, listened to him with wonder, with doubt: at length she answered: Yes, it was true this that he said. One can

fancy too the boundless gratitude of Mahomet; and how of all the kindnesses she had done him, this of believing the earnest struggling word he now spoke was the greatest. "It is certain," says Novalis, "my Conviction gains infinitely, the moment another soul will believe in it." It is a

boundless favor. --He never forgot this good Kadajah. Long afterwards, Ayesha his young favorite wife, a woman who indeed distinguished herself among the Moslem, by all manner of qualities, through her whole long life; this

young brilliant Ayesha was, one day, questioning him: "Now am not I better

than Kadajah? She was a widow; old, and had lost her looks: you love me

better than you did her?"--" No, by Allah!" answered Mahomet: "No, by Allah!

She believed in me when none else would believe. In the whole world I had

but one friend, and she was that!"--Seid, his Slave, also believed in him; these with his young Cousin Ali, Abu Thaleb's son, were his first

converts.

He spoke of his Doctrine to this man and that; but the most treated it

with ridicule, with indifference; in three years, I think, he had gained but thirteen followers. His progress was slow enough. His encouragement to

go on, was altogether the usual encouragement that such a man in such a case meets. After some three years of small success, he invited forty of his chief kindred to an entertainment; and there stood up and told them what his pretension was: that he had this thing to promulgate abroad to all men; that it was the highest thing, the one thing: which of them would second him in that? Amid the doubt and silence of all, young Ali, as yet

a lad of sixteen, impatient of the silence, started up, and exclaimed in passionate fierce language, That he would! The assembly, among whom was Abu Thaleb, Ali's Father, could not be unfriendly to Mahomet; yet the

sight there, of one unlettered elderly man, with a lad of sixteen, deciding on such an enterprise against all mankind, appeared ridiculous to them; the assembly broke up in laughter. Nevertheless it proved not a laughable

thing; it was a very serious thing! As for this young Ali, one cannot

but

like him. A noble-minded creature, as he shows himself, now and always afterwards; full of affection, of fiery daring. Something chivalrous in him; brave as a lion; yet with a grace, a truth and affection worthy of Christian knighthood. He died by assassination in the Mosque at Bagdad;

a

death occasioned by his own generous fairness, confidence in the fairness of others: he said, If the wound proved not unto death, they must pardon the Assassin; but if it did, then they must slay him straightway, that so they two in the same hour might appear before God, and see which side of that quarrel was the just one!

Mahomet naturally gave offence to the Koreish, Keepers of the Caabah, superintendents of the Idols. One or two men of influence had joined

him:

the thing spread slowly, but it was spreading. Naturally he gave offence to everybody: Who is this that pretends to be wiser than we all; that rebukes us all, as mere fools and worshippers of wood! Abu Thaleb the

good

Uncle spoke with him: Could he not be silent about all that; believe it all for himself, and not trouble others, anger the chief men, endanger himself and them all, talking of it? Mahomet answered: If the Sun stood on his right hand and the Moon on his left, ordering him to hold his

peace,

he could not obey! No: there was something in this Truth he had got

which

was of Nature herself; equal in rank to Sun, or Moon, or whatsoever thing Nature had made. It would speak itself there, so long as the Almighty allowed it, in spite of Sun and Moon, and all Koreish and all men and things. It must do that, and could do no other. Mahomet answered so;

and,

they say, "burst into tears." Burst into tears: he felt that Abu Thaleb was good to him; that the task he had got was no soft, but a stern and great one.

He went on speaking to who would listen to him; publishing his Doctrine among the pilgrims as they came to Mecca; gaining adherents in this place and that. Continual contradiction, hatred, open or secret danger

attended

him. His powerful relations protected Mahomet himself; but by and by, on his own advice, all his adherents had to quit Mecca, and seek refuge in Abyssinia over the sea. The Koreish grew ever angrier; laid plots, and swore oaths among them, to put Mahomet to death with their own hands.

Abu

Thaleb was dead, the good Kadajah was dead. Mahomet is not solicitous of sympathy from us; but his outlook at this time was one of the dimmest. He had to hide in caverns, escape in disguise; fly hither and thither; homeless, in continual peril of his life. More than once it seemed all over with him; more than once it turned on a straw, some rider's horse taking fright or the like, whether Mahomet and his Doctrine had not ended there, and not been heard of at all. But it was not to end so.

In the thirteenth year of his mission, finding his enemies all banded against him, forty sworn men, one out of every tribe, waiting to take his life, and no continuance possible at Mecca for him any longer, Mahomet

fled

to the place then called Yathreb, where he had gained some adherents; the place they now call Medina, or "_Medinat al Nabi_", the City of the

Prophet," from that circumstance. It lay some two hundred miles off, through rocks and deserts; not without great difficulty, in such mood as

we
may fancy, he escaped thither, and found welcome. The whole East dates

its
era from this Flight, _hegira_ as they name it: the Year 1 of this

Hegira
is 622 of our Era, the fifty-third of Mahomet's life. He was now

becoming
an old man; his friends sinking round him one by one; his path desolate, encompassed with danger: unless he could find hope in his own heart, the outward face of things was but hopeless for him. It is so with all men

in
the like case. Hitherto Mahomet had professed to publish his Religion by the way of preaching and persuasion alone. But now, driven foully out of his native country, since unjust men had not only given no ear to his earnest Heaven's-message, the deep cry of his heart, but would not even

let
him live if he kept speaking it, --the wild Son of the Desert resolved to defend himself, like a man and Arab. If the Koreish will have it so,

they
shall have it. Tidings, felt to be of infinite moment to them and all

men,
they would not listen to these; would trample them down by sheer

violence,
steel and murder: well, let steel try it then! Ten years more this Mahomet had; all of fighting of breathless impetuous toil and struggle; with what result we know.

Much has been said of Mahomet's propagating his Religion by the sword.

It
is no doubt far nobler what we have to boast of the Christian Religion, that it propagated itself peaceably in the way of preaching and

conviction.
Yet withal, if we take this for an argument of the truth or falsehood of

a
religion, there is a radical mistake in it. The sword indeed: but where will you get your sword! Every new opinion, at its starting, is

precisely
in a _minority of one_. In one man's head alone, there it dwells as yet. One man alone of the whole world believes it; there is one man against

all
men. That _he_ take a sword, and try to propagate with that, will do little for him. You must first get your sword! On the whole, a thing

will
propagate itself as it can. We do not find, of the Christian Religion either, that it always disdained the sword, when once it had got one. Charlemagne's conversion of the Saxons was not by preaching. I care

little
about the sword: I will allow a thing to struggle for itself in this world, with any sword or tongue or implement it has, or can lay hold of. We will let it preach, and pamphleteer, and fight, and to the uttermost bestir itself, and do, beak and claws, whatsoever is in it; very sure

that
it will, in the long-run, conquer nothing which does not deserve to be
conquered. What is better than itself, it cannot put away, but only what
is worse. In this great Duel, Nature herself is umpire, and can do no
wrong: the thing which is deepest-rooted in Nature, what we call

truest,
that thing and not the other will be found growing at last.

Here however, in reference to much that there is in Mahomet and his
success, we are to remember what an umpire Nature is; what a greatness,
composure of depth and tolerance there is in her. You take wheat to cast
into the Earth's bosom; your wheat may be mixed with chaff, chopped

straw,
barn-sweepings, dust and all imaginable rubbish; no matter: you cast it
into the kind just Earth; she grows the wheat, --the whole rubbish she
silently absorbs, shrouds it in, says nothing of the rubbish. The

yellow
wheat is growing there; the good Earth is silent about all the rest, --has
silently turned all the rest to some benefit too, and makes no complaint
about it! So everywhere in Nature! She is true and not a lie; and yet

so
great, and just, and motherly in her truth. She requires of a thing only
that it be genuine of heart; she will protect it if so; will not, if

not
so. There is a soul of truth in all the things she ever gave harbor to.
Alas, is not this the history of all highest Truth that comes or ever

came
into the world? The body of them all is imperfection, an element of
light in darkness: to us they have to come embodied in mere Logic, in

some
merely scientific Theorem of the Universe; which cannot be complete;
which cannot but be found, one day, incomplete, erroneous, and so die and
disappear. The body of all Truth dies; and yet in all, I say, there is a
soul which never dies; which in new and ever-nobler embodiment lives
immortal as man himself! It is the way with Nature. The genuine essence
of Truth never dies. That it be genuine, a voice from the great Deep of
Nature, there is the point at Nature's judgment-seat. What we call

pure
or impure, is not with her the final question. Not how much chaff is in
you; but whether you have any wheat. Pure? I might say to many a man:
Yes, you are pure; pure enough; but you are chaff, --insincere hypothesis,
hearsay, formality; you never were in contact with the great heart of the
Universe at all; you are properly neither pure nor impure; you are
nothing, Nature has no business with you.

Mahomet's Creed we called a kind of Christianity; and really, if we look

at
the wild rapt earnestness with which it was believed and laid to heart, I
should say a better kind than that of those miserable Syrian Sects, with
their vain janglings about Homoiou sion and Homoou sion, the head full

of
worthless noise, the heart empty and dead! The truth of it is embedded

in
portentous error and falsehood; but the truth of it makes it be believed,
not the falsehood: it succeeded by its truth. A bastard kind of
Christianity, but a living kind; with a heart-life in it; not dead,
chopping barren logic merely! Out of all that rubbish of Arab

idolatries,
argumentative theologies, traditions, subtleties, rumors and hypotheses

of
Greeks and Jews, with their idle wire-drawings, this wild man of the
Desert, with his wild sincere heart, earnest as death and life, with his
great flashing natural eyesight, had seen into the kernel of the matter.
Idolatry is nothing: these Wooden Idols of yours, "ye rub them with oil
and wax, and the flies stick on them,"--these are wood, I tell you! They
can do nothing for you; they are an impotent blasphemous presence; a

horror
and abomination, if ye knew them. God alone is; God alone has power; He
made us, He can kill us and keep us alive: "_Allah akbar_, God is

great."
Understand that His will is the best for you; that howsoever sore to

flesh
and blood, you will find it the wisest, best: you are bound to take it

so;
in this world and in the next, you have no other thing that you can do!

And now if the wild idolatrous men did believe this, and with their fiery
hearts lay hold of it to do it, in what form soever it came to them, I

say
it was well worthy of being believed. In one form or the other, I say it
is still the one thing worthy of being believed by all men. Man does
hereby become the high-priest of this Temple of a World. He is in

harmony
with the Decrees of the Author of this World; cooperating with them, not
vainly withstanding them: I know, to this day, no better definition of
Duty than that same. All that is _right_ includes itself in this of
co-operating with the real Tendency of the World: you succeed by this

(the
World's Tendency will succeed), you are good, and in the right course
there. _Homoiou sion_, _Homoou sion_, vain logical jangle, then or before

or
at any time, may jangle itself out, and go whither and how it likes:

this
is the _thing_ it all struggles to mean, if it would mean anything. If

it
do not succeed in meaning this, it means nothing. Not that Abstractions,
logical Propositions, be correctly worded or incorrectly; but that living
concrete Sons of Adam do lay this to heart: that is the important point.
Islam devoured all these vain jangling Sects; and I think had right to do
so. It was a Reality, direct from the great Heart of Nature once more.
Arab idolatries, Syrian formulas, whatsoever was not equally real, had to
go up in flame,--mere dead _fuel_, in various senses, for this which was
fire.

It was during these wild warfarings and strugglings, especially after the
Flight to Mecca, that Mahomet dictated at intervals his Sacred Book,

which
they name _Koran_, or _Reading_, "Thing to be read." This is the Work he
and his disciples made so much of, asking all the world, Is not that a
miracle? The Mahometans regard their Koran with a reverence which few
Christians pay even to their Bible. It is admitted every where as the
standard of all law and all practice; the thing to be gone upon in

speculation and life; the message sent direct out of Heaven, which this Earth has to conform to, and walk by; the thing to be read. Their Judges decide by it; all Moslem are bound to study it, seek in it for the light

of their life. They have mosques where it is all read daily; thirty relays

of priests take it up in succession, get through the whole each day. There, for twelve hundred years, has the voice of this Book, at all moments,

kept sounding through the ears and the hearts of so many men. We hear of Mahometan Doctors that had read it seventy thousand times!

Very curious: if one sought for "discrepancies of national taste," here surely were the most eminent instance of that! We also can read the

Koran; our Translation of it, by Sale, is known to be a very fair one. I must say, it is as toilsome reading as I ever undertook. A wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement; most crude, incondite; --insupportable stupidity, in short! Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran.

We read in it, as we might in the State-Paper Office, unreadable masses of lumber, that perhaps we may get some glimpses of a remarkable man. It is true we have it under disadvantages: the Arabs see more method in it

than we. Mahomet's followers found the Koran lying all in fractions, as it

had been written down at first promulgation; much of it, they say, on shoulder-blades of mutton, flung pell-mell into a chest: and they published it, without any discoverable order as to time or otherwise; --merely trying, as would seem, and this not very strictly, to put the longest chapters first. The real beginning of it, in that way, lies almost at the end: for the earliest portions were the shortest.

Read in its historical sequence it perhaps would not be so bad. Much of it, too, they say, is rhythmic; a kind of wild chanting song, in the

original. This may be a great point; much perhaps has been lost in the Translation here. Yet with every allowance, one feels it difficult to see how any mortal ever could consider this Koran as a Book written in Heaven, too

good for the Earth; as a well-written book, or indeed as a book at all; and not a bewildered rhapsody; written, so far as writing goes, as badly as almost any book ever was! So much for national discrepancies, and the standard of taste.

Yet I should say, it was not unintelligible how the Arabs might so love it.

When once you get this confused coil of a Koran fairly off your hands, and have it behind you at a distance, the essential type of it begins to disclose itself; and in this there is a merit quite other than the

literary one. If a book come from the heart, it will contrive to reach other hearts; all art and author-craft are of small amount to that. One would say the primary character of the Koran is this of its genuineness, of

its
being a _bona-fide_ book. Prideaux, I know, and others have represented

it
as a mere bundle of juggleries; chapter after chapter got up to excuse

and
varnish the author's successive sins, forward his ambitions and

quackeries:
but really it is time to dismiss all that. I do not assert Mahomet's
continual sincerity: who is continually sincere? But I confess I can

make
nothing of the critic, in these times, who would accuse him of deceit
prepnese; of conscious deceit generally, or perhaps at all; --still

more,
of living in a mere element of conscious deceit, and writing this Koran

as
a forger and juggler would have done! Every candid eye, I think, will

read
the Koran far otherwise than so. It is the confused ferment of a great
rude human soul; rude, untutored, that cannot even read; but fervent,
earnest, struggling vehemently to utter itself in words. With a kind of
breathless intensity he strives to utter himself; the thoughts crowd on

him
pell-mell: for very multitude of things to say, he can get nothing said.
The meaning that is in him shapes itself into no form of composition, is
stated in no sequence, method, or coherence; --they are not _shaped_ at

all,
these thoughts of his; flung out unshaped, as they struggle and tumble
there, in their chaotic inarticulate state. We said "stupid:" yet

natural
stupidity is by no means the character of Mahomet's Book; it is natural
uncultivation rather. The man has not studied speaking; in the haste and
pressure of continual fighting, has not time to mature himself into fit
speech. The panting breathless haste and vehemence of a man struggling

in
the thick of battle for life and salvation; this is the mood he is in! A
headlong haste; for very magnitude of meaning, he cannot get himself
articulated into words. The successive utterances of a soul in that

mood,
colored by the various vicissitudes of three-and-twenty years; now well
uttered, now worse: this is the Koran.

For we are to consider Mahomet, through these three-and-twenty years, as
the centre of a world wholly in conflict. Battles with the Koreish and
Heathen, quarrels among his own people, backslidings of his own wild

heart;
all this kept him in a perpetual whirl, his soul knowing rest no more.

In
wakeful nights, as one may fancy, the wild soul of the man, tossing amid
these vortices, would hail any light of a decision for them as a

veritable
light from Heaven; _any_ making-up of his mind, so blessed, indispensable
for him there, would seem the inspiration of a Gabriel. Forger and
juggler? No, no! This great fiery heart, seething, simmering like a

great
furnace of thoughts, was not a juggler's. His Life was a Fact to him;

this
God's Universe an awful Fact and Reality. He has faults enough. The man
was an uncultured semi-barbarous Son of Nature, much of the Bedouin still
clinging to him: we must take him for that. But for a wretched
Simulacrum, a hungry Impostor without eyes or heart, practicing for a
mess
of pottage such blasphemous swindlery, forgery of celestial documents,
continual high-treason against his Maker and Self, we will not and cannot
take him.

Sincerity, in all senses, seems to me the merit of the Koran; what had
rendered it precious to the wild Arab men. It is, after all, the first
and
last merit in a book; gives rise to merits of all kinds, --nay, at bottom,
it alone can give rise to merit of any kind. Curiously, through these
inconcoherent masses of tradition, vituperation, complaint, ejaculation in
the
Koran, a vein of true direct insight, of what we might almost call
poetry,
is found straggling. The body of the Book is made up of mere tradition,
and as it were vehement enthusiastic extempore preaching. He returns
forever to the old stories of the Prophets as they went current in the
Arab
memory: how Prophet after Prophet, the Prophet Abraham, the Prophet Hud,
the Prophet Moses, Christian and other real and fabulous Prophets, had
come
to this Tribe and to that, warning men of their sin; and been received by
them even as he Mahomet was, --which is a great solace to him. These
things
he repeats ten, perhaps twenty times; again and ever again, with
wearisome
iteration; has never done repeating them. A brave Samuel Johnson, in his
forlorn garret, might con over the Biographies of Authors in that way!
This is the great staple of the Koran. But curiously, through all this,
comes ever and anon some glance as of the real thinker and seer. He has
actually an eye for the world, this Mahomet: with a certain directness
and
rugged vigor, he brings home still, to our heart, the thing his own heart
has been opened to. I make but little of his praises of Allah, which
many
praise; they are borrowed I suppose mainly from the Hebrew, at least they
are far surpassed there. But the eye that flashes direct into the heart
of
things, and sees the truth of them; this is to me a highly interesting
object. Great Nature's own gift; which she bestows on all; but which
only
one in the thousand does not cast sorrowfully away: it is what I call
sincerity of vision; the test of a sincere heart.

Mahomet can work no miracles; he often answers impatiently: I can work
no
miracles. I? "I am a Public Preacher;" appointed to preach this

doctrine

to all creatures. Yet the world, as we can see, had really from of old been all one great miracle to him. Look over the world, says he; is it

not

wonderful, the work of Allah; wholly "a sign to you," if your eyes were open! This Earth, God made it for you; "appointed paths in it;" you can live in it, go to and fro on it. --The clouds in the dry country of

Arabia,

to Mahomet they are very wonderful: Great clouds, he says, born in the deep bosom of the Upper Immensity, where do they come from! They hang there, the great black monsters; pour down their rain-deluges "to revive

a

dead earth," and grass springs, and "tall leafy palm-trees with their date-clusters hanging round. Is not that a sign?" Your cattle

too, --Allah

made them; serviceable dumb creatures; they change the grass into milk;

you

have your clothing from them, very strange creatures; they come ranking home at evening-time, "and," adds he, "and are a credit to you!" Ships also, --he talks often about ships: Huge moving mountains, they spread

out

their cloth wings, go bounding through the water there, Heaven's wind driving them; anon they lie motionless, God has withdrawn the wind, they lie dead, and cannot stir! Miracles? cries he: What miracle would you have? Are not you yourselves there? God made you, "shaped you out of a little clay." Ye were small once; a few years ago ye were not at all.

Ye

have beauty, strength, thoughts, "ye have compassion on one another."

Old

age comes on you, and gray hairs; your strength fades into feebleness; ye sink down, and again are not. "Ye have compassion on one another:" this struck me much: Allah might have made you having no compassion on one another, --how had it been then! This is a great direct thought, a glance at first-hand into the very fact of things. Rude vestiges of poetic genius, of whatsoever is best and truest, are visible in this man. A strong untutored intellect; eyesight, heart: a strong wild man, --might have shaped himself into Poet, King, Priest, any kind of Hero.

To his eyes it is forever clear that this world wholly is miraculous. He sees what, as we said once before, all great thinkers, the rude Scandinavians themselves, in one way or other, have contrived to see:

That

this so solid-looking material world is, at bottom, in very deed,

Nothing;

is a visual and factual Manifestation of God's power and presence, --a shadow hung out by Him on the bosom of the void Infinite; nothing more. The mountains, he says, these great rock-mountains, they shall dissipate themselves "like clouds;" melt into the Blue as clouds do, and not be!

He

figures the Earth, in the Arab fashion, Sale tells us, as an immense

Plain

or flat Plate of ground, the mountains are set on that to steady it.

At

the Last Day they shall disappear "like clouds;" the whole Earth shall go spinning, whirl itself off into wreck, and as dust and vapor vanish in

the
Inane. Allah withdraws his hand from it, and it ceases to be. The
universal empire of Allah, presence everywhere of an unspeakable Power, a
Splendor, and a Terror not to be named, as the true force, essence and
reality, in all things whatsoever, was continually clear to this man.

What
a modern talks of by the name, Forces of Nature, Laws of Nature; and does
not figure as a divine thing; not even as one thing at all, but as a set

of
things, undivine enough, --salable, curious, good for propelling

steamships!

With our Sciences and Cyclopaedias, we are apt to forget the

divineness,

in those laboratories of ours. We ought not to forget it! That once

well

forgotten, I know not what else were worth remembering. Most sciences, I
think were then a very dead thing; withered, contentious, empty; --a

thistle

in late autumn. The best science, without this, is but as the dead
timber; it is not the growing tree and forest, --which gives ever-new
timber, among other things! Man cannot know either, unless he can
worship in some way. His knowledge is a pedantry, and dead thistle,
otherwise.

Much has been said and written about the sensuality of Mahomet's

Religion;

more than was just. The indulgences, criminal to us, which he permitted,
were not of his appointment; he found them practiced, unquestioned from
immemorial time in Arabia; what he did was to curtail them, restrict

them,

not on one but on many sides. His Religion is not an easy one: with
rigorous fasts, lavations, strict complex formulas, prayers five times a
day, and abstinence from wine, it did not "succeed by being an easy
religion." As if indeed any religion, or cause holding of religion,

could

succeed by that! It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to
heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense, --sugar-plums of any
kind, in this world or the next! In the meanest mortal there lies
something nobler. The poor swearing soldier, hired to be shot, has his
"honor of a soldier," different from drill-regulations and the shilling a
day. It is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things,

and

vindicate himself under God's Heaven as a god-made Man, that the poorest
son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest
day-drudge kindles into a hero. They wrong man greatly who say he is to

be

seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the
allurements that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life
of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations. Not
happiness, but something higher: one sees this even in the frivolous
classes, with their "point of honor" and the like. Not by flattering our
appetites; no, by awakening the Heroic that slumbers in every heart, can
any Religion gain followers.

Mahomet himself, after all that can be said about him, was not a sensual
man. We shall err widely if we consider this man as a common voluptuary,
intent mainly on base enjoyments, --nay on enjoyments of any kind. His

household was of the frugal est; his common diet barley-bread and water: sometimes for months there was not a fire once lighted on his hearth.

They record with just pride that he would mend his own shoes, patch his own cloak. A poor, hard-toiling, ill-provided man; careless of what vulgar

men toil for. Not a bad man, I should say; something better in him than _hunger_ of any sort, --or these wild Arab men, fighting and jostling three-and-twenty years at his hand, in close contact with him always,

would not have revered him so! They were wild men, bursting ever and anon into quarrel, into all kinds of fierce sincerity; without right worth and manhood, no man could have commanded them. They called him Prophet, you say? Why, he stood there face to face with them; bare, not enshrined in any mystery; visibly clouting his own cloak, cobbling his own shoes; fighting, counselling, ordering in the midst of them: they must have

seen what kind of a man he _was_, let him be _called_ what you like! No

emperor with his tiaras was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting. During three-and-twenty years of rough actual trial. I find something of

a veritable Hero necessary for that, of itself.

His last words are a prayer; broken ejaculations of a heart struggling

up, in trembling hope, towards its Maker. We cannot say that his religion

made him _worse_; it made him better; good, not bad. Generous things are recorded of him: when he lost his Daughter, the thing he answers is, in his own dialect, every way sincere, and yet equivalent to that of Christians, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the

name of the Lord." He answered in like manner of Seid, his emancipated well-beloved Slave, the second of the believers. Seid had fallen in the War of Tabuc, the first of Mahomet's fightings with the Greeks. Mahomet said, It was well; Seid had done his Master's work, Seid had now gone to his Master: it was all well with Seid. Yet Seid's daughter found him weeping over the body; --the old gray-haired man melting in tears! "What

do I see?" said she. --"You see a friend weeping over his friend." --He went

out for the last time into the mosque, two days before his death; asked, If

he had injured any man? Let his own back bear the stripes. If he owed any man? A voice answered, "Yes, me three drachms," borrowed on such an occasion. Mahomet ordered them to be paid: "Better be in shame now,"

said he, "than at the Day of Judgment." --You remember Kadijah, and the "No, by Allah!" Traits of that kind show us the genuine man, the brother of us all, brought visible through twelve centuries, --the veritable Son of our common Mother.

Withal I like Mahomet for his total freedom from cant. He is a rough self-helping son of the wilderness; does not pretend to be what he is

not.

There is no ostentatious pride in him; but neither does he go much upon humility: he is there as he can be, in cloak and shoes of his own clouting; speaks plainly to all manner of Persian Kings, Greek Emperors, what it is they are bound to do; knows well enough, about himself, "the respect due unto thee." In a life-and-death war with Bedouins, cruel things could not fail; but neither are acts of mercy, of noble natural

pity

and generosity wanting. Mahomet makes no apology for the one, no boast

of

the other. They were each the free dictate of his heart; each called

for,

there and then. Not a mealy-mouthed man! A candid ferocity, if the case call for it, is in him; he does not mince matters! The War of Tabuc is a thing he often speaks of: his men refused, many of them, to march on

that

occasion; pleaded the heat of the weather, the harvest, and so forth; he can never forget that. Your harvest? It lasts for a day. What will become of your harvest through all Eternity? Hot weather? Yes, it was hot; "but Hell will be hotter!" Sometimes a rough sarcasm turns up: He says to the unbelievers, Ye shall have the just measure of your deeds at that Great Day. They will be weighed out to you; ye shall not have short weight! --Everywhere he fixes the matter in his eye; he sees it: his heart, now and then, is as if struck dumb by the greatness of it.

"Assuredly," he says: that word, in the Koran, is written down sometimes as a sentence by itself: "Assuredly."

No Dilettantism in this Mahomet; it is a business of Reprobation and Salvation with him, of Time and Eternity: he is in deadly earnest about it! Dilettantism, hypothesis, speculation, a kind of amateur-search for Truth, toying and coquetting with Truth: this is the sorest sin. The

root

of all other imaginable sins. It consists in the heart and soul of the

man

never having been open to Truth; --"living in a vain show." Such a man not only utters and produces falsehoods, but is himself a falsehood. The rational moral principle, spark of the Divinity, is sunk deep in him, in quiet paralysis of life-death. The very falsehoods of Mahomet are truer than the truths of such a man. He is the insincere man:

smooth-polished,

respectable in some times and places; inoffensive, says nothing harsh to anybody; most cleanly, --just as carbonic acid is, which is death and poison.

We will not praise Mahomet's moral precepts as always of the superfinest sort; yet it can be said that there is always a tendency to good in them; that they are the true dictates of a heart aiming towards what is just

and

true. The sublime forgiveness of Christianity, turning of the other

cheek

when the one has been smitten, is not here: you are to revenge

yourself,

but it is to be in measure, not overmuch, or beyond justice. On the

other

hand, Islam, like any great Faith, and insight into the essence of man,

is

a perfect equalizer of men: the soul of one believer outweighs all

earthly
kingships; all men, according to Islam too, are equal. Mahomet insists

not
on the propriety of giving alms, but on the necessity of it: he marks

down
by law how much you are to give, and it is at your peril if you neglect.
The tenth part of a man's annual income, whatever that may be, is the
property of the poor, of those that are afflicted and need help. Good
all this: the natural voice of humanity, of pity and equity dwelling in
the heart of this wild Son of Nature speaks _so_.

Mahomet's Paradise is sensual, his Hell sensual: true; in the one and

the
other there is enough that shocks all spiritual feeling in us. But we

are
to recollect that the Arabs already had it so; that Mahomet, in whatever

he
changed of it, softened and diminished all this. The worst sensualities,
too, are the work of doctors, followers of his, not his work. In the

Koran
there is really very little said about the joys of Paradise; they are
intimated rather than insisted on. Nor is it forgotten that the highest
joys even there shall be spiritual; the pure Presence of the Highest,

this
shall infinitely transcend all other joys. He says, "Your salutation

shall
be, Peace." _Salam_, Have Peace!--the thing that all rational souls long
for, and seek, vainly here below, as the one blessing. "Ye shall sit on
seats, facing one another: all grudges shall be taken away out of your
hearts." All grudges! Ye shall love one another freely; for each of

you,
in the eyes of his brothers, there will be Heaven enough!

In reference to this of the sensual Paradise and Mahomet's sensuality,

the
sorest chapter of all for us, there were many things to be said; which it
is not convenient to enter upon here. Two remarks only I shall make, and
therewith leave it to your candor. The first is furnished me by Goethe;

it
is a casual hint of his which seems well worth taking note of. In one of
his Delineations, in _Meister's Travels_ it is, the hero comes upon a
Society of men with very strange ways, one of which was this: "We
require," says the Master, "that each of our people shall restrict

himself
in one direction," shall go right against his desire in one matter, and
make himself do the thing he does not wish, "should we allow him the
greater latitude on all other sides." There seems to me a great justness
in this. Enjoying things which are pleasant; that is not the evil: it

is
the reducing of our moral self to slavery by them that is. Let a man
assert withal that he is king over his habitudes; that he could and would
shake them off, on cause shown: this is an excellent law. The Month
Ramadhan for the Moslem, much in Mahomet's Religion, much in his own

Life,

bears in that direction; if not by forethought, or clear purpose of moral improvement on his part, then by a certain healthy manful instinct, which is as good.

But there is another thing to be said about the Mahometan Heaven and

Hell.

This namely, that, however gross and material they may be, they are an emblem of an everlasting truth, not always so well remembered elsewhere. That gross sensual Paradise of his; that horrible flaming Hell; the great enormous Day of Judgment he perpetually insists on: what is all this but

a

rude shadow, in the rude Bedouin imagination, of that grand spiritual

Fact,

and Beginning of Facts, which it is ill for us too if we do not all know and feel: the Infinite Nature of Duty? That man's actions here are of _infinite_ moment to him, and never die or end at all; that man, with his little life, reaches upwards high as Heaven, downwards low as Hell, and

in

his threescore years of Time holds an Eternity fearfully and wonderfully hidden: all this had burnt itself, as in flame-characters, into the wild Arab soul. As in flame and lightning, it stands written there; awful, unspeakable, ever present to him. With bursting earnestness, with a

fierce

savage sincerity, half-articulating, not able to articulate, he strives

to

speak it, bodies it forth in that Heaven and that Hell. Bodied forth in what way you will, it is the first of all truths. It is venerable under all embodiments. What is the chief end of man here below? Mahomet has answered this question, in a way that might put some of us to shame! He does not, like a Bentham, a Paley, take Right and Wrong, and calculate

the

profit and loss, ultimate pleasure of the one and of the other; and

summing

all up by addition and subtraction into a net result, ask you, Whether on the whole the Right does not preponderate considerably? No; it is not _better_ to do the one than the other; the one is to the other as life is to death, --as Heaven is to Hell. The one must in nowise be done, the

other

in nowise left undone. You shall not measure them; they are incommensurable: the one is death eternal to a man, the other is life eternal. Bentham's Utility, virtue by Profit and Loss; reducing this God's-world to a dead brute Steam-engine, the infinite celestial Soul of Man to a kind of Hay-balance for weighing hay and thistles on, pleasures and pains on: --If you ask me which gives, Mahomet or they, the beggarlier and falser view of Man and his Destinies in this Universe, I will answer, it is not Mahomet! --

On the whole, we will repeat that this Religion of Mahomet's is a kind of Christianity; has a genuine element of what is spiritually highest

looking

through it, not to be hidden by all its imperfections. The Scandinavian God _Wish_, the god of all rude men, --this has been enlarged into a

Heaven

by Mahomet; but a Heaven symbolical of sacred Duty, and to be earned by faith and well-doing, by valiant action, and a divine patience which is still more valiant. It is Scandinavian Paganism, and a truly celestial element superadded to that. Call it not false; look not at the falsehood of it, look at the truth of it. For these twelve centuries, it has been

the religion and life-guidance of the fifth part of the whole kindred of Mankind. Above all things, it has been a religion heartily _believed_. These Arabs believe their religion, and try to live by it! No

Christians,
since the early ages, or only perhaps the English Puritans in modern times,
have ever stood by their Faith as the Moslem do by theirs, --believing it wholly, fronting Time with it, and Eternity with it. This night the watchman on the streets of Cairo when he cries, "Who goes? " will hear from the passenger, along with his answer, "There is no God but God." _Allah akbar_, _Islam_, sounds through the souls, and whole daily existence, of these dusky millions. Zealous missionaries preach it abroad among

Malays,
black Papuans, brutal Idolaters; --displacing what is worse, nothing that is better or good.

To the Arab Nation it was as a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first became alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people, roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world: a Hero-Prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe: see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable, the small has grown world-great; within one century afterwards, Arabia is at Grenada on this hand, at Delhi on

that; --glancing in valor and splendor and the light of genius, Arabia shines through long ages over a great section of the world. Belief is great, life-giving.

The history of a Nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. These Arabs, the man Mahomet, and that one century, --is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark, on a world of what seemed black unnoticeable sand; but lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada! I said, the Great Man was always as lightning out of Heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame.

[May 12, 1840.]
LECTURE III.
THE HERO AS POET. DANTE: SHAKSPEARE.

The Hero as Divinity, the Hero as Prophet, are productions of old ages; not to be repeated in the new. They presuppose a certain rudeness of conception, which the progress of mere scientific knowledge puts an end to. There needs to be, as it were, a world vacant, or almost vacant of scientific forms, if men in their loving wonder are to fancy their fellow-man either a god or one speaking with the voice of a god.

Divinity

and Prophet are past. We are now to see our Hero in the less ambitious, but also less questionable, character of Poet; a character which does not pass. The Poet is a heroic figure belonging to all ages; whom all ages possess, when once he is produced, whom the newest age as the oldest may produce; --and will produce, always when Nature pleases. Let Nature send

a

Hero-soul; in no age is it other than possible that he may be shaped into

a

Poet.

Hero, Prophet, Poet, --many different names, in different times, and

places,

do we give to Great Men; according to varieties we note in them,

according

to the sphere in which they have displayed themselves! We might give

many

more names, on this same principle. I will remark again, however, as a fact not unimportant to be understood, that the different sphere constitutes the grand origin of such distinction; that the Hero can be Poet, Prophet, King, Priest or what you will, according to the kind of world he finds himself born into. I confess, I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be all sorts of men. The Poet who could

merely

sit on a chair, and compose stanzas, would never make a stanza worth

much.

He could not sing the Heroic warrior, unless he himself were at least a Heroic warrior too. I fancy there is in him the Politician, the Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher; --in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all these. So too I cannot understand how a Mirabeau, with that great glowing heart, with the fire that was in it, with the bursting

tears

that were in it, could not have written verses, tragedies, poems, and touched all hearts in that way, had his course of life and education led him thitherward. The grand fundamental character is that of Great Man; that the man be great. Napoleon has words in him which are like

Austerlitz

Battles. Louis Fourteenth's Marshals are a kind of poetical men withal; the things Turenne says are full of sagacity and genality, like sayings

of

Samuel Johnson. The great heart, the clear deep-seeing eye: there it lies; no man whatever, in what province soever, can prosper at all

without

these. Petrarch and Boccaccio did diplomatic messages, it seems, quite well: one can easily believe it; they had done things a little harder

than

these! Burns, a gifted song-writer, might have made a still better Mirabeau. Shakspeare, --one knows not what he could not have made, in

the

supreme degree.

True, there are aptitudes of Nature too. Nature does not make all great men, more than all other men, in the self-same mould. Varieties of aptitude doubtless; but infinitely more of circumstance; and far oftenest it is the latter only that are looked to. But it is as with common men in the learning of trades. You take any man, as yet a vague capability

of
a man, who could be any kind of craftsman; and make him into a smith, a
carpenter, a mason: he is then and thenceforth that and nothing else.

And
if, as Addison complains, you sometimes see a street-porter, staggering
under his load on spindle-shanks, and near at hand a tailor with the

frame
of a Samson handling a bit of cloth and small Whitechapel needle, --it
cannot be considered that aptitude of Nature alone has been consulted

here
either! --The Great Man also, to what shall he be bound apprentice? Given
your Hero, is he to become Conqueror, King, Philosopher, Poet? It is an
inexplicably complex controversial calculation between the world and him!
He will read the world and its laws; the world with its laws will be

there
to be read. What the world, on this matter, shall permit and bid is,

as
we said, the most important fact about the world. --

Poet and Prophet differ greatly in our loose modern notions of them. In
some old languages, again, the titles are synonymous; Vates means both
Prophet and Poet: and indeed at all times, Prophet and Poet, well
understood, have much kindred of meaning. Fundamentally indeed they are
still the same; in this most important respect especially, That they have
penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe; what
Goethe calls "the open secret." "Which is the great secret?" asks
one. --"The open secret," --open to all, seen by almost none! That

divine
mystery, which lies everywhere in all Beings, "the Divine Idea of the
World, that which lies at the bottom of Appearance," as Fichte styles it;
of which all Appearance, from the starry sky to the grass of the field,

but
especially the Appearance of Man and his work, is but the vesture, the
embodiment that renders it visible. This divine mystery is in all

times
and in all places; veritably is. In most times and places it is greatly
overlooked; and the Universe, definable always in one or the other

dialect,
as the realized Thought of God, is considered a trivial, inert,

commonplace
matter, --as if, says the Satirist, it were a dead thing, which some
upholsterer had put together! It could do no good, at present, to

speak
much about this; but it is a pity for every one of us if we do not know

it,
live ever in the knowledge of it. Really a most mournful pity; --a

failure
to live at all, if we live otherwise!

But now, I say, whoever may forget this divine mystery, the Vates,
whether Prophet or Poet, has penetrated into it; is a man sent hither to
make it more impressively known to us. That always is his message; he is
to reveal that to us, --that sacred mystery which he more than others

lives

ever present with. While others forget it, he knows it; --I might say, he has been driven to know it; without consent asked of him, he finds

himself

living in it, bound to live in it. Once more, here is no Hearsay, but a direct Insight and Belief; this man too could not help being a sincere

man!

Whosoever may live in the shows of things, it is for him a necessity of nature to live in the very fact of things. A man once more, in earnest with the Universe, though all others were but toying with it. He is a Vates, first of all, in virtue of being sincere. So far Poet and Prophet, participators in the "open secret," are one.

With respect to their distinction again: The Vates Prophet, we might say, has seized that sacred mystery rather on the moral side, as Good and Evil, Duty and Prohibition; the Vates Poet on what the Germans call the aesthetic side, as Beautiful, and the Like. The one we may call a

revealer

of what we are to do, the other of what we are to love. But indeed these two provinces run into one another, and cannot be disjoined. The Prophet too has his eye on what we are to love: how else shall he know what it

is

we are to do? The highest Voice ever heard on this earth said withal, "Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." A

glance,

that, into the deepest deep of Beauty. "The lilies of the

field," --dressed

finer than earthly princes, springing up there in the humble

furrow-field;

a beautiful eye looking out on you, from the great inner Sea of Beauty! How could the rude Earth make these, if her Essence, rugged as she looks and is, were not inwardly Beauty? In this point of view, too, a saying

of

Goethe's, which has staggered several, may have meaning: "The

Beautiful,"

he intimates, "is higher than the Good; the Beautiful includes in it the Good." The true Beautiful; which however, I have said somewhere, "differs from the false as Heaven does from Vauxhall!" So much for the distinction and identity of Poet and Prophet. --

In ancient and also in modern periods we find a few Poets who are

accounted

perfect; whom it were a kind of treason to find fault with. This is noteworthy; this is right: yet in strictness it is only an illusion. At bottom, clearly enough, there is no perfect Poet! A vein of Poetry

exists

in the hearts of all men; no man is made altogether of Poetry. We are

all

poets when we read a poem well. The "imagination that shudders at the Hell of Dante," is not that the same faculty, weaker in degree, as

Dante's

own? No one but Shakspeare can embody, out of Saxo Grammaticus, the story of Hamlet as Shakspeare did: but every one models some kind of story out of it; every one embodies it better or worse. We need not

spend
time in defining. Where there is no specific difference, as between
round
and square, all definition must be more or less arbitrary. A man that
has
so much more of the poetic element developed in him as to have become
noticeable, will be called Poet by his neighbors. World-Poets too, those
whom we are to take for perfect Poets, are settled by critics in the same
way. One who rises _so_ far above the general level of Poets will, to
such
and such critics, seem a Universal Poet; as he ought to do. And yet it
is,
and must be, an arbitrary distinction. All Poets, all men, have some
touches of the Universal; no man is wholly made of that. Most Poets are
very soon forgotten: but not the noblest Shakspeare or Homer of them can
be remembered _forever_; --a day comes when he too is not!

Nevertheless, you will say, there must be a difference between true

Poetry
and true Speech not poetical: what is the difference? On this point

many
things have been written, especially by late German Critics, some of

which
are not very intelligible at first. They say, for example, that the Poet
has an _infinite_ in him; communicates an _Unendlichkeit_, a certain
character of "infinity," to whatsoever he delineates. This, though not
very precise, yet on so vague a matter is worth remembering: if well
meditated, some meaning will gradually be found in it. For my own part,

I
find considerable meaning in the old vulgar distinction of Poetry being
metrical, having music in it, being a Song. Truly, if pressed to give

a
definition, one might say this as soon as anything else: If your
delineation be authentically _musical_, musical not in word only, but in
heart and substance, in all the thoughts and utterances of it, in the

whole
conception of it, then it will be poetical; if not, not. --Musical: how
much lies in that! A _musical_ thought is one spoken by a mind that has
penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost

mystery
of it, namely the _melody_ that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of
coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists, and has a right to be,

here
in this world. All inmost things, we may say, are melodious; naturally
utter themselves in Song. The meaning of Song goes deep. Who is there
that, in logical words, can express the effect music has on us? A kind

of
inarticulate unfathomable speech, which leads us to the edge of the
Infinite, and lets us for moments gaze into that!

Nay all speech, even the commonest speech, has something of song in it:
not a parish in the world but has its parish-accent; --the rhythm or

tune
to which the people there _sing_ what they have to say! Accent is a kind
of chanting; all men have accent of their own, --though they only _notice_

that of others. Observe too how all passionate language does of itself become musical, --with a finer music than the mere accent; the speech of a man even in zealous anger becomes a chant, a song. All deep things are Song. It seems somehow the very central essence of us, Song; as if all

the rest were but wrappings and hulls! The primal element of us; of us, and

of all things. The Greeks fabled of Sphere-Harmonies: it was the feeling they had of the inner structure of Nature; that the soul of all her

voices and utterances was perfect music. Poetry, therefore, we will call

musical Thought. The Poet is he who thinks in that manner. At bottom, it

turns still on power of intellect; it is a man's sincerity and depth of vision that makes him a Poet. See deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it.

The Vates Poet, with his melodious Apocalypse of Nature, seems to hold

a poor rank among us, in comparison with the Vates Prophet; his function, and our esteem of him for his function, alike slight. The Hero taken as Divinity; the Hero taken as Prophet; then next the Hero taken only as

Poet: does it not look as if our estimate of the Great Man, epoch after epoch, were continually diminishing? We take him first for a god, then for one god-inspired; and now in the next stage of it, his most miraculous word gains from us only the recognition that he is a Poet, beautiful verse-maker, man of genius, or such like!--It looks so; but I persuade myself that intrinsically it is not so. If we consider well, it will perhaps appear that in man still there is the same altogether peculiar admiration for the Heroic Gift, by what name soever called, that there at any time was.

I should say, if we do not now reckon a Great Man literally divine, it is that our notions of God, of the supreme unattainable Fountain of

Splendor, Wisdom and Heroism, are ever rising higher; not altogether that our reverence for these qualities, as manifested in our like, is getting

lower. This is worth taking thought of. Sceptical Dilettantism, the curse of these ages, a curse which will not last forever, does indeed in this the highest province of human things, as in all provinces, make sad work; and our reverence for great men, all crippled, blinded, paralytic as it is, comes out in poor plight, hardly recognizable. Men worship the shows of great men; the most disbelieve that there is any reality of great men to worship. The dreariest, fatalest faith; believing which, one would literally despair of human things. Nevertheless look, for example, at Napoleon! A Corsican lieutenant of artillery; that is the show of him: yet is he not obeyed, worshipped after his sort, as all the Tiaraed and Diademed of the world put together could not be? High Duchesses, and ostlers of inns, gather round the Scottish rustic, Burns; --a strange feeling dwelling in each that they never heard a man like this; that, on the whole, this is the man! In the secret heart of these people it still dimly reveals itself, though there is no accredited way of uttering it at present, that this rustic, with his black brows and flashing sun-eyes,

and strange words moving laughter and tears, is of a dignity far beyond all others, incommensurable with all others. Do not we feel it so? But now,

were Dilettantism, Scepticism, Triviality, and all that sorrowful brood, cast out of us, --as, by God's blessing, they shall one day be; were faith in the shows of things entirely swept out, replaced by clear faith in the _things_, so that a man acted on the impulse of that only, and counted

the other non-extant; what a new livelier feeling towards this Burns were it!

Nay here in these ages, such as they are, have we not two mere Poets, if not deified, yet we may say beatified? Shakspeare and Dante are Saints

of Poetry; really, if we will think of it, _canonized_, so that it is

impiety to meddle with them. The unguided instinct of the world, working across all these perverse impediments, has arrived at such result. Dante and Shakspeare are a peculiar Two. They dwell apart, in a kind of royal solitude; none equal, none second to them: in the general feeling of the world, a certain transcendentalism, a glory as of complete perfection, invests these two. They _are_ canonized, though no Pope or Cardinals

took hand in doing it! Such, in spite of every perverting influence, in the most unheroic times, is still our indestructible reverence for

heroism. --We will look a little at these Two, the Poet Dante and the Poet Shakspeare: what little it is permitted us to say here of the Hero as Poet will most fitly arrange itself in that fashion.

Many volumes have been written by way of commentary on Dante and his

Book; yet, on the whole, with no great result. His Biography is, as it were, irrecoverably lost for us. An unimportant, wandering, sorrow-stricken

man, not much note was taken of him while he lived; and the most of that has vanished, in the long space that now intervenes. It is five centuries since he ceased writing and living here. After all commentaries, the

Book itself is mainly what we know of him. The Book; --and one might add that Portrait commonly attributed to Giotto, which, looking on it, you cannot help inclining to think genuine, whoever did it. To me it is a most touching face; perhaps of all faces that I know, the most so. Lonely there, painted as on vacancy, with the simple laurel wound round it; the deathless sorrow and pain, the known victory which is also deathless; --significant of the whole history of Dante! I think it is the mournfullest face that ever was painted from reality; an altogether

tragic, heart-affecting face. There is in it, as foundation of it, the softness, tenderness, gentle affection as of a child; but all this is as if

congealed into sharp contradiction, into abnegation, isolation, proud hopeless

pain. A soft ethereal soul looking out so stern, implacable, grim-trenchant, as from imprisonment of thick-ribbed ice! Withal it is a silent pain too, a silent scornful one: the lip is curled in a kind of godlike disdain of

the thing that is eating out his heart, --as if it were withal a mean insignificant thing, as if he whom it had power to torture and strangle were greater than it. The face of one wholly in protest, and lifelong

unsundering battle, against the world. Affection all converted into indignation: an implacable indignation; slow, equable, silent, like that of a god! The eye too, it looks out as in a kind of _surprise_, a kind

of inquiry, Why the world was of such a sort? This is Dante: so he looks, this "voice of ten silent centuries," and sings us "his mystic

unfathomable song."

The little that we know of Dante's Life corresponds well enough with this Portrait and this Book. He was born at Florence, in the upper class of society, in the year 1265. His education was the best then going; much school-divinity, Aristotelean logic, some Latin classics, --no inconsiderable insight into certain provinces of things: and Dante, with his earnest intelligent nature, we need not doubt, learned better than

most all that was learnable. He has a clear cultivated understanding, and of great subtlety; this best fruit of education he had contrived to realize from these scholastics. He knows accurately and well what lies close to him; but, in such a time, without printed books or free intercourse, he could not know well what was distant: the small clear light, most

luminous for what is near, breaks itself into singular _chiaroscuro_ striking on what is far off. This was Dante's learning from the schools. In life,

he had gone through the usual destinies; been twice out campaigning as a soldier for the Florentine State, been on embassy; had in his

thirty-fifth year, by natural gradation of talent and service, become one of the Chief Magistrates of Florence. He had met in boyhood a certain Beatrice Portinari, a beautiful little girl of his own age and rank, and grown up thenceforth in partial sight of her, in some distant intercourse with

her. All readers know his graceful affecting account of this; and then of

their being parted; of her being wedded to another, and of her death soon

after. She makes a great figure in Dante's Poem; seems to have made a great

figure in his life. Of all beings it might seem as if she, held apart from him, far apart at last in the dim Eternity, were the only one he had ever with his whole strength of affection loved. She died: Dante himself was wedded; but it seems not happily, far from happily. I fancy, the

rigorous earnest man, with his keen excitabilities, was not altogether easy to

make happy.

We will not complain of Dante's miseries: had all gone right with him as he wished it, he might have been Prior, Podesta, or whatsoever they call it, of Florence, well accepted among neighbors, --and the world had wanted one of the most notable words ever spoken or sung. Florence would have

had another prosperous Lord Mayor; and the ten dumb centuries continued voiceless, and the ten other listening centuries (for there will be ten

of
them and more) had no *Divina Commedia* to hear! We will complain of
nothing. A nobler destiny was appointed for this Dante; and he,

struggling
like a man led towards death and crucifixion, could not help fulfilling

it.
Give *him* the choice of his happiness! He knew not, more than we do,

what
was really happy, what was really miserable.

In Dante's Priorship, the Guelph-Ghibelline, Bianchi-Neri, or some other
confused disturbances rose to such a height, that Dante, whose party had
seemed the stronger, was with his friends cast unexpectedly forth into
banishment; doomed thenceforth to a life of woe and wandering. His
property was all confiscated and more; he had the fiercest feeling that

it
was entirely unjust, nefarious in the sight of God and man. He tried

what
was in him to get reinstated; tried even by warlike surprisal, with arms

in
his hand: but it would not do; bad only had become worse. There is a
record, I believe, still extant in the Florence Archives, dooming this
Dante, wheresoever caught, to be burnt alive. Burnt alive; so it stands,
they say: a very curious civic document. Another curious document, some
considerable number of years later, is a Letter of Dante's to the
Florentine Magistrates, written in answer to a milder proposal of theirs,
that he should return on condition of apologizing and paying a fine. He
answers, with fixed stern pride: "If I cannot return without calling
myself guilty, I will never return, *_nunquam revertar_*."

For Dante there was now no home in this world. He wandered from patron

to
patron, from place to place; proving, in his own bitter words, "How hard

is
the path, *_Come e duro calle_*." The wretched are not cheerful company.
Dante, poor and banished, with his proud earnest nature, with his moody
humors, was not a man to conciliate men. Petrarch reports of him that
being at Can della Scala's court, and blamed one day for his gloom and
taciturnity, he answered in no courtier-like way. Della Scala stood

among
his courtiers, with mimes and buffoons (*_nebulones ac histriones_*) making
him heartily merry; when turning to Dante, he said: "Is it not strange,
now, that this poor fool should make himself so entertaining; while you,

a
wise man, sit there day after day, and have nothing to amuse us with at
all?" Dante answered bitterly: "No, not strange; your Highness is to
recollect the Proverb, *_Like to Like_*;"--given the amuser, the amusee

must
also be given! Such a man, with his proud silent ways, with his sarcasms
and sorrows, was not made to succeed at court. By degrees, it came to be
evident to him that he had no longer any resting-place, or hope of

benefit,
in this earth. The earthly world had cast him forth, to wander, wander;

no
living heart to love him now; for his sore miseries there was no solace
here.

The deeper naturally would the Eternal World impress itself on him; that awful reality over which, after all, this Time-world, with its Florences and banishments, only flutters as an unreal shadow. Florence thou shalt never see: but Hell and Purgatory and Heaven thou shalt surely see!

What
is Florence, Can della Scala, and the World and Life altogether?

ETERNITY:
thither, of a truth, not elsewhere, art thou and all things bound! The great soul of Dante, homeless on earth, made its home more and more in

that
awful other world. Naturally his thoughts brooded on that, as on the one fact important for him. Bodied or bodiless, it is the one fact important for all men:--but to Dante, in that age, it was bodied in fixed certainty of scientific shape; he no more doubted of that *Malebolge* Pool, that it all lay there with its gloomy circles, with its *alti guai*, and that he himself should see it, than we doubt that we should see Constantinople if we went thither. Dante's heart, long filled with this, brooding over it

in
speechless thought and awe, bursts forth at length into "mystic unfathomable song;" and this his *Divine Comedy*, the most remarkable of all modern Books, is the result.

It must have been a great solacement to Dante, and was, as we can see, a proud thought for him at times, That he, here in exile, could do this

work;
that no Florence, nor no man or men, could hinder him from doing it, or even much help him in doing it. He knew too, partly, that it was great; the greatest a man could do. "If thou follow thy star, *Se tu segui tua stella*,"--so could the Hero, in his forsakenness, in his extreme need, still say to himself: "Follow thou thy star, thou shalt not fail of a glorious haven!" The labor of writing, we find, and indeed could know otherwise, was great and painful for him; he says, This Book, "which has made me lean for many years." Ah yes, it was won, all of it, with pain

and
sore toil,--not in sport, but in grim earnest. His Book, as indeed most good Books are, has been written, in many senses, with his heart's blood. It is his whole history, this Book. He died after finishing it; not yet very old, at the age of fifty-six;--broken-hearted rather, as is said.

He
lies buried in his death-city Ravenna: *Hic claudor Dantes patriis extorris ab oris*. The Florentines begged back his body, in a century after; the Ravenna people would not give it. "Here am I Dante laid, shut out from my native shores."

I said, Dante's Poem was a Song: it is Tieck who calls it "a mystic unfathomable Song;" and such is literally the character of it. Coleridge remarks very pertinently somewhere, that wherever you find a sentence musically worded, of true rhythm and melody in the words, there is something deep and good in the meaning too. For body and soul, word and idea, go strangely together here as everywhere. Song: we said before,

it
was the Heroic of Speech! All *old* Poems, Homer's and the rest, are authentically Songs. I would say, in strictness, that all right Poems

are;
that whatsoever is not *sung* is properly no Poem, but a piece of Prose cramped into jingling lines,--to the great injury of the grammar, to the great grief of the reader, for most part! What we wants to get at is the *thought* the man had, if he had any: why should he twist it into

jingle,
if he could speak it out plainly? It is only when the heart of him is rapt into true passion of melody, and the very tones of him, according to Coleridge's remark, become musical by the greatness, depth and music of

his thoughts, that we can give him right to rhyme and sing; that we call him

a Poet, and listen to him as the Heroic of Speakers, --whose speech is Song. Pretenders to this are many; and to an earnest reader, I doubt, it is for most part a very melancholy, not to say an insupportable business, that

of reading rhyme! Rhyme that had no inward necessity to be rhymed; --it

ought to have told us plainly, without any jingle, what it was aiming at. I would advise all men who can speak their thought, not to sing it; to understand that, in a serious time, among serious men, there is no

vocation in them for singing it. Precisely as we love the true song, and are charmed by it as by something divine, so shall we hate the false song,

and account it a mere wooden noise, a thing hollow, superfluous, altogether

an insincere and offensive thing.

I give Dante my highest praise when I say of his Divine Comedy that it is, in all senses, genuinely a Song. In the very sound of it there is a canto fermo; it proceeds as by a chant. The language, his simple

terza rima, doubtless helped him in this. One reads along naturally with a

sort of lilt. But I add, that it could not be otherwise; for the essence

and material of the work are themselves rhythmic. Its depth, and rapt

passion and sincerity, makes it musical; --go deep enough, there is music everywhere. A true inward symmetry, what one calls an architectural harmony, reigns in it, proportionates it all: architectural; which also partakes of the character of music. The three kingdoms, Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso, look out on one another like compartments of a great edifice; a great supernatural world-cathedral, piled up there,

stern, solemn, awful; Dante's World of Souls! It is, at bottom, the sincerest of all Poems; sincerity, here too,, we find to be the measure of worth.

It came deep out of the author's heart of hearts; and it goes deep, and through long generations, into ours. The people of Verona, when they saw him on the streets, used to say, "Eccovi l' uom ch' e stato all'

Inferno, See, there is the man that was in Hell!" Ah yes, he had been in

Hell; --in Hell enough, in long severe sorrow and struggle; as the like of him is pretty sure to have been. Comedias that come out divine are not accomplished otherwise. Thought, true labor of any kind, highest virtue itself, is it not the daughter of Pain? Born as out of the black

whirlwind; --true effort, in fact, as of a captive struggling to free himself: that is Thought. In all ways we are "to become perfect through suffering." --But, as I say, no work known to me is so elaborated as this of Dante's. It has all been as if molten, in the hottest furnace of his soul. It had made him "lean" for many years. Not the general whole only; every compartment of it is worked out, with intense earnestness,

into truth, into clear visuality. Each answers to the other; each fits in its place, like a marble stone accurately hewn and polished. It is the soul

of Dante, and in this the soul of the middle ages, rendered forever rhythmically visible there. No light task; a right intense one: but a task which is done.

Perhaps one would say, intensity, with the much that depends on it, is the prevailing character of Dante's genius. Dante does not come before

us as a large catholic mind; rather as a narrow, and even sectarian mind:

it is partly the fruit of his age and position, but partly too of his own nature. His greatness has, in all senses, concentrated itself into fiery emphasis and depth. He is world-great not because he is worldwide, but because he is world-deep. Through all objects he pierces as if were down into the heart of Being. I know nothing so intense as Dante. Consider, for example, to begin with the outermost development of his intensity, consider how he paints. He has a great power of vision; seizes the very type of a thing; presents that and nothing more. You remember that first view he gets of the Hall of Dite: red pinnacle, red-hot cone of iron glowing through the dim immensity of gloom; --so vivid, so distinct,

visible at once and forever! It is as an emblem of the whole genius of Dante. There is a brevity, an abrupt precision in him: Tacitus is not briefer, more condensed; and then in Dante it seems a natural condensation, spontaneous to the man. One smiting word; and then there is silence, nothing more said. His silence is more eloquent than words. It is

strange with what a sharp decisive grace he snatches the true likeness of a

matter: cuts into the matter as with a pen of fire. Plutus, the blustering

giant, collapses at Virgil's rebuke; it is "as the sails sink, the mast being suddenly broken." Or that poor Brunetto Latini, with the cotto

aspetto, "face baked," parched brown and lean; and the "fiery snow" that falls

on them there, a "fiery snow without wind," slow, deliberate, never-ending! Or the lids of those Tombs; square sarcophaguses, in that silent dim-burning Hall, each with its Soul in torment; the lids laid open

there; they are to be shut at the Day of Judgment, through Eternity. And how Farinata rises; and how Cavalcante falls--at hearing of his Son, and the past tense "fue"! The very movements in Dante have something brief; swift, decisive, almost military. It is of the inmost essence of his genius this sort of painting. The fiery, swift Italian nature of the

man, so silent, passionate, with its quick abrupt movements, its silent "pale rages," speaks itself in these things.

For though this of painting is one of the outermost developments of a

man,

it comes like all else from the essential faculty of him; it is physiognomical of the whole man. Find a man whose words paint you a likeness, you have found a man worth something; mark his manner of doing it, as very characteristic of him. In the first place, he could not have discerned the object at all, or seen the vital type of it, unless he had, what we may call, sympathized with it, --had sympathy in him to bestow

on

objects. He must have been sincere about it too; sincere and sympathetic: a man without worth cannot give you the likeness of any object; he dwells in vague outwardness, fallacy and trivial hearsay,

about

all objects. And indeed may we not say that intellect al together

expresses

itself in this power of discerning what an object is? Whatsoever of faculty a man's mind may have will come out here. Is it even of

business,

a matter to be done? The gifted man is he who sees the essential

point,

and leaves all the rest aside as surplusage: it is his faculty too, the man of business's faculty, that he discern the true likeness, not the false superficial one, of the thing he has got to work in. And how much

of

morality is in the kind of insight we get of anything; "the eye seeing

in

all things what it brought with it the faculty of seeing"! To the mean

eye

all things are trivial, as certainly as to the jaundiced they are yellow. Raphael, the Painters tell us, is the best of all Portrait-painters

withal.

No most gifted eye can exhaust the significance of any object. In the commonest human face there lies more than Raphael will take away with

him.

Dante's painting is not graphic only, brief, true, and of a vividness as

of

fire in dark night; taken on the wider scale, it is every way noble, and the outcome of a great soul. Francesca and her Lover, what qualities in that! A thing woven as out of rainbows, on a ground of eternal black. A small flute-voice of infinite wail speaks there, into our very heart of hearts. A touch of womanhood in it too: della bella persona, che mi fu tolta; and how, even in the Pit of woe, it is a solace that he will never part from her! Saddest tragedy in these alti guai. And the racking winds, in that aer bruno, whirl them away again, to wail forever!--Strange to think: Dante was the friend of this poor

Francesca's

father; Francesca herself may have sat upon the Poet's knee, as a bright innocent little child. Infinite pity, yet also infinite rigor of law:

it

is so Nature is made; it is so Dante discerned that she was made. What a paltry notion is that of his Divine Comedy's being a poor splenetic impotent terrestrial libel; putting those into Hell whom he could not be avenged upon on earth! I suppose if ever pity, tender as a mother's, was

in the heart of any man, it was in Dante's. But a man who does not know rigor cannot pity either. His very pity will be cowardly, egoistic, --sentimentality, or little better. I know not in the world an affection equal to that of Dante. It is a tenderness, a trembling, longing, pitying love: like the wail of AEolian harps, soft, soft; like

a child's young heart; --and then that stern, sore-saddened heart! These longings of his towards his Beatrice; their meeting together in the Paradiso; his gazing in her pure transfigured eyes, her that had been purified by death so long, separated from him so far: --one likens it to

the song of angels; it is among the purest utterances of affection, perhaps

the very purest, that ever came out of a human soul.

For the intense Dante is intense in all things; he has got into the essence of all. His intellectual insight as painter, on occasion too as reasoner, is but the result of all other sorts of intensity. Morally great, above all, we must call him; it is the beginning of all. His

scorn, his grief are as transcendent as his love; --as indeed, what are they but the inverse or converse of his love? "A Dio spiacenti ed a' nemici sui, Hateful to God and to the enemies of God: "lofty scorn,

unappeasable silent reprobation and aversion; "Non ragionam di lor, We will not

speak of them, look only and pass." Or think of this; "They have not the hope to die, Non han speranza di morte." One day, it had risen

sternly benign on the scathed heart of Dante, that he, wretched, never-resting, worn as he was, would full surely die; "that Destiny itself could not doom him not to die." Such words are in this man. For rigor,

earnestness and depth, he is not to be paralleled in the modern world; to seek his parallel we must go into the Hebrew Bible, and live with the antique Prophets there.

I do not agree with much modern criticism, in greatly preferring the Inferno to the two other parts of the Divine Commedia. Such

preference belongs, I imagine, to our general Byronism of taste, and is like to be a transient feeling. The Purgatorio and Paradiso, especially the

former, one would almost say, is even more excellent than it. It is a noble

thing that Purgatorio, "Mountain of Purification;" an emblem of the noblest conception of that age. If sin is so fatal, and Hell is and must be so rigorous, awful, yet in Repentance too is man purified; Repentance is the grand Christian act. It is beautiful how Dante works it out. The tremolar dell' onde, that "trembling" of the ocean-waves, under the

first pure gleam of morning, dawning afar on the wandering Two, is as the type

of an altered mood. Hope has now dawned; never-dying Hope, if in company still with heavy sorrow. The obscure sojourn of demons and reprobate is underfoot; a soft breathing of penitence mounts higher and higher, to the

Throne of Mercy itself. "Pray for me," the denizens of that Mount of

Pain

all say to him. "Tell my Giovanna to pray for me," my daughter Giovanna; "I think her mother loves me no more!" They toil painfully up by that winding steep, "bent down like corbels of a building," some of them, --crushed together so "for the sin of pride;" yet nevertheless in years, in ages and aeons, they shall have reached the top, which is heaven's gate, and by Mercy shall have been admitted in. The joy too of all, when one has prevailed; the whole Mountain shakes with joy, and a psalm of praise rises, when one soul has perfected repentance and got its sin and misery left behind! I call all this a noble embodiment of a true noble thought.

But indeed the Three compartments mutually support one another, are indispensable to one another. The Paradiso, a kind of inarticulate

music

to me, is the redeeming side of the Inferno; the Inferno without it were untrue. All three make up the true Unseen World, as figured in the Christianity of the Middle Ages; a thing forever memorable, forever true

in

the essence of it, to all men. It was perhaps delineated in no human

soul

with such depth of veracity as in this of Dante's; a man sent to sing

it,

to keep it long memorable. Very notable with what brief simplicity he passes out of the every-day reality, into the Invisible one; and in the second or third stanza, we find ourselves in the World of Spirits; and dwell there, as among things palpable, indubitable! To Dante they were so; the real world, as it is called, and its facts, was but the threshold to an infinitely higher Fact of a World. At bottom, the one was as preternatural as the other. Has not each man a soul? He will not only be a spirit, but is one. To the earnest Dante it is all one visible

Fact;

he believes it, sees it; is the Poet of it in virtue of that. Sincerity,

I

say again, is the saving merit, now as always.

Dante's Hell, Purgatory, Paradise, are a symbol withal, an emblematic representation of his Belief about this Universe: --some Critic in a

future

age, like those Scandinavian ones the other day, who has ceased

altogether

to think as Dante did, may find this too all an "Allegory," perhaps an

idle

Allegory! It is a sublime embodiment, or sublimest, of the soul of Christianity. It expresses, as in huge world-wide architectural emblems, how the Christian Dante felt Good and Evil to be the two polar elements

of

this Creation, on which it all turns; that these two differ not by preferability of one to the other, but by incompatibility absolute and infinite; that the one is excellent and high as light and Heaven, the

other

hideous, black as Gehenna and the Pit of Hell! Everlasting Justice, yet with Penitence, with everlasting Piety, --all Christianity, as Dante and

the

Middle Ages had it, is emblemized here. Emblemized: and yet, as I urged the

other day, with what entire truth of purpose; how unconscious of any embleming! Hell, Purgatory, Paradise: these things were not fashioned

as emblems; was there, in our Modern European Mind, any thought at all of their being emblems! Were they not indubitable awful facts; the whole heart of man taking them for practically true, all Nature everywhere confirming them? So is it always in these things. Men do not believe an Allegory. The future Critic, whatever his new thought may be, who considers this of Dante to have been all got up as an Allegory, will

commit one sore mistake! --Paganism we recognized as a veracious expression of

the earnest awe-struck feeling of man towards the Universe; veracious, true once, and still not without worth for us. But mark here the difference

of Paganism and Christianity; one great difference. Paganism emblemized

chiefly the Operations of Nature; the destinies, efforts, combinations, vicissitudes of things and men in this world; Christianity emblemized the

Law of Human Duty, the Moral Law of Man. One was for the sensuous nature: a rude helpless utterance of the first Thought of men, --the chief

recognized virtue, Courage, Superiority to Fear. The other was not for the sensuous nature, but for the moral. What a progress is here, if in that one

respect only! --

And so in this Dante, as we said, had ten silent centuries, in a very strange way, found a voice. The *Divina Commedia* is of Dante's writing; yet in truth it belongs to ten Christian centuries, only the finishing of it is Dante's. So always. The craftsman there, the smith with that

metal of his, with these tools, with these cunning methods, --how little of all

he does is properly *his* work! All past inventive men work there with him; --as indeed with all of us, in all things. Dante is the spokesman of the Middle Ages; the Thought they lived by stands here, in everlasting music. These sublime ideas of his, terrible and beautiful, are the fruit of the Christian Meditation of all the good men who had gone before him. Precious they; but also is not he precious? Much, had not he spoken,

would have been dumb; not dead, yet living voiceless.

On the whole, is it not an utterance, this mystic Song, at once of one of the greatest human souls, and of the highest thing that Europe had

hitherto realized for itself? Christianity, as Dante sings it, is another than Paganism in the rude Norse mind; another than "Bastard Christianity"

half-articulated spoken in the Arab Desert, seven hundred years before! --The noblest *idea* made *real* hitherto among men, is sung, and emblemized

forth abidingly, by one of the noblest men. In the one sense and in the other, are we not right glad to possess it? As I calculate, it may last yet for

long thousands of years. For the thing that is uttered from the inmost parts of a man's soul, differs altogether from what is uttered by the

outer part. The outer is of the day, under the empire of mode; the outer

passes away, in swift endless changes; the inmost is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. True souls, in all generations of the world, who look on

this Dante, will find a brotherhood in him; the deep sincerity of his

thoughts, his woes and hopes, will speak likewise to their sincerity; they will

feel that this Dante too was a brother. Napoleon in Saint Helena is charmed with the genial veracity of old Homer. The oldest Hebrew Prophet, under

a vesture the most diverse from ours, does yet, because he speaks from the heart of man, speak to all men's hearts. It is the one sole secret of continuing long memorable. Dante, for depth of sincerity, is like an antique Prophet too; his words, like theirs, come from his very heart.

One need not wonder if it were predicted that his Poem might be the most enduring thing our Europe has yet made; for nothing so endures as a truly spoken word. All cathedrals, pontificalities, brass and stone, and outer arrangement never so lasting, are brief in comparison to an unfathomable heart-song like this: one feels as if it might survive, still of importance to men, when these had all sunk into new irrecognizable combinations, and had ceased individually to be. Europe has made much; great cities, great empires, encyclopaedias, creeds, bodies of opinion

and practice: but it has made little of the class of Dante's Thought. Homer yet is veritably present face to face with every open soul of us; and Greece, where is it? Desolate for thousands of years; away, vanished;

a bewildered heap of stones and rubbish, the life and existence of it all gone. Like a dream; like the dust of King Agamemnon! Greece was;

Greece, except in the words it spoke, is not.

The uses of this Dante? We will not say much about his "uses." A human soul who has once got into that primal element of Song, and sung forth fitly somewhat therefrom, has worked in the depths of our existence; feeding through long times the life-roots of all excellent human things whatsoever, --in a way that "utilities" will not succeed well in calculating! We will not estimate the Sun by the quantity of gaslight it saves us; Dante shall be invaluable, or of no value. One remark I may make: the contrast in this respect between the Hero-Poet and the Hero-Prophet. In a hundred years, Mahomet, as we saw, had his Arabians

at Grenada and at Delhi; Dante's Italians seem to be yet very much where

they were. Shall we say, then, Dante's effect on the world was small in comparison? Not so: his arena is far more restricted; but also it is

far nobler, clearer; --perhaps not less but more important. Mahomet speaks to great masses of men, in the coarse dialect adapted to such; a dialect filled with inconsistencies, crudities, follies: on the great masses

alone
can he act, and there with good and with evil strangely blended. Dante
speaks to the noble, the pure and great, in all times and places.

Neither
does he grow obsolete, as the other does. Dante burns as a pure star,
fixed there in the firmament, at which the great and the high of all ages
kindle themselves: he is the possession of all the chosen of the world

for
uncounted time. Dante, one calculates, may long survive Mahomet. In

this
way the balance may be made straight again.

But, at any rate, it is not by what is called their effect on the world,

by
what we can judge of their effect there, that a man and his work are
measured. Effect? Influence? Utility? Let a man do his work; the
fruit of it is the care of Another than he. It will grow its own fruit;
and whether embodied in Caliph Thrones and Arabian Conquests, so that it
"fills all Morning and Evening Newspapers," and all Histories, which are

a
kind of distilled Newspapers; or not embodied so at all; --what matters
that? That is not the real fruit of it! The Arabian Caliph, in so far
only as he did something, was something. If the great Cause of Man, and
Man's work in God's Earth, got no furtherance from the Arabian Caliph,

then
no matter how many scimeters he drew, how many gold piasters pocketed,

and
what uproar and blaring he made in this world, --he was but a
loud-sounding inanity and futility; at bottom, he was not at all. Let

us
honor the great empire of Silence, once more! The boundless treasury
which we do not jingle in our pockets, or count up and present before

men!
It is perhaps, of all things, the usefulest for each of us to do, in

these
loud times. --

As Dante, the Italian man, was sent into our world to embody musically

the
Religion of the Middle Ages, the Religion of our Modern Europe, its Inner
Life; so Shakspeare, we may say, embodies for us the Outer Life of our
Europe as developed then, its chivalries, courtesies, humors, ambitions,
what practical way of thinking, acting, looking at the world, men then

had.
As in Homer we may still construe Old Greece; so in Shakspeare and Dante,
after thousands of years, what our modern Europe was, in Faith and in
Practice, will still be legible. Dante has given us the Faith or soul;
Shakspeare, in a not less noble way, has given us the Practice or body.
This latter also we were to have; a man was sent for it, the man
Shakspeare. Just when that chivalry way of life had reached its last
finish, and was on the point of breaking down into slow or swift
dissolution, as we now see it everywhere, this other sovereign Poet, with
his seeing eye, with his perennial singing voice, was sent to take note

of

it, to give long-enduring record of it. Two fit men: Dante, deep,
fierce
as the central fire of the world; Shakspeare, wide, placid, far-seeing,
as
the Sun, the upper light of the world. Italy produced the one
world-voice;
we English had the honor of producing the other.

Curious enough how, as it were by mere accident, this man came to us. I
think always, so great, quiet, complete and self-sufficing is this
Shakspeare, had the Warwickshire Squire not prosecuted him for
deer-stealing, we had perhaps never heard of him as a Poet! The woods

and
skies, the rustic Life of Man in Stratford there, had been enough for

this
man! But indeed that strange outbudding of our whole English Existence,
which we call the Elizabethan Era, did not it too come as of its own
accord? The "Tree Igdrasil" buds and withers by its own laws, --too deep
for our scanning. Yet it does bud and wither, and every bough and leaf

of
it is there, by fixed eternal laws; not a Sir Thomas Lucy but comes at

the
hour fit for him. Curious, I say, and not sufficiently considered: how
everything does co-operate with all; not a leaf rotting on the highway

but
is indissoluble portion of solar and stellar systems; no thought, word or
act of man but has sprung withal out of all men, and works sooner or

later,
recognizably or irrecognizable, on all men! It is all a Tree:

circulation
of sap and influences, mutual communication of every minutest leaf with

the
lowest talon of a root, with every other greatest and minutest portion of
the whole. The Tree Igdrasil, that has its roots down in the Kingdoms of
Hela and Death, and whose boughs overspread the highest Heaven! --

In some sense it may be said that this glorious Elizabethan Era with its
Shakspeare, as the outcome and flowerage of all which had preceded it, is
itself attributable to the Catholicism of the Middle Ages. The Christian
Faith, which was the theme of Dante's Song, had produced this Practical
Life which Shakspeare was to sing. For Religion then, as it now and

always
is, was the soul of Practice; the primary vital fact in men's life. And
remark here, as rather curious, that Middle-Age Catholicism was

abolished,
so far as Acts of Parliament could abolish it, before Shakspeare, the
noblest product of it, made his appearance. He did make his appearance
nevertheless. Nature at her own time, with Catholicism or what else

might
be necessary, sent him forth; taking small thought of Acts of Parliament.
King Henrys, Queen Elizabeths go their way; and Nature too goes hers.

Acts
of Parliament, on the whole, are small, notwithstanding the noise they
make. What Act of Parliament, debate at St. Stephen's, on the hustings

or
elsewhere, was it that brought this Shakspeare into being? No dining at
Freemason's Tavern, opening subscription-lists, selling of shares, and
infinite other jangling and true or false endeavoring! This Elizabethan
Era, and all its nobleness and blessedness, came without proclamation,
preparation of ours. Priceless Shakspeare was the free gift of Nature;
given altogether silently; --received altogether silently, as if it had

been
a thing of little account. And yet, very literally, it is a priceless
thing. One should look at that side of matters too.

Of this Shakspeare of ours, perhaps the opinion one sometimes hears a
little idolatrously expressed is, in fact, the right one; I think the

best
judgment not of this country only, but of Europe at large, is slowly
pointing to the conclusion, that Shakspeare is the chief of all Poets
hitherto; the greatest intellect who, in our recorded world, has left
record of himself in the way of Literature. On the whole, I know not

such
a power of vision, such a faculty of thought, if we take all the

characters
of it, in any other man. Such a calmness of depth; placid joyous

strength;
all things imaged in that great soul of his so true and clear, as in a
tranquil unfathomable sea! It has been said, that in the constructing of
Shakspeare's Dramas there is, apart from all other "faculties" as they

are
called, an understanding manifested, equal to that in Bacon's *_Novum
Organum_* That is true; and it is not a truth that strikes every one. It
would become more apparent if we tried, any of us for himself, how, out

of
Shakspeare's dramatic materials, *_we_* could fashion such a result! The
built house seems all so fit, --every way as it should be, as if it came
there by its own law and the nature of things, --we forget the rude
disorderly quarry it was shaped from. The very perfection of the house,

as
if Nature herself had made it, hides the builder's merit. Perfect, more
perfect than any other man, we may call Shakspeare in this: he discerns,
knows as by instinct, what condition he works under, what his materials
are, what his own force and its relation to them is. It is not a
transitory glance of insight that will suffice; it is deliberate
illumination of the whole matter; it is a calmly *_seeing_* eye; a great
intellect, in short. How a man, of some wide thing that he has

witnessed,
will construct a narrative, what kind of picture and delineation he will
give of it, --is the best measure you could get of what intellect is in

the
man. Which circumstance is vital and shall stand prominent; which
inessential, fit to be suppressed; where is the true *_beginning_*, the

true
sequence and ending? To find out this, you task the whole force of

insight
that is in the man. He must *_understand_* the thing; according to the

depth
of his understanding, will the fitness of his answer be. You will try

him

so. Does like join itself to like; does the spirit of method stir in

that

confusion, so that its embroilment becomes order? Can the man say, Fi at lux, Let there be light; and out of chaos make a world? Precisely as there is light in himself, will he accomplish this.

Or indeed we may say again, it is in what I called Portrait-painting, delineating of men and things, especially of men, that Shakspeare is

great.

All the greatness of the man comes out decisively here. It is

unexampl ed,

I think, that calm creative perspicacity of Shakspeare. The thing he

looks

at reveals not this or that face of it, but its inmost heart, and generic secret: it dissolves itself as in light before him, so that he discerns the perfect structure of it. Creative, we said: poetic creation, what

is

this too but seeing the thing sufficiently? The word that will describe the thing, follows of itself from such clear intense sight of

the

thing. And is not Shakspeare's morality, his valor, candor, tolerance, truthfulness; his whole victorious strength and greatness, which can triumph over such obstructions, visible there too? Great as the world.

No

twisted, poor convex-concave mirror, reflecting all objects with its

own

convexities and concavities; a perfectly level mirror; --that is to say withal, if we will understand it, a man justly related to all things and men, a good man. It is truly a lordly spectacle how this great soul

takes

in all kinds of men and objects, a Falstaff, an Othello, a Juliet, a Coriolanus; sets them all forth to us in their round completeness;

loving,

just, the equal brother of all. Novum Organum, and all the intellect

you

will find in Bacon, is of a quite secondary order; earthy, material, poor in comparison with this. Among modern men, one finds, in strictness, almost nothing of the same rank. Goethe alone, since the days of Shakspeare, reminds me of it. Of him too you say that he saw the

object;

you may say what he himself says of Shakspeare: "His characters are like watches with dial-plates of transparent crystal; they show you the hour like others, and the inward mechanism also is all visible."

The seeing eye! It is this that discloses the inner harmony of things; what Nature meant, what musical idea Nature has wrapped up in these often rough embodiments. Something she did mean. To the seeing eye that something were discernible. Are they base, miserable things? You can laugh over them, you can weep over them; you can in some way or other genially relate yourself to them; --you can, at lowest, hold your peace about them, turn away your own and others' face from them, till the hour come for practically exterminating and extinguishing them! At bottom, it is the Poet's first gift, as it is all men's, that he have intellect enough. He will be a Poet if he have: a Poet in word; or failing that, perhaps still better, a Poet in act. Whether he write at all; and if so,

whether in prose or in verse, will depend on accidents: who knows on what extremely trivial accidents, --perhaps on his having had a singing-master, on his being taught to sing in his boyhood! But the faculty which

enables him to discern the inner heart of things, and the harmony that dwells

there (for whatsoever exists has a harmony in the heart of it, or it would not hold together and exist), is not the result of habits or accidents, but

the gift of Nature herself; the primary outfit for a Heroic Man in what sort soever. To the Poet, as to every other, we say first of all, See. If you cannot do that, it is of no use to keep stringing rhymes together, jingling sensibilities against each other, and name yourself a Poet; there is no hope for you. If you can, there is, in prose or verse, in action or speculation, all manner of hope. The crabbed old Schoolmaster used to ask, when they brought him a new pupil, "But are ye sure he's

not a dunce?" Why, really one might ask the same thing, in regard to every man proposed for whatsoever function; and consider it as the one inquiry needful: Are ye sure he's not a dunce? There is, in this world, no

other entirely fatal person.

For, in fact, I say the degree of vision that dwells in a man is a

correct measure of the man. If called to define Shakspeare's faculty, I should

say superiority of Intellect, and think I had included all under that. What indeed are faculties? We talk of faculties as if they were distinct, things separable; as if a man had intellect, imagination, fancy, &c., as

he has hands, feet and arms. That is a capital error. Then again, we hear

of a man's "intellectual nature," and of his "moral nature," as if these

again were divisible, and existed apart. Necessities of language do perhaps prescribe such forms of utterance; we must speak, I am aware, in that

way, if we are to speak at all. But words ought not to harden into things for us. It seems to me, our apprehension of this matter is, for most part, radically falsified thereby. We ought to know withal, and to keep

forever in mind, that these divisions are at bottom but names; that man's spiritual nature, the vital Force which dwells in him, is essentially one and indivisible; that what we call imagination, fancy, understanding, and so forth, are but different figures of the same Power of Insight, all indissolubly connected with each other, physiognomically related; that if we knew one of them, we might know all of them. Morality itself, what we call the moral quality of a man, what is this but another side of the

one vital Force whereby he is and works? All that a man does is

physiognomical of him. You may see how a man would fight, by the way in which he sings;

his courage, or want of courage, is visible in the word he utters, in the opinion he has formed, no less than in the stroke he strikes. He is

one;

and preaches the same Self abroad in all these ways.

Without hands a man might have feet, and could still walk: but, consider it, --without morality, intellect were impossible for him; a thoroughly immoral _man_ could not know anything at all! To know a thing, what we

can

call knowing, a man must first _love_ the thing, sympathize with it:

that

is, be _virtuously_ related to it. If he have not the justice to put

down

his own selfishness at every turn, the courage to stand by the dangerous-true at every turn, how shall he know? His virtues, all of

them,

will lie recorded in his knowledge. Nature, with her truth, remains to

the

bad, to the selfish and the pusillanimous forever a sealed book: what

such

can know of Nature is mean, superficial, small; for the uses of the day merely. --But does not the very Fox know something of Nature? Exactly so: it knows where the geese lodge! The human Reynard, very frequent everywhere in the world, what more does he know but this and the like of this? Nay, it should be considered too, that if the Fox had not a

certain

vulpine _morality_, he could not even know where the geese were, or get

at

the geese! If he spent his time in splenetic atrabiliar reflections on

his

own misery, his ill usage by Nature, Fortune and other Foxes, and so

forth;

and had not courage, promptitude, practicality, and other suitable

vulpine

gifts and graces, he would catch no geese. We may say of the Fox too,

that

his morality and insight are of the same dimensions; different faces of

the

same internal unity of vulpine life! --These things are worth stating; for the contrary of them acts with manifold very baleful perversion, in this time: what limitations, modifications they require, your own candor will supply.

If I say, therefore, that Shakspeare is the greatest of Intellects, I

have

said all concerning him. But there is more in Shakspeare's intellect

than

we have yet seen. It is what I call an unconscious intellect; there is more virtue in it than he himself is aware of. Novalis beautifully

remarks

of him, that those Dramas of his are Products of Nature too, deep as

Nature herself. I find a great truth in this saying. Shakspeare's Art is not Artifice; the noblest worth of it is not there by plan or precontrivance. It grows up from the deeps of Nature, through this noble sincere soul,

who is a voice of Nature. The latest generations of men will find new

meanings in Shakspeare, new elucidations of their own human being; "new harmonies with the infinite structure of the Universe; concurrences with later

ideas, affinities with the higher powers and senses of man." This well deserves meditating. It is Nature's highest reward to a true simple great soul, that he get thus to be a part of herself. Such a man's works,

whatsoever he with utmost conscious exertion and forethought shall accomplish, grow

up withal unconsciously, from the unknown deeps in him; --as the oak-tree

grows from the Earth's bosom, as the mountains and waters shape themselves;

with a symmetry grounded on Nature's own laws, conformable to all Truth whatsoever. How much in Shakspeare lies hid; his sorrows, his silent struggles known to himself; much that was not known at all, not speakable at all: like roots, like sap and forces working underground! Speech

is great; but Silence is greater.

Withal the joyful tranquillity of this man is notable. I will not blame Dante for his misery; it is as battle without victory; but true battle, --the first, indispensable thing. Yet I call Shakspeare greater than Dante, in that he fought truly, and did conquer. Doubt it not, he

had his own sorrows: those Sonnets of his will even testify expressly in what deep waters he had waded, and swum struggling for his life; --as what man like him ever failed to have to do? It seems to me a heedless

notion, our common one, that he sat like a bird on the bough; and sang forth,

free and off-hand, never knowing the troubles of other men. Not so; with no

man is it so. How could a man travel forward from rustic deer-poaching to

such tragedy-writing, and not fall in with sorrows by the way? Or, still better, how could a man delineate a Hamlet, a Coriolanus, a Macbeth, so many suffering heroic hearts, if his own heroic heart had never suffered?--And now, in contrast with all this, observe his mirthfulness, his genuine overflowing love of laughter! You would say, in no point

does he exaggerate but only in laughter. Fiery objurgations, words that pierce and burn, are to be found in Shakspeare; yet he is always in

measure here; never what Johnson would remark as a specially "good hater." But

his

laughter seems to pour from him in floods; he heaps all manner of ridiculous nicknames on the butt he is bantering, tumbles and tosses him

in all sorts of horse-play; you would say, with his whole heart laughs. And then, if not always the finest, it is always a genial laughter. Not at mere weakness, at misery or poverty; never. No man who can laugh, what we call laughing, will laugh at these things. It is some poor character only desiring to laugh, and have the credit of wit, that does so. Laughter means sympathy; good laughter is not "the crackling of thorns under the pot." Even at stupidity and pretension this Shakspeare does

not laugh otherwise than genially. Dogberry and Verges tickle our very

hearts; and we dismiss them covered with explosions of laughter: but we like the poor fellows only the better for our laughing; and hope they will get on well there, and continue Presidents of the City-watch. Such laughter,

like sunshine on the deep sea, is very beautiful to me.

We have no room to speak of Shakspeare's individual works; though perhaps there is much still waiting to be said on that head. Had we, for

instance, all his plays reviewed as Hamlet, in Wilhelm Meister, is! A thing which might, one day, be done. August Wilhelm Schlegel has a remark on

his Historical Plays, Henry Fifth and the others, which is worth

remembering. He calls them a kind of National Epic. Marlborough, you recollect, said, he knew no English History but what he had learned from Shakspeare.

There are really, if we look to it, few as memorable Histories. The great salient points are admirably seized; all rounds itself off, into a kind

of rhythmic coherence; it is, as Schlegel says, epic; --as indeed all delineation by a great thinker will be. There are right beautiful things in those Pieces, which indeed together form one beautiful thing. That battle of Agincourt strikes me as one of the most perfect things, in its sort, we anywhere have of Shakspeare's. The description of the two

hosts: the worn-out, jaded English; the dread hour, big with destiny, when the battle shall begin; and then that deathless valor: "Ye good yeomen,

whose limbs were made in England!" There is a noble Patriotism in it, --far

other than the "indifference" you sometimes hear ascribed to Shakspeare. A

true English heart breathes, calm and strong, through the whole business; not boisterous, protrusive; all the better for that. There is a sound in it like the ring of steel. This man too had a right stroke in him, had it come to that!

But I will say, of Shakspeare's works generally, that we have no full impress of him there; even as full as we have of many men. His works are so many windows, through which we see a glimpse of the world that was in him. All his works seem, comparatively speaking, cursory, imperfect,

written under cramping circumstances; giving only here and there a note of the full utterance of the man. Passages there are that come upon you like splendor out of Heaven; bursts of radiance, illuminating the very heart of the thing: you say, "That is true, spoken once and forever;

wheresoever and whensoever there is an open human soul, that will be recognized as true!" Such bursts, however, make us feel that the surrounding matter is not radiant; that it is, in part, temporary, conventional. Alas, Shakspeare had to write for the Globe Playhouse: his great soul had to crush itself, as it could, into that and no other mould. It was with

him, then, as it is with us all. No man works save under conditions. The sculptor cannot set his own free Thought before us; but his Thought as he could translate it into the stone that was given, with the tools that

were given. Dissecta membra are all that we find of any Poet, or of any man.

Whoever looks intelligently at this Shakspeare may recognize that he too was a Prophet, in his way; of an insight analogous to the Prophetic, though he took it up in another strain. Nature seemed to this man also divine; unspeakable, deep as Tophet, high as Heaven; "We are such stuff

as Dreams are made of!" That scroll in Westminster Abbey, which few read

with understanding, is of the depth of any seer. But the man sang; did not preach, except musically. We called Dante the melodious Priest of Middle-Age Catholicism. May we not call Shakspeare the still more melodious Priest of a true Catholicism, the "Universal Church" of the Future and of all times? No narrow superstition, harsh asceticism, intolerance, fanatical fierceness or perversion: a Revelation, so far as it goes, that such a thousand-fold hidden beauty and divineness dwells in all Nature; which let all men worship as they can! We may say without offence, that there rises a kind of universal Psalm out of this

Shakspeare too; not unfit to make itself heard among the still more sacred Psalms. Not in disharmony with these, if we understood them, but in harmony! --I cannot call this Shakspeare a "Sceptic," as some do; his indifference to the creeds and theological quarrels of his time misleading them. No: neither unpatriotic, though he says little about his Patriotism; nor sceptic, though he says little about his Faith. Such "indifference" was the fruit of his greatness withal: his whole heart was in his own grand sphere of worship (we may call it such); these other controversies,

vitaly important to other men, were not vital to him.

But call it worship, call it what you will, is it not a right glorious thing, and set of things, this that Shakspeare has brought us? For

myself, I feel that there is actually a kind of sacredness in the fact of such a man being sent into this Earth. Is he not an eye to us all; a blessed heaven-sent Bringer of Light?--And, at bottom, was it not perhaps far better that this Shakspeare, every way an unconscious man, was

conscious
of no Heavenly message? He did not feel, like Mahomet, because he saw
into
those internal Splendors, that he specially was the "Prophet of God:"
and
was he not greater than Mahomet in that? Greater; and also, if we
compute
strictly, as we did in Dante's case, more successful. It was
intrinsically
an error that notion of Mahomet's, of his supreme Prophethood; and has
come
down to us inextricably involved in error to this day; dragging along
with
it such a coil of fables, impurities, intolerances, as makes it a
questionable step for me here and now to say, as I have done, that
Mahomet
was a true Speaker at all, and not rather an ambitious charlatan,
perversity and simulacrum; no Speaker, but a Babbling! Even in Arabia, as
I
compute, Mahomet will have exhausted himself and become obsolete, while
this Shakspeare, this Dante may still be young; --while this Shakspeare
may
still pretend to be a Priest of Mankind, of Arabia as of other places,
for
unlimited periods to come!

Compared with any speaker or singer one knows, even with Aeschylus or
Homer, why should he not, for veracity and universality, last like them?
He is sincere as they; reaches deep down like them, to the universal
and
perennial. But as for Mahomet, I think it had been better for him not
to
be so conscious! Alas, poor Mahomet; all that he was conscious of was
a
mere error; a futility and triviality, --as indeed such ever is. The
truly
great in him too was the unconscious: that he was a wild Arab lion of
the
desert, and did speak out with that great thunder-voice of his, not by
words which he thought to be great, but by actions, by feelings, by a
history which were great! His Koran has become a stupid piece of
prolix
absurdity; we do not believe, like him, that God wrote that! The Great
Man
here too, as always, is a Force of Nature. whatsoever is truly great in
him springs up from the inarticulate deeps.

Well: this is our poor Warwickshire Peasant, who rose to be Manager of a
Playhouse, so that he could live without begging; whom the Earl of
Southampton cast some kind glances on; whom Sir Thomas Lucy, many thanks

to
him, was for sending to the Treadmill! We did not account him a god,

like
Odin, while he dwelt with us; --on which point there were much to be said.
But I will say rather, or repeat: In spite of the sad state Hero-worship
now lies in, consider what this Shakspeare has actually become among us.
Which Englishman we ever made, in this land of ours, which million of
Englishmen, would we not give up rather than the Stratford Peasant?

There
is no regiment of highest Dignitaries that we would sell him for. He is
the grandest thing we have yet done. For our honor among foreign

nations,
as an ornament to our English Household, what item is there that we would
not surrender rather than him? Consider now, if they asked us, Will you
give up your Indian Empire or your Shakspeare, you English; never have

had
any Indian Empire, or never have had any Shakspeare? Really it were a
grave question. Official persons would answer doubtless in official
language; but we, for our part too, should not we be forced to answer:
Indian Empire, or no Indian Empire; we cannot do without Shakspeare!
Indian Empire will go, at any rate, some day; but this Shakspeare does

not
go, he lasts forever with us; we cannot give up our Shakspeare!

Nay, apart from spiritualities; and considering him merely as a real,
marketable, tangibly useful possession. England, before long, this

Island
of ours, will hold but a small fraction of the English: in America, in

New
Holland, east and west to the very Antipodes, there will be a Saxondom
covering great spaces of the Globe. And now, what is it that can keep

all
these together into virtually one Nation, so that they do not fall out

and
fight, but live at peace, in brotherlike intercourse, helping one

another?
This is justly regarded as the greatest practical problem, the thing all
manner of sovereignties and governments are here to accomplish: what is

it
that will accomplish this? Acts of Parliament, administrative
prime-ministers cannot. America is parted from us, so far as Parliament
could part it. Call it not fantastic, for there is much reality in it:
Here, I say, is an English King, whom no time or chance, Parliament or
combination of Parliaments, can dethrone! This King Shakspeare, does not
he shine, in crowned sovereignty, over us all, as the noblest, gentlest,
yet strongest of rallying-signs; indestructible; really more valuable in
that point of view than any other means or appliance whatsoever? We can
fancy him as radiant aloft over all the Nations of Englishmen, a thousand
years hence. From Paramatta, from New York, wheresoever, under what sort
of Parish-Constable soever, English men and women are, they will say to

one
another: "Yes, this Shakspeare is ours; we produced him, we speak and
think by him; we are of one blood and kind with him." The most
common-sense politician, too, if he pleases, may think of that.

Yes, truly, it is a great thing for a Nation that it get an articulate

voice; that it produce a man who will speak forth melodiously what the heart of it means! Italy, for example, poor Italy lies dismembered, scattered asunder, not appearing in any protocol or treaty as a unity at all; yet the noble Italy is actually one: Italy produced its Dante; Italy can speak! The Czar of all the Russias, he is strong with so many bayonets, Cossacks and cannons; and does a great feat in keeping such a tract of Earth politically together; but he cannot yet speak. Something great in him, but it is a dumb greatness. He has had no voice of genius, to be heard of all men and times. He must learn to speak. He is a great dumb monster hitherto. His cannons and Cossacks will all have rusted

into
nonentity, while that Dante's voice is still audible. The Nation that
has
a Dante is bound together as no dumb Russia can be. --We must here end
what
we had to say of the Hero-Poet.

[May 15, 1840.]

LECTURE IV.

THE HERO AS PRIEST. LUTHER; REFORMATION: KNOX; PURITANISM.

Our present discourse is to be of the Great Man as Priest. We have repeatedly endeavored to explain that all sorts of Heroes are

intrinsically
of the same material; that given a great soul, open to the Divine Significance of Life, then there is given a man fit to speak of this, to sing of this, to fight and work for this, in a great, victorious,

enduring
manner; there is given a Hero, --the outward shape of whom will depend on the time and the environment he finds himself in. The Priest too, as I understand it, is a kind of Prophet; in him too there is required to be a light of inspiration, as we must name it. He presides over the worship

of
the people; is the Uniter of them with the Unseen Holy. He is the spiritual Captain of the people; as the Prophet is their spiritual King with many captains: he guides them heavenward, by wise guidance through this Earth and its work. The ideal of him is, that he too be what we can call a voice from the unseen Heaven; interpreting, even as the Prophet

did,
and in a more familiar manner unfolding the same to men. The unseen Heaven, --the "open secret of the Universe," --which so few have an eye

for!
He is the Prophet shorn of his more awful splendor; burning with mild equable radiance, as the enlightener of daily life. This, I say, is the ideal of a Priest. So in old times; so in these, and in all times. One knows very well that, in reducing ideals to practice, great latitude of tolerance is needful; very great. But a Priest who is not this at all,

who
does not any longer aim or try to be this, is a character --of whom we had rather not speak in this place.

Luther and Knox were by express vocation Priests, and did faithfully perform that function in its common sense. Yet it will suit us better

here
to consider them chiefly in their historical character, rather as

Reformers
than Priests. There have been other Priests perhaps equally notable, in

calmer times, for doing faithfully the office of a Leader of Worship; bringing down, by faithful heroism in that kind, a light from Heaven into the daily life of their people; leading them forward, as under God's guidance, in the way wherein they were to go. But when this same _way_

was

a rough one, of battle, confusion and danger, the spiritual Captain, who led through that, becomes, especially to us who live under the fruit of

his

leading, more notable than any other. He is the warfaring and battling Priest; who led his people, not to quiet faithful labor as in smooth

times,

but to faithful valorous conflict, in times all violent, dismembered: a more perilous service, and a more memorable one, be it higher or not. These two men we will account our best Priests, inasmuch as they were our best Reformers. Nay I may ask, Is not every true Reformer, by the nature of him, a _Priest_ first of all? He appeals to Heaven's invisible

justice

against Earth's visible force; knows that it, the invisible, is strong

and

alone strong. He is a believer in the divine truth of things; a _seer_, seeing through the shows of things; a worshipper, in one way or the

other,

of the divine truth of things; a Priest, that is. If he be not first a Priest, he will never be good for much as a Reformer.

Thus then, as we have seen Great Men, in various situations, building up Religions, heroic Forms of human Existence in this world, Theories of

Life

worthy to be sung by a Dante, Practices of Life by a Shakspeare, --we are now to see the reverse process; which also is necessary, which also may

be

carried on in the Heroic manner. Curious how this should be necessary: yet necessary it is. The mild shining of the Poet's light has to give place to the fierce lightning of the Reformer: unfortunately the

Reformer

too is a personage that cannot fail in History! The Poet indeed, with

his

mildness, what is he but the product and ultimate adjustment of Reform,

or

Prophecy, with its fierceness? No wild Saint Dominics and Thebaid Eremites, there had been no melodious Dante; rough Practical Endeavor, Scandinavian and other, from Odin to Walter Raleigh, from Ufila to Cranmer, enabled Shakspeare to speak. Nay the finished Poet, I remark sometimes, is a symptom that his epoch itself has reached perfection and

is

finished; that before long there will be a new epoch, new Reformers

needed.

Doubtless it were finer, could we go along always in the way of _music_;

be

tamed and taught by our Poets, as the rude creatures were by their

Orpheus

of old. Or failing this rhythmic _musical_ way, how good were it could

we
get so much as into the equable way; I mean, if peaceable Priests,
reforming from day to day, would always suffice us! But it is not so;
even
this latter has not yet been realized. Alas, the battling Reformer too
is,
from time to time, a needful and inevitable phenomenon. Obstructions are
never wanting: the very things that were once indispensable furtherances
become obstructions; and need to be shaken off, and left behind us, --a
business often of enormous difficulty. It is notable enough, surely, how
a
Theorem or spiritual Representation, so we may call it, which once took
in
the whole Universe, and was completely satisfactory in all parts of it to
the highly discursive acute intellect of Dante, one of the greatest in
the
world, --had in the course of another century become dubitable to common
intellects; become deniable; and is now, to every one of us, flatly
incredible, obsolete as Odin's Theorem! To Dante, human Existence, and
God's ways with men, were all well represented by those Malebolges,
Purgatorios; to Luther not well. How was this? Why could not Dante's
Catholicism continue; but Luther's Protestantism must needs follow?

Alas,
nothing will continue.

I do not make much of "Progress of the Species," as handled in these
times
of ours; nor do I think you would care to hear much about it. The talk
on
that subject is too often of the most extravagant, confused sort. Yet I
may say, the fact itself seems certain enough; nay we can trace out the
inevitable necessity of it in the nature of things. Every man, as I have
stated somewhere, is not only a learner but a doer: he learns with the
mind given him what has been; but with the same mind he discovers
farther,
he invents and devises somewhat of his own. Absolutely without
originality
there is no man. No man whatever believes, or can believe, exactly what
his grandfather believed: he enlarges somewhat, by fresh discovery, his
view of the Universe, and consequently his Theorem of the

Universe, --which
is an infinite Universe, and can never be embraced wholly or finally by
any view or Theorem, in any conceivable enlargement: he enlarges

somewhat,
I say; finds somewhat that was credible to his grandfather incredible to
him, false to him, inconsistent with some new thing he has discovered or
observed. It is the history of every man; and in the history of Mankind

we
see it summed up into great historical amounts, --revolutions, new epochs.
Dante's Mountain of Purgatory does not stand "in the ocean of the other
Hemisphere," when Columbus has once sailed thither! Men find no such

thing
extant in the other Hemisphere. It is not there. It must cease to be
believed to be there. So with all beliefs whatsoever in this world, --all
Systems of Belief, and Systems of Practice that spring from these.

If we add now the melancholy fact, that when Belief waxes uncertain, Practice too becomes unsound, and errors, injustices and miseries everywhere more and more prevail, we shall see material enough for revolution. At all turns, a man who will _do_ faithfully, needs to

believe

firmly. If he have to ask at every turn the world's suffrage; if he

cannot

dispense with the world's suffrage, and make his own suffrage serve, he

is

a poor eye-servant; the work committed to him will be _misdone_. Every such man is a daily contributor to the inevitable downfall. Whatsoever work he does, dishonestly, with an eye to the outward look of it, is a

new

offence, parent of new misery to somebody or other. Offences accumulate till they become insupportable; and are then violently burst through, cleared off as by explosion. Dante's sublime Catholicism, incredible now in theory, and defaced still worse by faithless, doubting and dishonest practice, has to be torn asunder by a Luther, Shakspeare's noble

Feudalism,

as beautiful as it once looked and was, has to end in a French

Revolution.

The accumulation of offences is, as we say, too literally _exploded_, blasted asunder volcanically; and there are long troublous periods,

before

matters come to a settlement again.

Surely it were mournful enough to look only at this face of the matter,

and

find in all human opinions and arrangements merely the fact that they

were

uncertain, temporary, subject to the law of death! At bottom, it is not so: all death, here too we find, is but of the body, not of the essence

or

soul; all destruction, by violent revolution or howsoever it be, is but

new

creation on a wider scale. Odinism was _Valor_; Christianity was _Humility_, a nobler kind of Valor. No thought that ever dwelt honestly

as

true in the heart of man but _was_ an honest insight into God's truth on man's part, and _has_ an essential truth in it which endures through all changes, an everlasting possession for us all. And, on the other hand, what a melancholy notion is that, which has to represent all men, in all countries and times except our own, as having spent their life in blind condemnable error, mere lost Pagans, Scandinavians, Mahometans, only that we might have the true ultimate knowledge! All generations of men were lost and wrong, only that this present little section of a generation

might

be saved and right. They all marched forward there, all generations

since

the beginning of the world, like the Russian soldiers into the ditch of Schweidnitz Fort, only to fill up the ditch with their dead bodies, that

we

might march over and take the place! It is an incredible hypothesis.

Such incredible hypothesis we have seen maintained with fierce emphasis; and this or the other poor individual man, with his sect of individual

men,
marching as over the dead bodies of all men, towards sure victory but

when
he too, with his hypothesis and ultimate infallible credo, sank into the ditch, and became a dead body, what was to be said?--Withal, it is an important fact in the nature of man, that he tends to reckon his own insight as final, and goes upon it as such. He will always do it, I suppose, in one or the other way; but it must be in some wider, wiser way than this. Are not all true men that live, or that ever lived, soldiers

of
the same army, enlisted, under Heaven's captaincy, to do battle against

the
same enemy, the empire of Darkness and Wrong? Why should we misknow one another, fight not against the enemy but against ourselves, from mere difference of uniform? All uniforms shall be good, so they hold in them true valiant men. All fashions of arms, the Arab turban and swift scimitar, Thor's strong hammer smiting down _Jotuns_, shall be welcome. Luther's battle-voice, Dante's march-melody, all genuine things are with us, not against us. We are all under one Captain. soldiers of the same host.--Let us now look a little at this Luther's fighting; what kind of battle it was, and how he comported himself in it. Luther too was of our spiritual Heroes; a Prophet to his country and time.

As introductory to the whole, a remark about Idolatry will perhaps be in place here. One of Mahomet's characteristics, which indeed belongs to

all
Prophets, is unlimited implacable zeal against Idolatry. It is the grand theme of Prophets: Idolatry, the worshipping of dead Idols as the Divinity, is a thing they cannot away with, but have to denounce continually, and brand with inexorable reprobation; it is the chief of

all
the sins they see done under the sun. This is worth noting. We will not enter here into the theological question about Idolatry. Idol is _Eidolon_, a thing seen, a symbol. It is not God, but a Symbol of God;

and
perhaps one may question whether any the most benighted mortal ever took

it
for more than a Symbol. I fancy, he did not think that the poor image

his
own hands had made _was_ God; but that God was emblamed by it, that God

was
in it some way or other. And now in this sense, one may ask, Is not all worship whatsoever a worship by Symbols, by _eidola_, or things seen? Whether _seen_, rendered visible as an image or picture to the bodily

eye;
or visible only to the inward eye, to the imagination, to the intellect: this makes a superficial, but no substantial difference. It is still a Thing Seen, significant of Godhead; an Idol. The most rigorous Puritan

has
his Confession of Faith, and intellectual Representation of Divine

things,
and worships thereby; thereby is worship first made possible for him.

All
creeds, liturgies, religious forms, conceptions that fitly invest

religious
feelings, are in this sense eidola, things seen. All worship

whatsoever
must proceed by Symbols, by Idols: --we may say, all Idolatry is
comparative, and the worst Idolatry is only more idolatrous.

Where, then, lies the evil of it? Some fatal evil must lie in it, or
earnest prophetic men would not on all hands so reprobate it. Why is
Idolatry so hateful to Prophets? It seems to me as if, in the worship of
those poor wooden symbols, the thing that had chiefly provoked the

Prophet,
and filled his inmost soul with indignation and aversion, was not exactly
what suggested itself to his own thought, and came out of him in words to
others, as the thing. The rudest heathen that worshipped Canopus, or the
Caabah Black-Stone, he, as we saw, was superior to the horse that
worshipped nothing at all! Nay there was a kind of lasting merit in that
poor act of his; analogous to what is still meritorious in Poets:
recognition of a certain endless divine beauty and significance in

stars
and all natural objects whatsoever. Why should the Prophet so

mercilessly
condemn him? The poorest mortal worshipping his Fetish, while his heart

is
full of it, may be an object of pity, of contempt and avoidance, if you
will; but cannot surely be an object of hatred. Let his heart be
honestly full of it, the whole space of his dark narrow mind illuminated
thereby; in one word, let him entirely believe in his Fetish, --it will
then be, I should say, if not well with him, yet as well as it can

readily
be made to be, and you will leave him alone, unmolested there.

But here enters the fatal circumstance of Idolatry, that, in the era of

the
Prophets, no man's mind is any longer honestly filled with his Idol or
Symbol. Before the Prophet can arise who, seeing through it, knows it to
be mere wood, many men must have begun dimly to doubt that it was little
more. Condemnable Idolatry is insincere Idolatry. Doubt has eaten out
the heart of it: a human soul is seen clinging spasmodically to an Ark

of
the Covenant, which it half feels now to have become a Phantasm. This is
one of the baleful sights. Souls are no longer filled with their
Fetish; but only pretend to be filled, and would fain make themselves

feel
that they are filled. "You do not believe," said Coleridge; "you only
believe that you believe." It is the final scene in all kinds of Worship
and Symbolism; the sure symptom that death is now nigh. It is equivalent
to what we call Formulism, and Worship of Formulas, in these days of

ours.
No more immoral act can be done by a human creature; for it is the
beginning of all immorality, or rather it is the impossibility henceforth
of any morality whatsoever: the innermost moral soul is paralyzed

thereby,
cast into fatal magnetic sleep! Men are no longer sincere men. I do

not

wonder that the earnest man denounces this, brands it, prosecutes it with
inextinguishable aversion. He and it, all good and it, are at

death-feud.

Blamable Idolatry is Cant, and even what one may call Sincere-Cant.
Sincere-Cant: that is worth thinking of! Every sort of Worship ends

with

this phasis.

I find Luther to have been a Breaker of Idols, no less than any other
Prophet. The wooden gods of the Koreish, made of timber and bees-wax,

were

not more hateful to Mahomet than Tetzels Pardons of Sin, made of

sheepskin

and ink, were to Luther. It is the property of every Hero, in every

time,

in every place and situation, that he come back to reality; that he stand
upon things, and not shows of things. According as he loves, and
venerates, articulately or with deep speechless thought, the awful
realities of things, so will the hollow shows of things, however regular,
decorous, accredited by Koreishes or Conclaves, be intolerable and
detestable to him. Protestantism, too, is the work of a Prophet: the
prophet-work of that sixteenth century. The first stroke of honest
demolition to an ancient thing grown false and idolatrous; preparatory

afar

off to a new thing, which shall be true, and authentically divine!

At first view it might seem as if Protestantism were entirely destructive
to this that we call Hero-worship, and represent as the basis of all
possible good, religious or social, for mankind. One often hears it said
that Protestantism introduced a new era, radically different from any the
world had ever seen before: the era of "private judgment," as they call
it. By this revolt against the Pope, every man became his own Pope; and
learnt, among other things, that he must never trust any Pope, or

spiritual

Hero-captain, any more! Whereby, is not spiritual union, all hierarchy

and

subordination among men, henceforth an impossibility? So we hear it
said. --Now I need not deny that Protestantism was a revolt against
spiritual sovereignties, Popes and much else. Nay I will grant that
English Puritanism, revolt against earthly sovereignties, was the second
act of it; that the enormous French Revolution itself was the third act,
whereby all sovereignties earthly and spiritual were, as might seem,
abolished or made sure of abolition. Protestantism is the grand root

from

which our whole subsequent European History branches out. For the
spiritual will always body itself forth in the temporal history of men;

the

spiritual is the beginning of the temporal. And now, sure enough, the

cry

is everywhere for Liberty and Equality, Independence and so forth;

instead

of Kings, Ballot-boxes and Electoral suffrages: it seems made out that
any Hero-sovereign, or loyal obedience of men to a man, in things

temporal

or things spiritual, has passed away forever from the world. I should

despair of the world altogether, if so. One of my deepest convictions

is,
that it is not so. Without sovereigns, true sovereigns, temporal and
spiritual, I see nothing possible but an anarchy; the hateful est of

things.

But I find Protestantism, whatever anarchic democracy it have produced,

to

be the beginning of new genuine sovereignty and order. I find it to be a
revolt against _false_ sovereigns; the painful but indispensable first
preparative for _true_ sovereigns getting place among us! This is worth
explaining a little.

Let us remark, therefore, in the first place, that this of "private
judgment" is, at bottom, not a new thing in the world, but only new at

that

epoch of the world. There is nothing generically new or peculiar in the
Reformation; it was a return to Truth and Reality in opposition to
Falsehood and Semblance, as all kinds of Improvement and genuine Teaching
are and have been. Liberty of private judgment, if we will consider it,
must at all times have existed in the world. Dante had not put out his
eyes, or tied shackles on himself; he was at home in that Catholicism of
his, a free-seeing soul in it, --if many a poor Hogstraten, Tetzels, and

Dr.

Eck had now become slaves in it. Liberty of judgment? No iron chain, or
outward force of any kind, could ever compel the soul of a man to believe
or to disbelieve: it is his own indefeasible light, that judgment of

his;

he will reign, and believe there, by the grace of God alone! The

sorriest

sophistical Bellarmine, preaching sightless faith and passive obedience,
must first, by some kind of _conviction_, have abdicated his right to be
convinced. His "private judgment" indicated that, as the advisablest

step

he could take. The right of private judgment will subsist, in full
force, wherever true men subsist. A true man _believes_ with his whole
judgment, with all the illumination and discernment that is in him, and

has

always so believed. A false man, only struggling to "believe that he
believes," will naturally manage it in some other way. Protestantism

said

to this latter, Woe! and to the former, Well done! At bottom, it was no
new saying; it was a return to all old sayings that ever had been said.

Be

genuine, be sincere: that was, once more, the meaning of it. Mahomet
believed with his whole mind; Odin with his whole mind, --he, and all

true

Followers of Odinism. They, by their private judgment, had "judged
"--_so_.

And now I venture to assert, that the exercise of private judgment,
faithfully gone about, does by no means necessarily end in selfish
independence, isolation; but rather ends necessarily in the opposite of
that. It is not honest inquiry that makes anarchy; but it is error,
insincerity, half-belief and untruth that make it. A man protesting
against error is on the way towards uniting himself with all men that
believe in truth. There is no communion possible among men who believe
only in hearsays. The heart of each is lying dead; has no power of

sympathy even with things, --or he would believe them and not

hearsays.

No sympathy even with things; how much less with his fellow-men! He

cannot

unite with men; he is an anarchic man. Only in a world of sincere men is unity possible; --and there, in the long-run, it is as good as certain.

For observe one thing, a thing too often left out of view, or rather altogether lost sight of in this controversy: That it is not necessary a man should himself have discovered the truth he is to believe in, and never so sincerely to believe in. A Great Man, we said, was always sincere, as the first condition of him. But a man need not be great in order to be sincere; that is not the necessity of Nature and all Time,

but

only of certain corrupt unfortunate epochs of Time. A man can believe,

and

make his own, in the most genuine way, what he has received from another; --and with boundless gratitude to that other! The merit of originality is not novelty; it is sincerity. The believing man is the original man; whatsoever he believes, he believes it for himself, not for another. Every son of Adam can become a sincere man, an original man, in this sense; no mortal is doomed to be an insincere man. Whole ages, what we call ages of Faith, are original; all men in them, or the most of men

in

them, sincere. These are the great and fruitful ages: every worker, in all spheres, is a worker not on semblance but on substance; every work issues in a result: the general sum of such work is great; for all of

it,

as genuine, tends towards one goal; all of it is additive, none of it subtractive. There is true union, true kingship, loyalty, all true and blessed things, so far as the poor Earth can produce blessedness for men.

Hero-worship? Ah me, that a man be self-subsistent, original, true, or what we call it, is surely the farthest in the world from indisposing him to reverence and believe other men's truth! It only disposes,

necessitates

and invincibly compels him to disbelieve other men's dead formulas, hearsays and untruths. A man embraces truth with his eyes open, and because his eyes are open: does he need to shut them before he can love his Teacher of truth? He alone can love, with a right gratitude and genuine loyalty of soul, the Hero-Teacher who has delivered him out of darkness into light. Is not such a one a true Hero and Serpent-queller; worthy of all reverence! The black monster, Falsehood, our one enemy in this world, lies prostrate by his valor; it was he that conquered the

world

for us! --See, accordingly, was not Luther himself revered as a true Pope, or Spiritual Father, being verily such? Napoleon, from amid boundless revolt of Sansculottism, became a King. Hero-worship never

dies,

nor can die. Loyalty and Sovereignty are everlasting in the world: --and there is this in them, that they are grounded not on garnitures and semblances, but on realities and sincerities. Not by shutting your eyes, your "private judgment;" no, but by opening them, and by having something to see! Luther's message was deposition and abolition to all false Popes and Potentates, but life and strength, though afar off, to new genuine ones.

All this of Liberty and Equality, Electoral suffrages, Independence and

so

forth, we will take, therefore, to be a temporary phenomenon, by no means
a
final one. Though likely to last a long time, with sad enough

embroilments

for us all, we must welcome it, as the penalty of sins that are past, the
pledge of inestimable benefits that are coming. In all ways, it behooved
men to quit simulacra and return to fact; cost what it might, that did
behoove to be done. With spurious Popes, and Believers having no private
judgment, --quacks pretending to command over dupes, --what can you do?
Misery and mischief only. You cannot make an association out of

insincere

men; you cannot build an edifice except by plummet and level, --at
right-angles to one another! In all this wild revolutionary work, from
Protestantism downwards, I see the blessedest result preparing itself:

not

abolition of Hero-worship, but rather what I would call a whole World of
Heroes. If Hero mean sincere man, why may not every one of us be a

Hero?

A world all sincere, a believing world: the like has been; the like will
again be, --cannot help being. That were the right sort of Worshippers

for

Heroes: never could the truly Better be so revered as where all were
True and Good! --But we must hasten to Luther and his Life.

Luther's birthplace was Eisleben in Saxony; he came into the world there

on

the 10th of November, 1483. It was an accident that gave this honor to
Eisleben. His parents, poor mine-laborers in a village of that region,
named Mohra, had gone to the Eisleben Winter-Fair: in the tumult of this
scene the Frau Luther was taken with travail, found refuge in some poor
house there, and the boy she bore was named MARTIN LUTHER. Strange

enough

to reflect upon it. This poor Frau Luther, she had gone with her husband
to make her small merchandisings; perhaps to sell the lock of yarn she

had

been spinning, to buy the small winter-necessaries for her narrow hut or
household; in the whole world, that day, there was not a more entirely
unimportant-looking pair of people than this Miner and his Wife. And yet
what were all Emperors, Popes and Potentates, in comparison? There was
born here, once more, a Mighty Man; whose light was to flame as the

beacon

over long centuries and epochs of the world; the whole world and its
history was waiting for this man. It is strange, it is great. It leads

us

back to another Birth-hour, in a still meaner environment, Eighteen

Hundred

years ago, --of which it is fit that we say nothing, that we think only

in

silence; for what words are there! The Age of Miracles past? The Age of
Miracles is forever here! --

I find it altogether suitable to Luther's function in this Earth, and
doubtless wisely ordered to that end by the Providence presiding over him
and us and all things, that he was born poor, and brought up poor, one of
the poorest of men. He had to beg, as the school-children in those times

did; singing for alms and bread, from door to door. Hardship, rigorous Necessity was the poor boy's companion; no man nor no thing would put on

a false face to flatter Martin Luther. Among things, not among the shows

of things, had he to grow. A boy of rude figure, yet with weak health, with his large greedy soul, full of all faculty and sensibility, he suffered greatly. But it was his task to get acquainted with _realities_, and

keep acquainted with them, at whatever cost: his task was to bring the whole world back to reality, for it had dwelt too long with semblance! A youth nursed up in wintry whirlwinds, in desolate darkness and difficulty, that he may step forth at last from his stormy Scandinavia, strong as a true man, as a god: a Christian Odin, --a right Thor once more, with his thunder-hammer, to smite asunder ugly enough _Jotuns_ and Giant-monsters!

Perhaps the turning incident of his life, we may fancy, was that death of his friend Alexis, by lightning, at the gate of Erfurt. Luther had struggled up through boyhood, better and worse; displaying, in spite of

all hindrances, the largest intellect, eager to learn: his father judging doubtless that he might promote himself in the world, set him upon the study of Law. This was the path to rise; Luther, with little will in it either way, had consented: he was now nineteen years of age. Alexis and he had been to see the old Luther people at Mansfeldt; were got back

again near Erfurt, when a thunder-storm came on; the bolt struck Alexis, he

fell dead at Luther's feet. What is this Life of ours?--gone in a moment,

burnt up like a scroll, into the blank Eternity! What are all earthly preferments, Chancellorships, Kingships? They lie shrunk

together--there! The Earth has opened on them; in a moment they are not, and Eternity is. Luther, struck to the heart, determined to devote himself to God and

God's service alone. In spite of all dissuasions from his father and others,

he became a Monk in the Augustine Convent at Erfurt.

This was probably the first light-point in the history of Luther, his

purser will now first decisively uttering itself; but, for the present, it was still as one light-point in an element all of darkness. He says he was a pious monk, *_ich bin ein frommer Monch gewesen_*; faithfully, painfully struggling to work out the truth of this high act of his; but it was to little purpose. His misery had not lessened; had rather, as it were, increased into infinitude. The drudgeries he had to do, as novice in his Convent, all sorts of slave-work, were not his grievance: the deep

earnest soul of the man had fallen into all manner of black scruples,

dubitations; he believed himself likely to die soon, and far worse than die. One

hears with a new interest for poor Luther that, at this time, he lived in

terror
of the unspeakable misery; fancied that he was doomed to eternal
reprobation. Was it not the humble sincere nature of the man? What was
he, that he should be raised to Heaven! He that had known only misery,

and
mean slavery: the news was too blessed to be credible. It could not
become clear to him how, by fasts, vigils, formalities and mass-work, a
man's soul could be saved. He fell into the blackest wretchedness; had

to
wander staggering as on the verge of bottomless Despair.

It must have been a most blessed discovery, that of an old Latin Bible
which he found in the Erfurt Library about this time. He had never seen
the Book before. It taught him another lesson than that of fasts and
vigils. A brother monk too, of pious experience, was helpful. Luther
learned now that a man was saved not by singing masses, but by the

infinite
grace of God: a more credible hypothesis. He gradually got himself
founded, as on the rock. No wonder he should venerate the Bible, which

had
brought this blessed help to him. He prized it as the Word of the

Highest
must be prized by such a man. He determined to hold by that; as through
life and to death he firmly did.

This, then, is his deliverance from darkness, his final triumph over
darkness, what we call his conversion; for himself the most important of
all epochs. That he should now grow daily in peace and clearness; that,
unfolding now the great talents and virtues implanted in him, he should
rise to importance in his Convent, in his country, and be found more and
more useful in all honest business of life, is a natural result. He was
sent on missions by his Augustine Order, as a man of talent and fidelity
fit to do their business well: the Elector of Saxony, Friedrich, named

the
Wise, a truly wise and just prince, had cast his eye on him as a valuable
person; made him Professor in his new University of Wittenberg, Preacher
too at Wittenberg; in both which capacities, as in all duties he did,

this
Luther, in the peaceable sphere of common life, was gaining more and more
esteem with all good men.

It was in his twenty-seventh year that he first saw Rome; being sent
thither, as I said, on mission from his Convent. Pope Julius the Second,
and what was going on at Rome, must have filled the mind of Luther with
amazement. He had come as to the Sacred City, throne of God's

High-priest
on Earth; and he found it--what we know! Many thoughts it must have

given
the man; many which we have no record of, which perhaps he did not

himself
know how to utter. This Rome, this scene of false priests, clothed not

in
the beauty of holiness, but in far other vesture, is _false_: but what

is
it to Luther? A mean man he, how shall he reform a world? That was far
from his thoughts. A humble, solitary man, why should he at all meddle

with the world? It was the task of quite higher men than he. His

business

was to guide his own footsteps wisely through the world. Let him do his own obscure duty in it well; the rest, horrible and dismal as it looks,

is

in God's hand, not in his.

It is curious to reflect what might have been the issue, had Roman Popery happened to pass this Luther by; to go on in its great wasteful orbit,

and

not come athwart his little path, and force him to assault it!

Conceivable

enough that, in this case, he might have held his peace about the abuses

of

Rome; left Providence, and God on high, to deal with them! A modest

quiet

man; not prompt he to attack irreverently persons in authority. His

clear

task, as I say, was to do his own duty; to walk wisely in this world of confused wickedness, and save his own soul alive. But the Roman High-priesthood did come athwart him: afar off at Wittenberg he, Luther, could not get lived in honesty for it; he remonstrated, resisted, came to extremity; was struck at, struck again, and so it came to wager of battle between them! This is worth attending to in Luther's history. Perhaps

no

man of so humble, peaceable a disposition ever filled the world with contention. We cannot but see that he would have loved privacy, quiet diligence in the shade; that it was against his will he ever became a notoriety. Notoriety: what would that do for him? The goal of his

march

through this world was the Infinite Heaven; an indubitable goal for him: in a few years, he should either have attained that, or lost it forever! We will say nothing at all, I think, of that sorrowfullest of theories, of its being some mean shopkeeper grudge, of the Augustine Monk against the Dominican, that first kindled the wrath of Luther, and produced the Protestant Reformation. We will say to the people who maintain it, if indeed any such exist now: Get first into the sphere of thought by which it is so much as possible to judge of Luther, or of any man like Luther, otherwise than distractedly; we may then begin arguing with you.

The Monk Tetzel, sent out carelessly in the way of trade, by Leo Tenth, --who merely wanted to raise a little money, and for the rest seems to have been a Pagan rather than a Christian, so far as he was anything, --arrived at Wittenberg, and drove his scandalous trade there. Luther's flock bought Indulgences; in the confessional of his Church, people pleaded to him that they had already got their sins pardoned. Luther, if he would not be found wanting at his own post, a false

sluggard

and coward at the very centre of the little space of ground that was his own and no other man's, had to step forth against Indulgences, and

declare

aloud that they were a futility and sorrowful mockery, that no man's

sins

could be pardoned by them. It was the beginning of the whole Reformation. We know how it went; forward from this first public

challenge

of Tetzel, on the last day of October, 1517, through remonstrance and argument; --spreading ever wider, rising ever higher; till it became unquenchable, and enveloped all the world. Luther's heart's desire was

to have this grief and other griefs amended; his thought was still far other than that of introducing separation in the Church, or revolting against

the Pope, Father of Christendom. --The elegant Pagan Pope cared little about this Monk and his doctrines; wished, however, to have done with the noise of him: in a space of some three years, having tried various softer methods, he thought good to end it by fire. He dooms the Monk's

writings to be burnt by the hangman, and his body to be sent bound to Rome, --probably for a similar purpose. It was the way they had ended

with Huss, with Jerome, the century before. A short argument, fire. Poor

Huss: he came to that Constance Council, with all imaginable promises and safe-conducts; an earnest, not rebellious kind of man: they laid him instantly in a stone dungeon "three feet wide, six feet high, seven feet long;" burnt the true voice of him out of this world; choked it in

smoke and fire. That was not well done!

I, for one, pardon Luther for now altogether revolting against the Pope. The elegant Pagan, by this fire-decree of his, had kindled into noble

just wrath the bravest heart then living in this world. The bravest, if also one of the humblest, peaceablest; it was now kindled. These words of

mine, words of truth and soberness, aiming faithfully, as human inability would allow, to promote God's truth on Earth, and save men's souls, you, God's vicegerent on earth, answer them by the hangman and fire? You will burn

me and them, for answer to the God's-message they strove to bring you? You are not God's vicegerent; you are another's than his, I think! I take

your Bull, as an emparchmented Lie, and burn it. You will do what you see good next: this is what I do. --It was on the 10th of December, 1520,

three years after the beginning of the business, that Luther, "with a great concourse of people," took this indignant step of burning the Pope's fire-decree "at the Elster-Gate of Wittenberg." Wittenberg looked on

"with shoutings;" the whole world was looking on. The Pope should not have provoked that "shout"! It was the shout of the awakening of nations.

The quiet German heart, modest, patient of much, had at length got more than

it could bear. Formulism, Pagan Popeism, and other Falsehood and corrupt Semblance had ruled long enough: and here once more was a man found who durst tell all men that God's-world stood not on semblances but on realities; that Life was a truth, and not a lie!

At bottom, as was said above, we are to consider Luther as a Prophet

Idol-breaker; a bringer-back of men to reality. It is the function of great men and teachers. Mahomet said, These idols of yours are wood; you put wax and oil on them, the flies stick on them: they are not God, I

tell

you, they are black wood! Luther said to the Pope, This thing of yours that you call a Pardon of Sins, it is a bit of rag-paper with ink. It is nothing else; it, and so much like it, is nothing else. God alone can pardon sins. Popeship, spiritual Fatherhood of God's Church, is that a vain semblance, of cloth and parchment? It is an awful fact. God's

Church

is not a semblance, Heaven and Hell are not semblances. I stand on this, since you drive me to it. Standing on this, I a poor German Monk am stronger than you all. I stand solitary, friendless, but on God's Truth; you with your tiaras, triple-hats, with your treasures and armories, thunders spiritual and temporal, stand on the Devil's Lie, and are not so strong! --

The Diet of Worms, Luther's appearance there on the 17th of April, 1521, may be considered as the greatest scene in Modern European History; the point, indeed, from which the whole subsequent history of civilization takes its rise. After multiplied negotiations, disputations, it had come to this. The young Emperor Charles Fifth, with all the Princes of

Germany,

Papal nuncios, dignitaries spiritual and temporal, are assembled there: Luther is to appear and answer for himself, whether he will recant or

not.

The world's pomp and power sits there on this hand: on that, stands up

for

God's Truth, one man, the poor miner Hans Luther's Son. Friends had reminded him of Huss, advised him not to go; he would not be advised. A large company of friends rode out to meet him, with still more earnest warnings; he answered, "Were there as many Devils in Worms as there are roof-tiles, I would on." The people, on the morrow, as he went to the

Hall

of the Diet, crowded the windows and house-tops, some of them calling out to him, in solemn words, not to recant: "Whosoever denieth me before

men!"

they cried to him, --as in a kind of solemn petition and adjuration. Was

it

not in reality our petition too, the petition of the whole world, lying

in

dark bondage of soul, paralyzed under a black spectral Nightmare and triple-hatted Chimera, calling itself Father in God, and what not: "Free us; it rests with thee; desert us not!"

Luther did not desert us. His speech, of two hours, distinguished itself by its respectful, wise and honest tone; submissive to whatsoever could lawfully claim submission, not submissive to any more than that. His writings, he said, were partly his own, partly derived from the Word of God. As to what was his own, human infirmity entered into it; unguarded anger, blindness, many things doubtless which it were a blessing for him could he abolish altogether. But as to what stood on sound truth and the Word of God, he could not recant it. How could he? "Confute me," he concluded, "by proofs of Scripture, or else by plain just arguments: I cannot recant otherwise. For it is neither safe nor prudent to do aught against conscience. Here stand I; I can do no other: God assist

me!" --It

is, as we say, the greatest moment in the Modern History of Men. English Puritanism, England and its Parliaments, Americas, and vast work these

two
centuries; French Revolution, Europe and its work everywhere at present:
the germ of it all lay there: had Luther in that moment done other, it

had
all been otherwise! The European World was asking him: Am I to sink

ever
lower into falsehood, stagnant putrescence, loathsome accursed death; or,
with whatever paroxysm, to cast the falsehoods out of me, and be cured

and
live?--

Great wars, contentions and disunion followed out of this Reformation;
which last down to our day, and are yet far from ended. Great talk and
crimination has been made about these. They are lamentable, undeniable;
but after all, what has Luther or his cause to do with them? It seems
strange reasoning to charge the Reformation with all this. When Hercules
turned the purifying river into King Augeas's stables, I have no doubt

the
confusion that resulted was considerable all around: but I think it was
not Hercules's blame; it was some other's blame! The Reformation might
bring what results it liked when it came, but the Reformation simply

could
not help coming. To all Popes and Popes' advocates, expostulating,
lamenting and accusing, the answer of the world is: Once for all, your
Popehood has become untrue. No matter how good it was, how good you say

it
is, we cannot believe it; the light of our whole mind, given us to walk

by
from Heaven above, finds it henceforth a thing unbelievable. We will not
believe it, we will not try to believe it,--we dare not! The thing is
untrue; we were traitors against the Giver of all Truth, if we durst
pretend to think it true. Away with it; let whatsoever likes come in the
place of it: with _it_ we can have no farther trade!--Luther and his
Protestantism is not responsible for wars; the false Simulacra that

forced
him to protest, they are responsible. Luther did what every man that God
has made has not only the right, but lies under the sacred duty, to do:
answered a Falsehood when it questioned him, Dost thou believe

me?--No! --At
what cost soever, without counting of costs, this thing behooved to be
done. Union, organization spiritual and material, a far nobler than any
Popedom or Feudalism in their truest days, I never doubt, is coming for

the
world; sure to come. But on Fact alone, not on Semblance and Simulacrum,
will it be able either to come, or to stand when come. With union

grounded
on falsehood, and ordering us to speak and act lies, we will not have
anything to do. Peace? A brutal lethargy is peaceable, the noisome

grave
is peaceable. We hope for a living peace, not a dead one!

And yet, in prizing justly the indispensable blessings of the New, let us
not be unjust to the Old. The Old was true, if it no longer is. In
Dante's days it needed no sophistry, self-blinding or other dishonesty,

to
get itself reckoned true. It was good then; nay there is in the soul of
it
a deathless good. The cry of "No Popery" is foolish enough in these
days.

The speculation that Popery is on the increase, building new chapels and
so
forth, may pass for one of the idlest ever started. Very curious: to
count up a few Popish chapels, listen to a few Protestant
logic-choppings, --to much dull-droning drowsy inanity that still calls
itself Protestant, and say: See, Protestantism is dead; Popery is

more
alive than it, will be alive after it!--Drowsy inanities, not a few, that
call themselves Protestant are dead; but Protestantism has not died

yet,
that I hear of! Protestantism, if we will look, has in these days

produced
its Goethe, its Napoleon; German Literature and the French Revolution;
rather considerable signs of life! Nay, at bottom, what else is alive
but Protestantism? The life of most else that one meets is a galvanic
one merely, --not a pleasant, not a lasting sort of life!

Popery can build new chapels; welcome to do so, to all lengths. Popery
cannot come back, any more than Paganism can, --which also still lingers
in some countries. But, indeed, it is with these things, as with the
ebbing of the sea: you look at the waves oscillating hither, thither on
the beach; for minutes you cannot tell how it is going; look in half an
hour where it is, --look in half a century where your Popehood is! Alas,
would there were no greater danger to our Europe than the poor old Pope's
revival! Thor may as soon try to revive. --And withal this oscillation

has
a meaning. The poor old Popehood will not die away entirely, as Thor has
done, for some time yet; nor ought it. We may say, the Old never dies

till
this happen, Till all the soul of good that was in it have got itself
transfused into the practical New. While a good work remains capable of
being done by the Romish form; or, what is inclusive of all, while a

pious
life remains capable of being led by it, just so long, if we consider,
will this or the other human soul adopt it, go about as a living witness

of
it. So long it will obtrude itself on the eye of us who reject it, till

we
in our practice too have appropriated whatsoever of truth was in it.

Then,
but also not till then, it will have no charm more for any man. It lasts
here for a purpose. Let it last as long as it can. --

Of Luther I will add now, in reference to all these wars and bloodshed,

the
noticeable fact that none of them began so long as he continued living.
The controversy did not get to fighting so long as he was there. To me

it
is proof of his greatness in all senses, this fact. How seldom do we

find

a man that has stirred up some vast commotion, who does not himself

perish,

swept away in it! Such is the usual course of revolutionists. Luther continued, in a good degree, sovereign of this greatest revolution; all Protestants, of what rank or function soever, looking much to him for guidance: and he held it peaceable, continued firm at the centre of it.

A

man to do this must have a kingly faculty: he must have the gift to discern at all turns where the true heart of the matter lies, and to

plant

himself courageously on that, as a strong true man, that other true men

may

rally round him there. He will not continue leader of men otherwise. Luther's clear deep force of judgment, his force of all sorts, of silence, of tolerance and moderation, among others, are very notable in these circumstances.

Tolerance, I say; a very genuine kind of tolerance: he distinguishes

what

is essential, and what is not; the unessential may go very much as it

will.

A complaint comes to him that such and such a Reformed Preacher "will not preach without a cassock." Well, answers Luther, what harm will a

cassock

do the man? "Let him have a cassock to preach in; let him have three cassocks if he find benefit in them!" His conduct in the matter of Karlstadt's wild image-breaking; of the Anabaptists; of the Peasants'

War,

shows a noble strength, very different from spasmodic violence. With

sure

prompt insight he discriminates what is what: a strong just man, he

speaks

forth what is the wise course, and all men follow him in that. Luther's Written Works give similar testimony of him. The dialect of these speculations is now grown obsolete for us; but one still reads them with

a

singular attraction. And indeed the mere grammatical diction is still legible enough; Luther's merit in literary history is of the greatest:

his

dialect became the language of all writing. They are not well written, these Four-and-twenty Quartos of his; written hastily, with quite other than literary objects. But in no Books have I found a more robust, genuine, I will say noble faculty of a man than in these. A rugged honesty, homeliness, simplicity; a rugged sterling sense and strength.

He

dashes out illumination from him; his smiting idiomatic phrases seem to cleave into the very secret of the matter. Good humor too, nay tender affection, nobleness and depth: this man could have been a Poet too! He had to work an Epic Poem, not write one. I call him a great Thinker;

as

indeed his greatness of heart already betokens that.

Richter says of Luther's words, "His words are half-battles." They may

be called so. The essential quality of him was, that he could fight and conquer; that he was a right piece of human Valor. No more valiant man,

no mortal heart to be called braver, that one has record of, ever lived in that Teutonic Kindred, whose character is valor. His defiance of the "Devils" in Worms was not a mere boast, as the like might be if now

spoken.

It was a faith of Luther's that there were Devils, spiritual denizens of the Pit, continually besetting men. Many times, in his writings, this turns up; and a most small sneer has been grounded on it by some. In the room of the Wartburg where he sat translating the Bible, they still show you a black spot on the wall; the strange memorial of one of these conflicts. Luther sat translating one of the Psalms; he was worn down

with

long labor, with sickness, abstinence from food: there rose before him some hideous indefinable Image, which he took for the Evil One, to forbid his work: Luther started up, with fiend-defiance; flung his inkstand at the spectre, and it disappeared! The spot still remains there; a curious monument of several things. Any apothecary's apprentice can now tell us what we are to think of this apparition, in a scientific sense: but the man's heart that dare rise defiant, face to face, against Hell itself,

can

give no higher proof of fearlessness. The thing he will quail before exists not on this Earth or under it.--Fearless enough! "The Devil is aware," writes he on one occasion, "that this does not proceed out of

fear

in me. I have seen and defied innumerable Devils. Duke George," of Leipzig, a great enemy of his, "Duke George is not equal to one Devil,"--far short of a Devil! "If I had business at Leipzig, I would

ride

into Leipzig, though it rained Duke Georges for nine days running." What

a

reservoir of Dukes to ride into!--

At the same time, they err greatly who imagine that this man's courage

was

ferocity, mere coarse disobedient obstinacy and savagery, as many do.

Far

from that. There may be an absence of fear which arises from the absence of thought or affection, from the presence of hatred and stupid fury. We do not value the courage of the tiger highly! With Luther it was far otherwise; no accusation could be more unjust than this of mere ferocious violence brought against him. A most gentle heart withal, full of pity

and

love, as indeed the truly valiant heart ever is. The tiger before a stronger foe--flies: the tiger is not what we call valiant, only

fierce

and cruel. I know few things more touching than those soft breathings of affection, soft as a child's or a mother's, in this great wild heart of Luther. So honest, unadulterated with any cant; homely, rude in their utterance; pure as water welling from the rock. What, in fact, was all that down-pressed mood of despair and reprobation, which we saw in his youth, but the outcome of pre-eminent thoughtful gentleness, affections

too

keen and fine? It is the course such men as the poor Poet Cowper fall

into. Luther to a slight observer might have seemed a timid, weak man; modesty, affectionate shrinking tenderness the chief distinction of him. It is a noble valor which is roused in a heart like this, once stirred up into defiance, all kindled into a heavenly blaze.

In Luther's Table-Talk, a posthumous Book of anecdotes and sayings collected by his friends, the most interesting now of all the Books proceeding from him, we have many beautiful unconscious displays of the man, and what sort of nature he had. His behavior at the death-bed of

his
little Daughter, so still, so great and loving, is among the most

affecting things. He is resigned that his little Magdalene should die, yet longs inexpressibly that she might live; --follows, in awe-struck thought, the flight of her little soul through those unknown realms. Awe-struck; most heartfelt, we can see; and sincere, --for after all dogmatic creeds and articles, he feels what nothing it is that we know, or can know: His little Magdalene shall be with God, as God wills; for Luther too that is all; Islam is all.

Once, he looks out from his solitary Patmos, the Castle of Coburg, in the middle of the night: The great vault of Immensity, long flights of

clouds
sailing through it, --dumb, gaunt, huge: --who supports all that? "None

ever
saw the pillars of it; yet it is supported." God supports it. We must know that God is great, that God is good; and trust, where we cannot see. --Returning home from Leipzig once, he is struck by the beauty of the harvest-fields: How it stands, that golden yellow corn, on its fair

taper
stem, its golden head bent, all rich and waving there, --the meek Earth,

at
God's kind bidding, has produced it once again; the bread of man! --In the garden at Wittenberg one evening at sunset, a little bird has perched for the night: That little bird, says Luther, above it are the stars and

deep
Heaven of worlds; yet it has folded its little wings; gone trustfully to rest there as in its home: the Maker of it has given it too a home! --Neither are mirthful turns wanting: there is a great free human heart in this man. The common speech of him has a rugged nobleness, idiomatic, expressive, genuine; gleams here and there with beautiful

poetic
tints. One feels him to be a great brother man. His love of Music, indeed, is not this, as it were, the summary of all these affections in him? Many a wild unutterability he spoke forth from him in the tones of his flute. The Devils fled from his flute, he says. Death-defiance on

the
one hand, and such love of music on the other; I could call these the two opposite poles of a great soul; between these two all great things had room.

Luther's face is to me expressive of him; in Kranach's best portraits I find the true Luther. A rude plebeian face; with its huge crag-like

brows
and bones, the emblem of rugged energy; at first, almost a repulsive

face.
Yet in the eyes especially there is a wild silent sorrow; an unnamable melancholy, the element of all gentle and fine affections; giving to the

rest the true stamp of nobleness. Laughter was in this Luther, as we
said;
but tears also were there. Tears also were appointed him; tears and hard
toil. The basis of his life was Sadness, Earnestness. In his latter
days,
after all triumphs and victories, he expresses himself heartily weary of
living; he considers that God alone can and will regulate the course
things
are taking, and that perhaps the Day of Judgment is not far. As for him,
he longs for one thing: that God would release him from his labor, and
let
him depart and be at rest. They understand little of the man who cite
this
in discredit of him! --I will call this Luther a true Great Man; great in
intellect, in courage, affection and integrity; one of our most lovable
and
precious men. Great, not as a hewn obelisk; but as an Alpine
mountain, --so
simple, honest, spontaneous, not setting up to be great at all; there for
quite another purpose than being great! Ah yes, unsubduable granite,
piercing far and wide into the Heavens; yet in the clefts of it
fountains,
green beautiful valleys with flowers! A right Spiritual Hero and
Prophet;
once more, a true Son of Nature and Fact, for whom these centuries, and
many that are to come yet, will be thankful to Heaven.

The most interesting phasis which the Reformation anywhere assumes,
especially for us English, is that of Puritanism. In Luther's own
country
Protestantism soon dwindled into a rather barren affair: not a religion
or
faith, but rather now a theological jangling of argument, the proper seat
of it not the heart; the essence of it sceptical contention: which
indeed
has jangled more and more, down to Voltairism itself, --through
Gustavus-Adolphus contentions onwards to French-Revolution ones! But in
our Island there arose a Puritanism, which even got itself established as
a
Presbyterianism and National Church among the Scotch; which came forth as
a
real business of the heart; and has produced in the world very notable
fruit. In some senses, one may say it is the only phasis of
Protestantism
that ever got to the rank of being a Faith, a true heart-communication
with
Heaven, and of exhibiting itself in History as such. We must spare a few
words for Knox; himself a brave and remarkable man; but still more
important as Chief Priest and Founder, which one may consider him to be,
of
the Faith that became Scotland's, New England's, Oliver Cromwell's.

History will have something to say about this, for some time to come!

We may censure Puritanism as we please; and no one of us, I suppose, but would find it a very rough defective thing. But we, and all men, may understand that it was a genuine thing; for Nature has adopted it, and it has grown, and grows. I say sometimes, that all goes by wager-of-battle

in this world; that strength, well understood, is the measure of all worth.

Give a thing time; if it can succeed, it is a right thing. Look now at American Saxondom; and at that little Fact of the sailing of the

Mayflower, two hundred years ago, from Delft Haven in Holland! Were we of open

sense as the Greeks were, we had found a Poem here; one of Nature's own Poems, such as she writes in broad facts over great continents. For it was properly the beginning of America: there were straggling settlers in America before, some material as of a body was there; but the soul of it was first this. These poor men, driven out of their own country, not

able well to live in Holland, determine on settling in the New World. Black untamed forests are there, and wild savage creatures; but not so cruel as Star-chamber hangmen. They thought the Earth would yield them food, if they tilled honestly; the everlasting heaven would stretch, there too, overhead; they should be left in peace, to prepare for Eternity by living well in this world of Time; worshipping in what they thought the true,

not the idolatrous way. They clubbed their small means together; hired a

ship, the little ship Mayflower, and made ready to set sail.

In Neal's History of the Puritans [Neal (London, 1755), i. 490] is an account of the ceremony of their departure: solemnity, we might call it rather, for it was a real act of worship. Their minister went down with them to the beach, and their brethren whom they were to leave behind; all joined in solemn prayer, That God would have pity on His poor children,

and go with them into that waste wilderness, for He also had made that, He

was there also as well as here. --Hah! These men, I think, had a work! The weak thing, weaker than a child, becomes strong one day, if it be a true thing. Puritanism was only despicable, laughable then; but nobody can manage to laugh at it now. Puritanism has got weapons and sinews; it has firearms, war-navies; it has cunning in its ten fingers, strength in its right arm; it can steer ships, fell forests, remove mountains; --it is one of the strongest things under this sun at present!

In the history of Scotland, too, I can find properly but one epoch: we

may say, it contains nothing of world-interest at all but this Reformation by Knox. A poor barren country, full of continual broils, dissensions, massacrings; a people in the last state of rudeness and destitution;

little better perhaps than Ireland at this day. Hungry fierce barons, not so

much as able to form any arrangement with each other how to divide what they fleeced from these poor drudges; but obliged, as the Colombian Republics

are at this day, to make of every alteration a revolution; no way of changing a ministry but by hanging the old ministers on gibbets: this is

a historical spectacle of no very singular significance! "Bravery" enough,

I doubt not; fierce fighting in abundance: but not braver or fiercer than that of their old Scandinavian Sea-king ancestors; _whose_ exploits we

have not found worth dwelling on! It is a country as yet without a soul: nothing developed in it but what is rude, external, semi-animal. And now at the Reformation, the internal life is kindled, as it were, under the ribs of this outward material death. A cause, the noblest of causes kindles itself, like a beacon set on high; high as Heaven, yet attainable from Earth; --whereby the meanest man becomes not a Citizen only, but a Member of Christ's visible Church; a veritable Hero, if he prove a true man!

Well; this is what I mean by a whole "nation of heroes;" a _believing_ nation. There needs not a great soul to make a hero; there needs a god-created soul which will be true to its origin; that will be a great soul! The like has been seen, we find. The like will be again seen,

under wider forms than the Presbyterian: there can be no lasting good done

till then. --Impossible! say some. Possible? Has it not _been_, in this

world, as a practiced fact? Did Hero-worship fail in Knox's case? Or are we

made of other clay now? Did the Westminster Confession of Faith add some new property to the soul of man? God made the soul of man. He did not doom any soul of man to live as a Hypothesis and Hearsay, in a world filled

with such, and with the fatal work and fruit of such! --

But to return: This that Knox did for his Nation, I say, we may really call a resurrection as from death. It was not a smooth business; but it was welcome surely, and cheap at that price, had it been far rougher. On the whole, cheap at any price! --as life is. The people began to _live_: they needed first of all to do that, at what cost and costs soever.

Scotch Literature and Thought, Scotch Industry; James Watt, David Hume, Walter Scott, Robert Burns: I find Knox and the Reformation acting in the

heart's core of every one of these persons and phenomena; I find that without the Reformation they would not have been. Or what of Scotland? The

Puritanism of Scotland became that of England, of New England. A tumult in the High Church of Edinburgh spread into a universal battle and struggle over all these realms; --there came out, after fifty years' struggling, what we all call the "_Glorious_ Revolution" a _Habeas Corpus_ Act, Free Parliaments, and much else! --Alas, is it not too true what we said, That many men in

the van do always, like Russian soldiers, march into the ditch of

Schweidnitz, and fill it up with their dead bodies, that the rear may pass over them dry-shod, and gain the honor? How many earnest rugged Cromwells, Knoxes,

poor Peasant Covenanters, wrestling, battling for very life, in rough
miry
places, have to struggle, and suffer, and fall, greatly censured,
bemired, --before a beautiful Revolution of Eighty-eight can step over
them in official pumps and silk-stockings, with universal
three-times-three!

It seems to me hard measure that this Scottish man, now after three
hundred
years, should have to plead like a culprit before the world;

intrinsically
for having been, in such way as it was then possible to be, the bravest
of
all Scotchmen! Had he been a poor Half-and-half, he could have crouched
into the corner, like so many others; Scotland had not been delivered;

and
Knox had been without blame. He is the one Scotchman to whom, of all
others, his country and the world owe a debt. He has to plead that
Scotland would forgive him for having been worth to it any million
"unblamable" Scotchmen that need no forgiveness! He bared his breast to
the battle; had to row in French galleys, wander forlorn in exile, in
clouds and storms; was censured, shot at through his windows; had a right
sore fighting life: if this world were his place of recompense, he had
made but a bad venture of it. I cannot apologize for Knox. To him it is
very indifferent, these two hundred and fifty years or more, what men say
of him. But we, having got above all those details of his battle, and
living now in clearness on the fruits of his victory, we, for our own

sake,
ought to look through the rumors and controversies enveloping the man,
into
the man himself.

For one thing, I will remark that this post of Prophet to his Nation was
not of his seeking; Knox had lived forty years quietly obscure, before he
became conspicuous. He was the son of poor parents; had got a college
education; become a Priest; adopted the Reformation, and seemed well
content to guide his own steps by the light of it, nowise unduly

intruding
it on others. He had lived as Tutor in gentlemen's families; preaching
when any body of persons wished to hear his doctrine: resolute he to

walk
by the truth, and speak the truth when called to do it; not ambitious of
more; not fancying himself capable of more. In this entirely obscure way
he had reached the age of forty; was with the small body of Reformers who
were standing siege in St. Andrew's Castle, --when one day in their

chapel,
the Preacher after finishing his exhortation to these fighters in the
forlorn hope, said suddenly, That there ought to be other speakers, that
all men who had a priest's heart and gift in them ought now to
speak; --which gifts and heart one of their own number, John Knox the name
of him, had: Had he not? said the Preacher, appealing to all the

audience:
what then is _his_ duty? The people answered affirmatively; it was a
criminal forsaking of his post, if such a man held the word that was in

him
silent. Poor Knox was obliged to stand up; he attempted to reply; he

could

say no word; --burst into a flood of tears, and ran out. It is worth remembering, that scene. He was in grievous trouble for some days. He felt what a small faculty was his for this great work. He felt what a baptism he was called to be baptized withal. He "burst into tears."

Our primary characteristic of a Hero, that he is sincere, applies emphatically to Knox. It is not denied anywhere that this, whatever

might

be his other qualities or faults, is among the truest of men. With a singular instinct he holds to the truth and fact; the truth alone is

there

for him, the rest a mere shadow and deceptive nonentity. However feeble, forlorn the reality may seem, on that and that only _can_ he take his stand. In the Galleys of the River Loire, whither Knox and the others, after their Castle of St. Andrew's was taken, had been sent as Galley-slaves, --some officer or priest, one day, presented them an Image

of

the Virgin Mother, requiring that they, the blasphemous heretics, should

do

it reverence. Mother? Mother of God? said Knox, when the turn came to him: This is no Mother of God: this is "_a pented bredd_," --_a_ piece

of

wood, I tell you, with paint on it! She is fitter for swimming, I think, than for being worshipped, added Knox; and flung the thing into the

river.

It was not very cheap jesting there: but come of it what might, this

thing

to Knox was and must continue nothing other than the real truth; it was a _pented bredd_: worship it he would not.

He told his fellow-prisoners, in this darkest time, to be of courage; the Cause they had was the true one, and must and would prosper; the whole world could not put it down. Reality is of God's making; it is alone strong. How many _pented bredds_, pretending to be real, are fitter to swim than to be worshipped! --This Knox cannot live but by fact: he

clings

to reality as the shipwrecked sailor to the cliff. He is an instance to

us

how a man, by sincerity itself, becomes heroic: it is the grand gift he has. We find in Knox a good honest intellectual talent, no transcendent one; --a narrow, inconsiderable man, as compared with Luther: but in heartfelt instinctive adherence to truth, in _sincerity_, as we say, he

has

no superior; nay, one might ask, What equal he has? The heart of him is

of

the true Prophet cast. "He lies there," said the Earl of Morton at his grave, "who never feared the face of man." He resembles, more than any

of

the moderns, an Old-Hebrew Prophet. The same inflexibility, intolerance, rigid narrow-looking adherence to God's truth, stern rebuke in the name

of

God to all that forsake truth: an Old-Hebrew Prophet in the guise of an Edinburgh Minister of the Sixteenth Century. We are to take him for

that;

not require him to be other.

Knox's conduct to Queen Mary, the harsh visits he used to make in her own palace, to reprove her there, have been much commented upon. Such

cruelty,

such coarseness fills us with indignation. On reading the actual

narrative

of the business, what Knox said, and what Knox meant, I must say one's tragic feeling is rather disappointed. They are not so coarse, these speeches; they seem to me about as fine as the circumstances would

permit!

Knox was not there to do the courtier; he came on another errand.

Whoever,

reading these colloquies of his with the Queen, thinks they are vulgar insolences of a plebeian priest to a delicate high lady, mistakes the purport and essence of them altogether. It was unfortunately not

possible

to be polite with the Queen of Scotland, unless one proved untrue to the Nation and Cause of Scotland. A man who did not wish to see the Land of his birth made a hunting-field for intriguing ambitious Guises, and the Cause of God trampled underfoot of Falsehoods, Formulas and the Devil's Cause, had no method of making himself agreeable! "Better that women weep," said Morton, "than that bearded men be forced to weep." Knox was the constitutional opposition-party in Scotland: the Nobles of the country, called by their station to take that post, were not found in it; Knox had to go, or no one. The hapless Queen; --but the still more

hapless

Country, if _she_ were made happy! Mary herself was not without

sharpness

enough, among her other qualities: "Who are you," said she once, "that presume to school the nobles and sovereign of this realm?"--"Madam, a subject born within the same," answered he. Reasonably answered! If the "subject" have truth to speak, it is not the "subject's" footing that

will

fail him here. --

We blame Knox for his intolerance. Well, surely it is good that each of

us

be as tolerant as possible. Yet, at bottom, after all the talk there is and has been about it, what is tolerance? Tolerance has to tolerate the unessential; and to see well what that is. Tolerance has to be noble, measured, just in its very wrath, when it can tolerate no longer. But,

on

the whole, we are not altogether here to tolerate! We are here to

resist,

to control and vanquish withal. We do not "tolerate" Falsehoods, Thieveries, Iniquities, when they fasten on us; we say to them, Thou art false, thou art not tolerable! We are here to extinguish Falsehoods, and put an end to them, in some wise way! I will not quarrel so much with

the

way; the doing of the thing is our great concern. In this sense Knox

was,

full surely, intolerant.

A man sent to row in French Gallies, and such like, for teaching the

Truth
in his own land, cannot always be in the mildest humor! I am not
prepared
to say that Knox had a soft temper; nor do I know that he had what we
call
an ill temper. An ill nature he decidedly had not. Kind honest
affections
dwelt in the much-enduring, hard-worn, ever-battling man. That he
could
rebuke Queens, and had such weight among those proud turbulent Nobles,
proud enough whatever else they were; and could maintain to the end a
kind
of virtual Presidency and Sovereignty in that wild realm, he who was only
"a subject born within the same:" this of itself will prove to us that
he
was found, close at hand, to be no mean acrid man; but at heart a
healthful, strong, sagacious man. Such alone can bear rule in that kind.
They blame him for pulling down cathedrals, and so forth, as if he were a
seditious rioting demagogue: precisely the reverse is seen to be the
fact,
in regard to cathedrals and the rest of it, if we examine! Knox wanted
no
pulling down of stone edifices; he wanted leprosy and darkness to be
thrown
out of the lives of men. Tumult was not his element; it was the tragic
feature of his life that he was forced to dwell so much in that. Every
such man is the born enemy of Disorder; hates to be in it: but what
then?
Smooth Falsehood is not Order; it is the general sum-total of Disorder.
Order is Truth, --each thing standing on the basis that belongs to it:
Order and Falsehood cannot subsist together.

Withal, unexpectedly enough, this Knox has a vein of drollery in him;
which
I like much, in combination with his other qualities. He has a true eye
for the ridiculous. His History, with its rough earnestness, is
curiously enlivened with this. When the two Prelates, entering Glasgow
Cathedral, quarrel about precedence; march rapidly up, take to hustling
one
another, twitching one another's rochets, and at last flourishing their
crossiers like quarter-staves, it is a great sight for him every way! Not
mockery, scorn, bitterness alone; though there is enough of that too.

But
a true, loving, illuminating laugh mounts up over the earnest visage; not
a
loud laugh; you would say, a laugh in the eyes most of all. An
honest-hearted, brotherly man; brother to the high, brother also to the
low; sincere in his sympathy with both. He had his pipe of Bourdeaux
too,
we find, in that old Edinburgh house of his; a cheery social man, with
faces that loved him! They go far wrong who think this Knox was a
gloomy,
spasmodic, shrieking fanatic. Not at all: he is one of the solidest of

men. Practical, cautious-hopeful, patient; a most shrewd, observing, quietly discerning man. In fact, he has very much the type of character

we
assign to the Scotch at present: a certain sardonic taciturnity is in

him;
insight enough; and a stouter heart than he himself knows of. He has the power of holding his peace over many things which do not vitally concern him, --"They? what are they?" But the thing which does vitally concern

him,
that thing he will speak of; and in a tone the whole world shall be made
to
hear: all the more emphatic for his long silence.

This Prophet of the Scotch is to me no hateful man! --He had a sore fight

of
an existence; wrestling with Popes and Principalities; in defeat, contention, life-long struggle; rowing as a galley-slave, wandering as an exile. A sore fight: but he won it. "Have you hope?" they asked him in his last moment, when he could no longer speak. He lifted his finger, "pointed upwards with his finger," and so died. Honor to him! His works have not died. The letter of his work dies, as of all men's; but the spirit of it never.

One word more as to the letter of Knox's work. The unforgivable offence

in
him is, that he wished to set up Priests over the head of Kings. In

other
words, he strove to make the Government of Scotland a _Theocracy_. This indeed is properly the sum of his offences, the essential sin; for which what pardon can there be? It is most true, he did, at bottom,

consciously
or unconsciously, mean a Theocracy, or Government of God. He did mean

that
Kings and Prime Ministers, and all manner of persons, in public or

private,
diplomating or whatever else they might be doing, should walk according to the Gospel of Christ, and understand that this was their Law, supreme over all laws. He hoped once to see such a thing realized; and the Petition, _Thy Kingdom come_, no longer an empty word. He was sore

grieved
when he saw greedy worldly Barons clutch hold of the Church's property; when he expostulated that it was not secular property, that it was spiritual property, and should be turned to _true_ churchly uses, education, schools, worship; --and the Regent Murray had to answer, with a shrug of the shoulders, "It is a devout imagination!" This was Knox's scheme of right and truth; this he zealously endeavored after, to realize it. If we think his scheme of truth was too narrow, was not true, we may rejoice that he could not realize it; that it remained after two

centuries
of effort, unrealizable, and is a "devout imagination" still. But how shall we blame _him_ for struggling to realize it? Theocracy, Government of God, is precisely the thing to be struggled for! All Prophets,

zealous
Priests, are there for that purpose. Hildebrand wished a Theocracy; Cromwell wished it, fought for it; Mahomet attained it. Nay, is it not what all zealous men, whether called Priests, Prophets, or whatsoever

else
called, do essentially wish, and must wish? That right and truth, or
God's
Law, reign supreme among men, this is the Heavenly Ideal (well named in
Knox's time, and namable in all times, a revealed "Will of God") towards
which the Reformer will insist that all be more and more approximated.

All
true Reformers, as I said, are by the nature of them Priests, and strive
for a Theocracy.

How far such Ideals can ever be introduced into Practice, and at what

point
our impatience with their non-introduction ought to begin, is always a
question. I think we may say safely, Let them introduce themselves as

far
as they can contrive to do it! If they are the true faith of men, all

men
ought to be more or less impatient always where they are not found
introduced. There will never be wanting Regent Murrays enough to shrug
their shoulders, and say, "A devout imagination!" We will praise the
Hero-priest rather, who does what is in him to bring them in; and wears
out, in toil, calumny, contradiction, a noble life, to make a God's

Kingdom
of this Earth. The Earth will not become too godlike!

[May 19, 1840.]

LECTURE V.

THE HERO AS MAN OF LETTERS. JOHNSON, ROUSSEAU, BURNS.

Hero-Gods, Prophets, Poets, Priests are forms of Heroism that belong to

the
old ages, make their appearance in the remotest times; some of them have
ceased to be possible long since, and cannot any more show themselves in
this world. The Hero as Man of Letters, again, of which class we are

to
speak to-day, is altogether a product of these new ages; and so long as

the
wondrous art of Writing, or of Ready-writing which we call Printing,
subsists, he may be expected to continue, as one of the main forms of
Heroism for all future ages. He is, in various respects, a very singular
phenomenon.

He is new, I say; he has hardly lasted above a century in the world yet.
Never, till about a hundred years ago, was there seen any figure of a

Great
Soul living apart in that anomalous manner; endeavoring to speak forth

the
inspiration that was in him by Printed Books, and find place and
subsistence by what the world would please to give him for doing that.
Much had been sold and bought, and left to make its own bargain in the
market-place; but the inspired wisdom of a Heroic Soul never till then,

in
that naked manner. He, with his copy-rights and copy-wrongs, in his
squalid garret, in his rusty coat; ruling (for this is what he does),

from
his grave, after death, whole nations and generations who would, or would
not, give him bread while living, --is a rather curious spectacle! Few
shapes of Heroism can be more unexpected.

Alas, the Hero from of old has had to cramp himself into strange shapes:
the world knows not well at any time what to do with him, so foreign is

his
aspect in the world! It seemed absurd to us, that men, in their rude
admiration, should take some wise great Odin for a god, and worship him

as
such; some wise great Mahomet for one god-inspired, and religiously

follow
his Law for twelve centuries: but that a wise great Johnson, a Burns, a
Rousseau, should be taken for some idle nondescript, extant in the world

to
amuse idleness, and have a few coins and applauses thrown him, that he
might live thereby; _this_ perhaps, as before hinted, will one day seem a
still absurder phasis of things! --Meanwhile, since it is the spiritual
always that determines the material, this same Man-of-Letters Hero must

be
regarded as our most important modern person. He, such as he may be, is
the soul of all. What he teaches, the whole world will do and make. The
world's manner of dealing with him is the most significant feature of the
world's general position. Looking well at his life, we may get a glance,
as deep as is readily possible for us, into the life of those singular
centuries which have produced him, in which we ourselves live and work.

There are genuine Men of Letters, and not genuine; as in every kind there
is a genuine and a spurious. If _hero_ be taken to mean genuine, then I
say the Hero as Man of Letters will be found discharging a function for

us
which is ever honorable, ever the highest; and was once well known to be
the highest. He is uttering forth, in such way as he has, the inspired
soul of him; all that a man, in any case, can do. I say _inspired_; for
what we call "originality," "sincerity," "genius," the heroic quality we
have no good name for, signifies that. The Hero is he who lives in the
inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine and Eternal, which exists
always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial: his being is in
that; he declares that abroad, by act or speech as it may be in declaring
himself abroad. His life, as we said before, is a piece of the

everlasting
heart of Nature herself: all men's life is, --but the weak many know not
the fact, and are untrue to it, in most times; the strong few are strong,
heroic, perennial, because it cannot be hidden from them. The Man of
Letters, like every Hero, is there to proclaim this in such sort as he

can.
Intrinsically it is the same function which the old generations named a

man
Prophet, Priest, Divinity for doing; which all manner of Heroes, by

speech
or by act, are sent into the world to do.

Fichte the German Philosopher delivered, some forty years ago at

Erlangen,
a highly remarkable Course of Lectures on this subject: "_Ueber das

Wesen

des Gelehrten_, On the Nature of the Literary Man." Fichte, in conformity with the Transcendental Philosophy, of which he was a distinguished teacher, declares first: That all things which we see or work with in this Earth, especially we ourselves and all persons, are as a kind of vesture or sensuous Appearance: that under all there lies, as the essence of them, what he calls the "Divine Idea of the World;" this is the Reality which "lies at the bottom of all Appearance." To the mass of men no such Divine Idea is recognizable in the world; they live merely, says Fichte, among the superficialities, practicalities and shows of the world, not dreaming that there is anything divine under them. But the Man of Letters is sent hither specially that he may discern for himself, and make manifest to us, this same Divine Idea: in every new generation it will manifest itself in a new dialect; and he is there for the purpose of doing that. Such is Fichte's phraseology; with which we need not quarrel. It is his way of naming what I here, by other words, am striving imperfectly to name; what there is at present no name for: The unspeakable Divine Significance, full of splendor, of wonder and terror, that lies in the being of every man, of every thing, --the Presence of the God who made every man and thing. Mahomet taught this in his dialect; Odin in his: it is the thing which all thinking hearts, in one dialect or another, are here to teach. Fichte calls the Man of Letters, therefore, a Prophet, or as he prefers to phrase it, a Priest, continually unfolding the Godlike to men: Men of Letters are a perpetual Priesthood, from age to age, teaching all men that a God is still present in their life, that all "Appearance," whatsoever we see in the world, is but as a vesture for the "Divine Idea of the World," for "that which lies at the bottom of Appearance." In the true Literary Man there is thus ever, acknowledged or not by the world, a sacredness: he is the light of the world; the world's Priest; --guiding it, like a sacred Pillar of Fire, in its dark pilgrimage through the waste of Time. Fichte discriminates with sharp zeal the _true_ Literary Man, what we here call the _Hero_ as Man of Letters, from multitudes of false unheroic. Whoever lives not wholly in this Divine Idea, or living partially in it, struggles not, as for the one good, to live wholly in it, --he is, let him live where else he like, in what pomps and prosperities he like, no Literary Man; he is, says Fichte, a "Bungler, _Stumper_." Or at best, if he belong to the prosaic provinces, he may be a "Hodman;" Fichte even calls him elsewhere

a
"Nonentity," and has in short no mercy for him, no wish that _he_ should continue happy among us! This is Fichte's notion of the Man of Letters. It means, in its own form, precisely what we here mean.

In this point of view, I consider that, for the last hundred years, by

far
the noblest of all Literary Men is Fichte's countryman, Goethe. To

that
man too, in a strange way, there was given what we may call a life in the Divine Idea of the World; vision of the inward divine mystery: and strangely, out of his Books, the world rises imaged once more as godlike, the workmanship and temple of a God. Illuminated all, not in fierce

impure
fire-splendor as of Mahomet, but in mild celestial radiance; --really a Prophecy in these most unprophetic times; to my mind, by far the

greatest,
though one of the quietest, among all the great things that have come to pass in them. Our chosen specimen of the Hero as Literary Man would be this Goethe. And it were a very pleasant plan for me here to discourse

of
his heroism: for I consider him to be a true Hero; heroic in what he

said
and did, and perhaps still more in what he did not say and did not do; to me a noble spectacle: a great heroic ancient man, speaking and keeping silence as an ancient Hero, in the guise of a most modern, high-bred, high-cultivated Man of Letters! We have had no such spectacle; no man capable of affording such, for the last hundred and fifty years.

But at present, such is the general state of knowledge about Goethe, it were worse than useless to attempt speaking of him in this case. Speak

as
I might, Goethe, to the great majority of you, would remain problematic, vague; no impression but a false one could be realized. Him we must

leave
to future times. Johnson, Burns, Rousseau, three great figures from a prior time, from a far inferior state of circumstances, will suit us

better
here. Three men of the Eighteenth Century; the conditions of their life far more resemble what those of ours still are in England, than what Goethe's in Germany were. Alas, these men did not conquer like him; they fought bravely, and fell. They were not heroic bringers of the light,

but
heroic seekers of it. They lived under galling conditions; struggling as under mountains of impediment, and could not unfold themselves into clearness, or victorious interpretation of that "Divine Idea." It is rather the _Tombs_ of three Literary Heroes that I have to show you.

There
are the monumental heaps, under which three spiritual giants lie buried. Very mournful, but also great and full of interest for us. We will

linger
by them for a while.

Complaint is often made, in these times, of what we call the disorganized condition of society: how ill many forces of society fulfil their work;

how many powerful are seen working in a wasteful, chaotic, altogether unarranged manner. It is too just a complaint, as we all know. But perhaps if we look at this of Books and the Writers of Books, we shall

find

here, as it were, the summary of all other disorganizations; --a sort of heart, from which, and to which all other confusion circulates in the world! Considering what Book writers do in the world, and what the world does with Book writers, I should say, It is the most anomalous thing the world at present has to show. --We should get into a sea far beyond sounding, did we attempt to give account of this: but we must glance at

it

for the sake of our subject. The worst element in the life of these

three

Literary Heroes was, that they found their business and position such a chaos. On the beaten road there is tolerable travelling; but it is sore work, and many have to perish, fashioning a path through the impassable!

Our pious Fathers, feeling well what importance lay in the speaking of

man

to men, founded churches, made endowments, regulations; everywhere in the civilized world there is a Pulpit, environed with all manner of complex dignified appurtenances and furtherances, that therefrom a man with the tongue may, to best advantage, address his fellow-men. They felt that

this

was the most important thing; that without this there was no good thing. It is a right pious work, that of theirs; beautiful to behold! But now with the art of Writing, with the art of Printing, a total change has

come

over that business. The Writer of a Book, is not he a Preacher preaching not to this parish or that, on this day or that, but to all men in all times and places? Surely it is of the last importance that he do his work right, whoever do it wrong; --that the eye report not falsely, for then all the other members are astray! Well; how he may do his work, whether he do it right or wrong, or do it at all, is a point which no man in the world has taken the pains to think of. To a certain shopkeeper, trying to get some money for his books, if lucky, he is of some

importance;

to no other man of any. Whence he came, whither he is bound, by what

ways

he arrived, by what he might be furthered on his course, no one asks. He is an accident in society. He wanders like a wild Ishmaelite, in a world of which he is as the spiritual light, either the guidance or the misguidance!

Certainly the Art of Writing is the most miraculous of all things man has devised. Odin's Runes were the first form of the work of a Hero;

Books

written words, are still miraculous Runes, the latest form! In Books lies the soul of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of

the

Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream. Mighty fleets and armies, harbors and arsenals, vast

cities,

high-domed, many-engined, --they are precious, great: but what do they become? Agamemnon, the many Agamemmons, Pericleses, and their Greece;

all

is gone now to some ruined fragments, dumb mournful wrecks and blocks:

but
the Books of Greece! There Greece, to every thinker, still very

literally
lives: can be called up again into life. No magic Rune is stranger

than
a Book. All that Mankind has done, thought, gained or been: it is lying
as in magic preservation in the pages of Books. They are the chosen
possession of men.

Do not Books still accomplish miracles, as Runes were fabled to do?
They persuade men. Not the wretchedest circulating-library novel, which
foolish girls thumb and con in remote villages, but will help to regulate
the actual practical weddings and households of those foolish girls. So
"Celia" felt, so "Clifford" acted: the foolish Theorem of Life, stamped
into those young brains, comes out as a solid Practice one day. Consider
whether any Rune in the wildest imagination of Mythologist ever did

such
wonders as, on the actual firm Earth, some Books have done! What built

St.
Paul's Cathedral? Look at the heart of the matter, it was that divine
Hebrew BOOK, --the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his
Midianitish herds, four thousand years ago, in the wildernesses of Sinai!
It is the strangest of things, yet nothing is truer. With the art of
Writing, of which Printing is a simple, an inevitable and comparatively
insignificant corollary, the true reign of miracles for mankind

commenced.
It related, with a wondrous new contiguity and perpetual closeness, the
Past and Distant with the Present in time and place; all times and all
places with this our actual Here and Now. All things were altered for

men;
all modes of important work of men: teaching, preaching, governing, and
all else.

To look at Teaching, for instance. Universities are a notable,

respectable
product of the modern ages. Their existence too is modified, to the very
basis of it, by the existence of Books. Universities arose while there
were yet no Books procurable; while a man, for a single Book, had to give
an estate of land. That, in those circumstances, when a man had some
knowledge to communicate, he should do it by gathering the learners round
him, face to face, was a necessity for him. If you wanted to know what
Abelard knew, you must go and listen to Abelard. Thousands, as many as
thirty thousand, went to hear Abelard and that metaphysical theology of
his. And now for any other teacher who had also something of his own to
teach, there was a great convenience opened: so many thousands eager to
learn were already assembled yonder; of all places the best place for him
was that. For any third teacher it was better still; and grew ever the
better, the more teachers there came. It only needed now that the King
took notice of this new phenomenon; combined or agglomerated the various
schools into one school; gave it edifices, privileges, encouragements,

and
named it Universitas, or School of all Sciences: the University of
Paris, in its essential characters, was there. The model of all

subsequent
Universities; which down even to these days, for six centuries now, have
gone on to found themselves. Such, I conceive, was the origin of
Universities.

It is clear, however, that with this simple circumstance, facility of

getting Books, the whole conditions of the business from top to bottom were changed. Once invent Printing, you metamorphosed all Universities, or superseded them! The Teacher needed not now to gather men personally

round him, that he might speak to them what he knew: print it in a Book, and all learners far and wide, for a trifle, had it each at his own fireside, much more effectually to learn it!--Doubtless there is still peculiar virtue in Speech; even writers of Books may still, in some circumstances, find it convenient to speak also, --witness our present meeting here!

There is, one would say, and must ever remain while man has a tongue, a distinct province for Speech as well as for Writing and Printing. In regard to

all things this must remain; to Universities among others. But the limits of the two have nowhere yet been pointed out, ascertained; much less put in practice: the University which would completely take in that great new fact, of the existence of Printed Books, and stand on a clear footing for the Nineteenth Century as the Paris one did for the Thirteenth, has not

yet come into existence. If we think of it, all that a University, or final highest School can do for us, is still but what the first School began doing, --teach us to read. We learn to read, in various languages, in various sciences; we learn the alphabet and letters of all manner of

Books. But the place where we are to get knowledge, even theoretic knowledge, is the Books themselves! It depends on what we read, after all manner of Professors have done their best for us. The true University of these

days is a Collection of Books.

But to the Church itself, as I hinted already, all is changed, in its preaching, in its working, by the introduction of Books. The Church is

the working recognized Union of our Priests or Prophets, of those who by wise teaching guide the souls of men. While there was no Writing, even while there was no Easy-writing, or Printing, the preaching of the voice was the natural sole method of performing this. But now with Books! --He

that can write a true Book, to persuade England, is not he the Bishop and Archbishop, the Primate of England and of All England? I many a time

say, the writers of Newspapers, Pamphlets, Poems, Books, these are the real working effective Church of a modern country. Nay not only our

preaching, but even our worship, is not it too accomplished by means of Printed

Books? The noble sentiment which a gifted soul has clothed for us in melodious words, which brings melody into our hearts, --is not this essentially, if

we will understand it, of the nature of worship? There are many, in all countries, who, in this confused time, have no other method of worship.

He

who, in any way, shows us better than we knew before that a lily of the fields is beautiful, does he not show it us as an effluence of the

Fountain
of all Beauty; as the handwriting, made visible there, of the great

Maker
of the Universe? He has sung for us, made us sing with him, a little

verse
of a sacred Psalm. Essentially so. How much more he who sings, who

says,
or in any way brings home to our heart the noble doings, feelings,

darings
and endurances of a brother man! He has verily touched our hearts as

with
a live coal from the altar. Perhaps there is no worship more

authentic.

Literature, so far as it is Literature, is an "apocalypse of Nature," a revealing of the "open secret." It may well enough be named, in Fichte's style, a "continuous revelation" of the Godlike in the Terrestrial and Common. The Godlike does ever, in very truth, endure there; is brought out, now in this dialect, now in that, with various degrees of clearness: all true gifted Singers and Speakers are, consciously or unconsciously, doing so. The dark stormful indignation of a Byron, so wayward and perverse, may have touches of it; nay the withered mockery of a French sceptic, --his mockery of the False, a love and worship of the True. How much more the sphere-harmony of a Shakspeare, of a Goethe; the cathedral music of a Milton! They are something too, those humble genuine

Lark-notes
of a Burns, --skylark, starting from the humble furrow, far overhead into the blue depths, and singing to us so genuinely there! For all true singing is of the nature of worship; as indeed all true working may be said to be, --whereof such singing is but the record, and fit melodious representation, to us. Fragments of a real "Church Liturgy" and "Body of Homilies," strangely disguised from the common eye, are to be found weltering in that huge froth-ocean of Printed Speech we loosely call Literature! Books are our Church too.

Or turning now to the Government of men. Witenagemote, old Parliament,

was
a great thing. The affairs of the nation were there deliberated and decided; what we were to do as a nation. But does not, though the name Parliament subsists, the parliamentary debate go on now, everywhere and

at
all times, in a far more comprehensive way, out of Parliament

al together?
Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact, --very momentous to us in these times. Literature is our Parliament too. Printing, which comes necessarily out of Writing, I say often, is equivalent to Democracy: invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable.

Writing
brings Printing; brings universal everyday extempore Printing, as we see

at
present. Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power, a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in

all acts of authority. It matters not what rank he has, what revenues or garnitures. the requisite thing is, that he have a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite. The nation is

governed

by all that has tongue in the nation: Democracy is virtually there.

Add

only, that whatsoever power exists will have itself, by and by,

organized;

working secretly under bandages, obscurations, obstructions, it will

never

rest till it get to work free, unencumbered, visible to all. Democracy virtually extant will insist on becoming palpably extant.--

On all sides, are we not driven to the conclusion that, of the things

which

man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful and worthy are the things we call Books! Those poor bits of rag-paper with black ink on them; --from the Daily Newspaper to the sacred Hebrew BOOK, what have they not done, what are they not doing! --For indeed, whatever

be

the outward form of the thing (bits of paper, as we say, and black ink),

is

it not verily, at bottom, the highest act of man's faculty that produces

a

Book? It is the Thought of man; the true thaumaturgic virtue; by which man works all things whatsoever. All that he does, and brings to pass,

is

the vesture of a Thought. This London City, with all its houses,

palaces,

steam-engines, cathedrals, and huge immeasurable traffic and tumult, what is it but a Thought, but millions of Thoughts made into One; --a huge immeasurable Spirit of a THOUGHT, embodied in brick, in iron, smoke,

dust,

Palaces, Parliaments, Hackney Coaches, Katherine Docks, and the rest of

it!

Not a brick was made but some man had to think of the making of that brick. --The thing we called "bits of paper with traces of black ink," is the purest embodiment a Thought of man can have. No wonder it is, in

all

ways, the activist and noblest.

All this, of the importance and supreme importance of the Man of Letters

in

modern Society, and how the Press is to such a degree superseding the Pulpit, the Senate, the Senatus Academicus and much else, has been admitted for a good while; and recognized often enough, in late times,

with

a sort of sentimental triumph and wonderment. It seems to me, the Sentimental by and by will have to give place to the Practical. If Men

of

Letters are so incalculably influential, actually performing such work for us from age to age, and even from day to day, then I think we may conclude that Men of Letters will not always wander like unrecognized

unregulated Ishmaelites among us! Whatsoever thing, as I said above, has virtual unnoticed power will cast off its wrappings, bandages, and step forth one day with palpably articulated, universally visible power. That one man wear the clothes, and take the wages, of a function which is done by quite another: there can be no profit in this; this is not right, it

is

wrong. And yet, alas, the making of it right, --what a business, for

long

times to come! Sure enough, this that we call Organization of the

Literary

Guild is still a great way off, encumbered with all manner of

complexities.

If you asked me what were the best possible organization for the Men of Letters in modern society; the arrangement of furtherance and regulation, grounded the most accurately on the actual facts of their position and of the world's position, --I should beg to say that the problem far exceeded

my

faculty! It is not one man's faculty; it is that of many successive men turned earnestly upon it, that will bring out even an approximate

solution.

What the best arrangement were, none of us could say. But if you ask, Which is the worst? I answer: This which we now have, that Chaos should sit umpire in it; this is the worst. To the best, or any good one, there is yet a long way.

One remark I must not omit, That royal or parliamentary grants of money

are

by no means the chief thing wanted! To give our Men of Letters stipends, endowments and all furtherance of cash, will do little towards the business. On the whole, one is weary of hearing about the omnipotence of money. I will say rather that, for a genuine man, it is no evil to be poor; that there ought to be Literary Men poor, --to show whether they are genuine or not! Mendicant Orders, bodies of good men doomed to beg, were instituted in the Christian Church; a most natural and even necessary development of the spirit of Christianity. It was itself founded on Poverty, on Sorrow, Contradiction, Crucifixion, every species of worldly Distress and Degradation. We may say, that he who has not known those things, and learned from them the priceless lessons they have to teach,

has

missed a good opportunity of schooling. To beg, and go barefoot, in

coarse

woollen cloak with a rope round your loins, and be despised of all the world, was no beautiful business; --nor an honorable one in any eye, till the nobleness of those who did so had made it honored of some!

Begging is not in our course at the present time: but for the rest of

it,

who will say that a Johnson is not perhaps the better for being poor? It is needful for him, at all rates, to know that outward profit, that

success

of any kind is not the goal he has to aim at. Pride, vanity, ill-conditioned egoism of all sorts, are bred in his heart, as in every heart; need, above all, to be cast out of his heart, --to be, with

whatever

pangs, torn out of it, cast forth from it, as a thing worthless. Byron, born rich and noble, made out even less than Burns, poor and plebeian.

Who

knows but, in that same "best possible organization" as yet far off, Poverty may still enter as an important element? What if our Men of Letters, men setting up to be Spiritual Heroes, were still _then_, as

they

now are, a kind of "involuntary monastic order;" bound still to this same ugly Poverty, --till they had tried what was in it too, till they had learned to make it too do for them! Money, in truth, can do much, but it cannot do all. We must know the province of it, and confine it there;

and

even spurn it back, when it wishes to get farther.

Besides, were the money-furtherances, the proper season for them, the fit assigner of them, all settled, --how is the Burns to be recognized that merits these? He must pass through the ordeal, and prove himself.

This

ordeal; this wild welter of a chaos which is called Literary Life: this too is a kind of ordeal! There is clear truth in the idea that a

struggle

from the lower classes of society, towards the upper regions and rewards

of

society, must ever continue. Strong men are born there, who ought to

stand

elsewhere than there. The manifold, inextricably complex, universal struggle of these constitutes, and must constitute, what is called the progress of society. For Men of Letters, as for all other sorts of men. How to regulate that struggle? There is the whole question. To leave it as it is, at the mercy of blind Chance; a whirl of distracted atoms, one cancelling the other; one of the thousand arriving saved, nine hundred

and

ninety-nine lost by the way; your royal Johnson languishing inactive in garrets, or harnessed to the yoke of Printer Cave; your Burns dying broken-hearted as a Gauger; your Rousseau driven into mad exasperation, kindling French Revolutions by his paradoxes: this, as we said, is

clearly

enough the _worst_ regulation. The _best_, alas, is far from us!

And yet there can be no doubt but it is coming; advancing on us, as yet hidden in the bosom of centuries: this is a prophecy one can risk. For

so

soon as men get to discern the importance of a thing, they do infallibly set about arranging it, facilitating, forwarding it; and rest not till,

in

some approximate degree, they have accomplished that. I say, of all Priesthoods, Aristocracies, Governing Classes at present extant in the world, there is no class comparable for importance to that Priesthood of the Writers of Books. This is a fact which he who runs may read, --and

draw

inferences from. "Literature will take care of itself," answered Mr.

Pitt,

when applied to for some help for Burns. "Yes," adds Mr. Southey, "it

will

take care of itself; _and of you too_, if you do not look to it!"

The result to individual Men of Letters is not the momentous one; they

are
but individuals, an infinitesimal fraction of the great body; they can struggle on, and live or else die, as they have been wont. But it deeply concerns the whole society, whether it will set its light on high

places,
to walk thereby; or trample it under foot, and scatter it in all ways of wild waste (not without conflagration), as heretofore! Light is the one thing wanted for the world. Put wisdom in the head of the world, the

world
will fight its battle victoriously, and be the best world man can make

it.
I called this anomaly of a disorganic Literary Class the heart of all

other
anomalies, at once product and parent; some good arrangement for that

would
be as the punctum saliens of a new vitality and just arrangement for

all.
Already, in some European countries, in France, in Prussia, one traces

some
beginnings of an arrangement for the Literary Class; indicating the

gradual
possibility of such. I believe that it is possible; that it will have to be possible.

By far the most interesting fact I hear about the Chinese is one on which we cannot arrive at clearness, but which excites endless curiosity even

in
the dim state: this namely, that they do attempt to make their Men of Letters their Governors! It would be rash to say, one understood how

this
was done, or with what degree of success it was done. All such things

must
be very unsuccessful; yet a small degree of success is precious; the very attempt how precious! There does seem to be, all over China, a more or less active search everywhere to discover the men of talent that grow up

in
the young generation. Schools there are for every one: a foolish sort

of
training, yet still a sort. The youths who distinguish themselves in the lower school are promoted into favorable stations in the higher, that

they
may still more distinguish themselves, --forward and forward: it appears

to
be out of these that the Official Persons, and incipient Governors, are taken. These are they whom they try first, whether they can govern or not. And surely with the best hope: for they are the men that have already shown intellect. Try them: they have not governed or

administered
as yet; perhaps they cannot; but there is no doubt they have some Understanding, --without which no man can! Neither is Understanding a tool, as we are too apt to figure; "it is a hand which can handle any tool." Try these men: they are of all others the best worth trying. --Surely there is no kind of government, constitution, revolution,

social apparatus or arrangement, that I know of in this world, so promising to one's scientific curiosity as this. The man of intellect at the top

of affairs: this is the aim of all constitutions and revolutions, if they have any aim. For the man of true intellect, as I assert and believe always, is the noble-hearted man withal, the true, just, humane and

valiant man. Get him for governor, all is got; fail to get him, though you had Constitutions plentiful as blackberries, and a Parliament in every

village, there is nothing yet got! --

These things look strange, truly; and are not such as we commonly

speculate upon. But we are fallen into strange times; these things will require to be speculated upon; to be rendered practicable, to be in some way put in practice. These, and many others. On all hands of us, there is the announcement, audible enough, that the old Empire of Routine has ended; that to say a thing has long been, is no reason for its continuing to be. The things which have been are fallen into decay, are fallen into incompetence; large masses of mankind, in every society of our Europe,

are no longer capable of living at all by the things which have been. When millions of men can no longer by their utmost exertion gain food for themselves, and "the third man for thirty-six weeks each year is short of third-rate potatoes," the things which have been must decidedly prepare

to alter themselves! -- I will now quit this of the organization of Men of Letters.

Alas, the evil that pressed heaviest on those Literary Heroes of ours was not the want of organization for Men of Letters, but a far deeper one;

out of which, indeed, this and so many other evils for the Literary Man, and for all men, had, as from their fountain, taken rise. That our Hero as

Man of Letters had to travel without highway, companionless, through an inorganic chaos, -- and to leave his own life and faculty lying there, as a partial contribution towards _pushing_ some highway through it: this,

had not his faculty itself been so perverted and paralyzed, he might have put up with, might have considered to be but the common lot of Heroes. His fatal misery was the _spiritual paralysis_, so we may name it, of the Age in which his life lay; whereby his life too, do what he might, was half paralyzed! The Eighteenth was a _Sceptical_ Century; in which little

word there is a whole Pandora's Box of miseries. Scepticism means not intellectual Doubt alone, but moral Doubt; all sorts of infidelity, insincerity, spiritual paralysis. Perhaps, in few centuries that one

could specify since the world began, was a life of Heroism more difficult for a man. That was not an age of Faith, -- an age of Heroes! The very possibility of Heroism had been, as it were, formally abnegated in the minds of all. Heroism was gone forever; Triviality, Formulism and Commonplace were come forever. The "age of miracles" had been, or

perhaps
had not been; but it was not any longer. An effete world; wherein

Wonder,
Greatness, Godhood could not now dwell; --in one word, a godless world!

How mean, dwarfish are their ways of thinking, in this time, --compared

not
with the Christian Shakespeares and Miltons, but with the old Pagan

Skalds,
with any species of believing men! The living TREE Igdrasil, with the
melodious prophetic waving of its world-wide boughs, deep-rooted as Hel a,
has died out into the clanking of a World-MACHINE. "Tree" and "Machine:"
contrast these two things. I, for my share, declare the world to be no
machine! I say that it does not go by wheel-and-pinion "motives"
self-interests, checks, balances; that there is something far other in it
than the clank of spinning-jennies, and parliamentary majorities; and, on
the whole, that it is not a machine at all! --The old Norse Heathen had a
truer motion of God's-world than these poor Machine-Sceptics: the old
Heathen Norse were sincere men. But for these poor Sceptics there was

no
sincerity, no truth. Half-truth and hearsay was called truth. Truth,

for
most men, meant plausibility; to be measured by the number of votes you
could get. They had lost any notion that sincerity was possible, or of
what sincerity was. How many Plausibilities asking, with unaffected
surprise and the air of offended virtue, What! am not I sincere?

Spiritual
Paralysis, I say, nothing left but a Mechanical life, was the
characteristic of that century. For the common man, unless happily he
stood below his century and belonged to another prior one, it was
impossible to be a Believer, a Hero; he lay buried, unconscious, under
these baleful influences. To the strongest man, only with infinite
struggle and confusion was it possible to work himself half loose; and

lead
as it were, in an enchanted, most tragical way, a spiritual

death-in-life,
and be a Half-Hero!

Scepticism is the name we give to all this; as the chief symptom, as the
chief origin of all this. Concerning which so much were to be said! It
would take many Discourses, not a small fraction of one Discourse, to

state
what one feels about that Eighteenth Century and its ways. As indeed

this,
and the like of this, which we now call Scepticism, is precisely the

black
malady and life-foe, against which all teaching and discoursing since

man's
life began has directed itself: the battle of Belief against Unbelief is
the never-ending battle! Neither is it in the way of crimination that

one
would wish to speak. Scepticism, for that century, we must consider as

the
decay of old ways of believing, the preparation afar off for new better

and
wider ways, --an inevitable thing. We will not blame men for it; we will
lament their hard fate. We will understand that destruction of old

forms
is not destruction of everlasting _substances_; that Scepticism, as
sorrowful and hateful as we see it, is not an end but a beginning.

The other day speaking, without prior purpose that way, of Bentham's
theory

of man and man's life, I chanced to call it a more beggarly one than
Mahomet's. I am bound to say, now when it is once uttered, that such is

my
deliberate opinion. Not that one would mean offence against the man

Jeremy
Bentham, or those who respect and believe him. Bentham himself, and even
the creed of Bentham, seems to me comparatively worthy of praise. It is

a
determinate _being_ what all the world, in a cowardly half-and-half

manner,
was tending to be. Let us have the crisis; we shall either have death or
the cure. I call this gross, steam-engine Utilitarianism an approach
towards new Faith. It was a laying-down of cant; a saying to oneself:
"Well then, this world is a dead iron machine, the god of it Gravitation
and selfish Hunger; let us see what, by checking and balancing, and good
adjustment of tooth and pinion, can be made of it!" Benthamism has
something complete, manful, in such fearless committal of itself to what

it
finds true; you may call it Heroic, though a Heroism with its _eyes_ put
out! It is the culminating point, and fearless ultimatum, of what lay in
the half-and-half state, pervading man's whole existence in that

Eighteenth
Century. It seems to me, all deniers of Godhood, and all lip-believers

of
it, are bound to be Benthamites, if they have courage and honesty.
Benthamism is an _eyeless_ Heroism: the Human Species, like a hapless
blinded Samson grinding in the Philistine Mill, clasps convulsively the
pillars of its Mill; brings huge ruin down, but ultimately deliverance
withal. Of Bentham I meant to say no harm.

But this I do say, and would wish all men to know and lay to heart, that

he
who discerns nothing but Mechanism in the Universe has in the fatallest

way
missed the secret of the Universe altogether. That all Godhood should
vanish out of men's conception of this Universe seems to me precisely the
most brutal error, --I will not disparage Heathenism by calling it a

Heathen
error, --that men could fall into. It is not true; it is false at the

very
heart of it. A man who thinks so will think _wrong_ about all things in
the world; this original sin will vitiate all other conclusions he can
form. One might call it the most lamentable of Delusions, --not

forgetting
Witchcraft itself! Witchcraft worshipped at least a living Devil; but

this
worships a dead iron Devil; no God, not even a Devil! Whatsoever is
noble,
divine, inspired, drops thereby out of life. There remains everywhere in
life a despicable caput-mortuum; the mechanical hull, all soul fled out
of it. How can a man act heroically? The "Doctrine of Motives" will

teach
him that it is, under more or less disguise, nothing but a wretched love
of
Pleasure, fear of Pain; that Hunger, of applause, of cash, of whatsoever
victual it may be, is the ultimate fact of man's life. Atheism, in
brief; --which does indeed frightfully punish itself. The man, I say, is
become spiritually a paralytic man; this godlike Universe a dead

mechanical
steam-engine, all working by motives, checks, balances, and I know not
what; wherein, as in the detestable belly of some Phalaris' -Bull of his

own
contriving, he the poor Phalaris sits miserably dying!

Belief I define to be the healthy act of a man's mind. It is a

mysterious
indescribable process, that of getting to believe; --indescribable, as all
vital acts are. We have our mind given us, not that it may cavil and
argue, but that it may see into something, give us clear belief and
understanding about something, whereon we are then to proceed to act.
Doubt, truly, is not itself a crime. Certainly we do not rush out,

clutch
up the first thing we find, and straightway believe that! All manner of
doubt, inquiry, [Gr.] skepsis as it is named, about all manner of
objects, dwells in every reasonable mind. It is the mystic working of

the
mind, on the object it is getting to know and believe. Belief comes

out
of all this, above ground, like the tree from its hidden roots. But

now
if, even on common things, we require that a man keep his doubts

silent,
and not babble of them till they in some measure become affirmations or
denials; how much more in regard to the highest things, impossible to

speak
of in words at all! That a man parade his doubt, and get to imagine that
debating and logic (which means at best only the manner of telling us
your thought, your belief or disbelief, about a thing) is the triumph and
true work of what intellect he has: alas, this is as if you should
overturn the tree, and instead of green boughs, leaves and fruits, show
us ugly taloned roots turned up into the air, --and no growth, only death
and misery going on!

For the Scepticism, as I said, is not intellectual only; it is moral

also;
a chronic atrophy and disease of the whole soul. A man lives by

believing
something; not by debating and arguing about many things. A sad case for
him when all that he can manage to believe is something he can button in

his pocket, and with one or the other organ eat and digest! Lower than that he will not get. We call those ages in which he gets so low the mournfullest, sickest and meanest of all ages. The world's heart is palsied, sick: how can any limb of it be whole? Genuine Acting ceases

in all departments of the world's work; dexterous Similitude of Acting

begins.

The world's wages are pocketed, the world's work is not done. Heroes

have

gone out; Quacks have come in. Accordingly, what Century, since the end

of

the Roman world, which also was a time of scepticism, simulacra and universal decadence, so abounds with Quacks as that Eighteenth? Consider them, with their tumid sentimental vapoing about virtue,

benevolence, --the

wretched Quack-squadron, Cagliostro at the head of them! Few men were without quackery; they had got to consider it a necessary ingredient and amalgam for truth. Chatham, our brave Chatham himself, comes down to the House, all wrapt and bandaged; he "has crawled out in great bodily suffering," and so on; --_forgets_, says Walpole, that he is acting the

sick

man; in the fire of debate, snatches his arm from the sling, and oratorically swings and brandishes it! Chatham himself lives the

strangest

mimetic life, half-hero, half-quack, all along. For indeed the world is full of dupes; and you have to gain the _world's_ suffrage! How the

duties

of the world will be done in that case, what quantities of error, which means failure, which means sorrow and misery, to some and to many, will gradually accumulate in all provinces of the world's business, we need

not

compute.

It seems to me, you lay your finger here on the heart of the world's maladies, when you call it a Sceptical World. An insincere world; a goddess untruth of a world! It is out of this, as I consider, that the whole tribe of social pestilences, French Revolutions, Chartisms, and

what

not, have derived their being, --their chief necessity to be. This must alter. Till this alter, nothing can beneficially alter. My one hope of the world, my inexpugnable consolation in looking at the miseries of the world, is that this is altering. Here and there one does now find a man who knows, as of old, that this world is a Truth, and no Plausibility and Falsity; that he himself is alive, not dead or paralytic; and that the world is alive, instinct with Godhood, beautiful and awful, even as in

the

beginning of days! One man once knowing this, many men, all men, must by and by come to know it. It lies there clear, for whosoever will take the _spectacles_ off his eyes and honestly look, to know! For such a man the Unbelieving Century, with its unblest Products, is already past; a new century is already come. The old unblest Products and Performances, as solid as they look, are Phantasms, preparing speedily to vanish. To this and the other noisy, very great-looking Simulacrum with the whole world huzzaiing at its heels, he can say, composedly stepping aside: Thou art

not

true; thou art not extant, only semblant; go thy way! --Yes, hollow Formulism, gross Benthamism, and other unheroic atheistic Insincerity is

visibly and even rapidly declining. An unbelieving Eighteenth Century is but an exception, --such as now and then occurs. I prophesy that the

world

will once more become sincere; a believing world; with many Heroes in it, a heroic world! It will then be a victorious world; never till then.

Or indeed what of the world and its victories? Men speak too much about the world. Each one of us here, let the world go how it will, and be victorious or not victorious, has he not a Life of his own to lead? One Life; a little gleam of Time between two Eternities; no second chance to

us

forevermore! It were well for us to live not as fools and simulacra, but as wise and realities. The world's being saved will not save us; nor the world's being lost destroy us. We should look to ourselves: there is great merit here in the "duty of staying at home"! And, on the whole, to say truth, I never heard of "world's" being "saved" in any other way.

That

mania of saving worlds is itself a piece of the Eighteenth Century with

its

windy sentimentalism. Let us not follow it too far. For the saving of

the

world I will trust confidently to the Maker of the world; and look a little to my own saving, which I am more competent to!--In brief, for the world's sake, and for our own, we will rejoice greatly that Scepticism, Insincerity, Mechanical Atheism, with all their poison-dews, are going,

and

as good as gone.--

Now it was under such conditions, in those times of Johnson, that our Men of Letters had to live. Times in which there was properly no truth in life. Old truths had fallen nigh dumb; the new lay yet hidden, not

trying

to speak. That Man's Life here below was a Sincerity and Fact, and would forever continue such, no new intimation, in that dusk of the world, had yet dawned. No intimation; not even any French Revolution, --which we define to be a Truth once more, though a Truth clad in hell-fire! How different was the Luther's pilgrimage, with its assured goal, from the Johnson's, girt with mere traditions, suppositions, grown now incredible, unintelligible! Mahomet's Formulas were of "wood waxed and oiled," and could be burnt out of one's way: poor Johnson's were far more difficult

to

burn.--The strong man will ever find work, which means difficulty,

pain,

to the full measure of his strength. But to make out a victory, in those circumstances of our poor Hero as Man of Letters, was perhaps more difficult than in any. Not obstruction, disorganization, Bookseller Osborne and Fourpence-halfpenny a day; not this alone; but the light of

his

own soul was taken from him. No landmark on the Earth; and, alas, what

is

that to having no loadstar in the Heaven! We need not wonder that none

of

those Three men rose to victory. That they fought truly is the highest praise. With a mournful sympathy we will contemplate, if not three

living

victorious Heroes, as I said, the Tombs of three fallen Heroes! They

fell
for us too; making a way for us. There are the mountains which they
hurled
abroad in their confused War of the Giants; under which, their strength
and
life spent, they now lie buried.

I have already written of these three Literary Heroes, expressly or
incidentally; what I suppose is known to most of you; what need not be
spoken or written a second time. They concern us here as the singular
Prophets of that singular age; for such they virtually were; and the
aspect they and their world exhibit, under this point of view, might lead
us into reflections enough! I call them, all three, Genuine Men more or
less; faithfully, for most part unconsciously, struggling to be genuine,
and plant themselves on the everlasting truth of things. This to a

degree
that eminently distinguishes them from the poor artificial mass of their
contemporaries; and renders them worthy to be considered as Speakers, in
some measure, of the everlasting truth, as Prophets in that age of

theirs.

By Nature herself a noble necessity was laid on them to be so. They were
men of such magnitude that they could not live on unrealities, --clouds,
froth and all inanity gave way under them: there was no footing for them
but on firm earth; no rest or regular motion for them, if they got not
footing there. To a certain extent, they were Sons of Nature once more

in
an age of Artifice; once more, Original Men.

As for Johnson, I have always considered him to be, by nature, one of our
great English souls. A strong and noble man; so much left undeveloped in
him to the last: in a kindlier element what might he not have

been, --Poet,
Priest, sovereign Ruler! On the whole, a man must not complain of his
"element," of his "time," or the like; it is thriftless work doing so.

His
time is bad: well then, he is there to make it better!--Johnson's youth
was poor, isolated, hopeless, very miserable. Indeed, it does not seem
possible that, in any the favorableness of outward circumstances, Johnson's

life
could have been other than a painful one. The world might have had more

of
profitable _work_ out of him, or less; but his _effort_ against the

world's
work could never have been a light one. Nature, in return for his
nobleness, had said to him, Live in an element of diseased sorrow. Nay,
perhaps the sorrow and the nobleness were intimately and even inseparably
connected with each other. At all events, poor Johnson had to go about
girt with continual hypochondria, physical and spiritual pain. Like a
Hercules with the burning Nessus' -shirt on him, which shoots in on him

dull
incurable misery: the Nessus' -shirt not to be stript off, which is his

own
natural skin! In this manner _he_ had to live. Figure him there, with

his

scrofulous diseases, with his great greedy heart, and unspeakable chaos
of
thoughts; stalking mournful as a stranger in this Earth; eagerly
devouring
what spiritual thing he could come at: school-languages and other
merely
grammatical stuff, if there were nothing better! The largest soul that
was
in all England; and provision made for it of "fourpence-halfpenny a day."
Yet a giant invincible soul; a true man's. One remembers always that

story
of the shoes at Oxford: the rough, seamy-faced, rawboned College

Servitor
stalking about, in winter-season, with his shoes worn out; how the
charitable Gentleman Commoner secretly places a new pair at his door; and
the rawboned Servitor, lifting them, looking at them near, with his dim
eyes, with what thoughts, -- pitches them out of window! Wet feet, mud,
frost, hunger or what you will; but not beggary: we cannot stand

beggary!
Rude stubborn self-help here; a whole world of squalor, rudeness,

confused
misery and want, yet of nobleness and manfulness withal. It is a type of
the man's life, this pitching away of the shoes. An original man; --not a
second-hand, borrowing or begging man. Let us stand on our own basis, at
any rate! On such shoes as we ourselves can get. On frost and mud, if

you
will, but honestly on that; --on the reality and substance which Nature
gives us, not on the semblance, on the thing she has given another than
us! --

And yet with all this rugged pride of manhood and self-help, was there

ever
soul more tenderly affectionate, loyally submissive to what was really
higher than he? Great souls are always loyally submissive, reverent to
what is over them; only small mean souls are otherwise. I could not find

a
better proof of what I said the other day, That the sincere man was by
nature the obedient man; that only in a World of Heroes was there loyal
Obedience to the Heroic. The essence of originality is not that it be
new: Johnson believed altogether in the old; he found the old opinions
credible for him, fit for him; and in a right heroic manner lived under
them. He is well worth study in regard to that. For we are to say that
Johnson was far other than a mere man of words and formulas; he was a man
of truths and facts. He stood by the old formulas; the happier was it

for
him that he could so stand: but in all formulas that he could stand

by,
there needed to be a most genuine substance. Very curious how, in that
poor Paper-age, so barren, artificial, thick-quilted with Pedantries,
Hearsays, the great Fact of this Universe glared in, forever wonderful,
indubitable, unspeakable, divine-infernal, upon this man too! How he
harmonized his Formulas with it, how he managed at all under such
circumstances: that is a thing worth seeing. A thing "to be looked at
with reverence, with pity, with awe." That Church of St. Clement Danes,
where Johnson still worshipped in the era of Voltaire, is to me a
venerable place.

It was in virtue of his sincerity, of his speaking still in some sort from the heart of Nature, though in the current artificial dialect, that Johnson was a Prophet. Are not all dialects "artificial"? Artificial things are not all false; --nay every true Product of Nature will

infallibly

shape itself; we may say all artificial things are, at the starting of them, true. What we call "Formulas" are not in their origin bad; they are indispensably good. Formula is method, habitude; found wherever

man

is found. Formulas fashion themselves as Paths do, as beaten Highways, leading toward some sacred or high object, whither many men are bent. Consider it. One man, full of heartfelt earnest impulse, finds out a way of doing somewhat, --were it of uttering his soul's reverence for the Highest, were it but of fitly saluting his fellow-man. An inventor was needed to do that, a poet; he has articulated the dim-struggling

thought

that dwelt in his own and many hearts. This is his way of doing that; these are his footsteps, the beginning of a "Path." And now see: the second men travels naturally in the footsteps of his foregoer, it is the easiest method. In the footsteps of his foregoer; yet with

improvements,

with changes where such seem good; at all events with enlargements, the Path ever widening itself as more travel it; --till at last there is a broad Highway whereon the whole world may travel and drive. While there remains a City or Shrine, or any Reality to drive to, at the farther end, the Highway shall be right welcome! When the City is gone, we will

forsake

the Highway. In this manner all Institutions, Practices, Regulated

Things

in the world have come into existence, and gone out of existence.

Formulas

all begin by being full of substance; you may call them the skin, the articulation into shape, into limbs and skin, of a substance that is already there: they had not been there otherwise. Idols, as we said, are not idolatrous till they become doubtful, empty for the worshipper's heart. Much as we talk against Formulas, I hope no one of us is ignorant withal of the high significance of true Formulas; that they were, and will ever be, the indispensablest furniture of our habitation in this world. --

Mark, too, how little Johnson boasts of his "sincerity." He has no suspicion of his being particularly sincere, --of his being particularly anything! A hard-struggling, weary-hearted man, or "scholar" as he calls himself, trying hard to get some honest livelihood in the world, not to starve, but to live--without stealing! A noble unconsciousness is in

him.

He does not "engrave Truth on his watch-seal;" no, but he stands by truth, speaks by it, works and lives by it. Thus it ever is. Think of

it

once more. The man whom Nature has appointed to do great things is,

first

of all, furnished with that openness to Nature which renders him

incapable

of being in_sincere! To his large, open, deep-feeling heart Nature is a Fact: all hearsay is hearsay; the unspeakable greatness of this Mystery

of

Life, let him acknowledge it or not, nay even though he seem to forget it or deny it, is ever present to him, --fearful and wonderful, on this

hand

and on that. He has a basis of sincerity; unrecognized, because never questioned or capable of question. Mirabeau, Mahomet, Cromwell,

Napoleon:

all the Great Men I ever heard of have this as the primary material of them. Innumerable commonplace men are debating, are talking everywhere their commonplace doctrines, which they have learned by logic, by rote,

at

second-hand: to that kind of man all this is still nothing. He must

have

truth; truth which he feels to be true. How shall he stand otherwise? His whole soul, at all moments, in all ways, tells him that there is no standing. He is under the noble necessity of being true. Johnson's way

of

thinking about this world is not mine, any more than Mahomet's was: but

I

recognize the everlasting element of heart-sincerity in both; and see with pleasure how neither of them remains ineffectual. Neither of them

is

as chaff sown; in both of them is something which the seedfield will grow.

Johnson was a Prophet to his people; preached a Gospel to them, --as all like him always do. The highest Gospel he preached we may describe as a kind of Moral Prudence: "in a world where much is to be done, and little is to be known," see how you will do it! A thing well worth preaching. "A world where much is to be done, and little is to be known:" do not

sink

yourselves in boundless bottomless abysses of Doubt, of wretched god-forgetting Unbelief; --you were miserable then, powerless, mad: how could you do or work at all? Such Gospel Johnson preached and taught; --coupled, theoretically and practically, with this other great Gospel, "Clear your mind of Cant!" Have no trade with Cant: stand on

the

cold mud in the frosty weather, but let it be in your own real torn shoes: "that will be better for you," as Mahomet says! I call this, I call these two things joined together, a great Gospel, the greatest perhaps that was possible at that time.

Johnson's Writings, which once had such currency and celebrity, are now

as

it were disowned by the young generation. It is not wonderful; Johnson's opinions are fast becoming obsolete: but his style of thinking and of living, we may hope, will never become obsolete. I find in Johnson's

Books

the indisputablest traces of a great intellect and great heart; --ever welcome, under what obstructions and perversions soever. They are sincere words, those of his; he means things by them. A wondrous

buckram

style, --the best he could get to then; a measured grandiloquence,

stepping

or rather stalking along in a very solemn way, grown obsolete now; sometimes a tumid size of phraseology not in proportion to the contents of it: all this you will put up with. For the phraseology, tumid or

not,
has always something within it. So many beautiful styles and books,
with
nothing in them; --a man is a malefactor to the world who writes such!
They are the avoidable kind! --Had Johnson left nothing but his
Dictionary, one might have traced there a great intellect, a genuine
man.
Looking to its clearness of definition, its general solidity, honesty,
insight and successful method, it may be called the best of all
Dictionaries. There is in it a kind of architectural nobleness; it
stands
there like a great solid square-built edifice, finished, symmetrically
complete: you judge that a true Builder did it.

One word, in spite of our haste, must be granted to poor Bozzy. He
passes
for a mean, inflated, gluttonous creature; and was so in many senses.

Yet
the fact of his reverence for Johnson will ever remain noteworthy. The
foolish conceited Scotch Laird, the most conceited man of his time,
approaching in such awe-struck attitude the great dusty irascible
Pedagogue
in his mean garret there: it is a genuine reverence for Excellence; a
worship for Heroes, at a time when neither Heroes nor worship were
surmised to exist. Heroes, it would seem, exist always, and a certain
worship of them! We will also take the liberty to deny altogether that
of
the witty Frenchman, that no man is a Hero to his valet-de-chambre. Or
if
so, it is not the Hero's blame, but the Valet's: that his soul, namely,
is
a mean valet-soul! He expects his Hero to advance in royal
stage-trappings, with measured step, trains borne behind him, trumpets
sounding before him. It should stand rather, No man can be a Grand-
Monarque to his valet-de-chambre. Strip your Louis Quatorze of his
king-gear, and there is left nothing but a poor forked radish with a
head
fantastically carved; --admirable to no valet. The Valet does not know a
Hero when he sees him! Alas, no: it requires a kind of Hero to do
that; --and one of the world's wants, in this as in other senses, is for
most part want of such.

On the whole, shall we not say, that Boswell's admiration was well
bestowed; that he could have found no soul in all England so worthy of
bending down before? Shall we not say, of this great mournful Johnson
too,
that he guided his difficult confused existence wisely; led it well,

like
a right valiant man? That waste chaos of Authorship by trade; that waste
chaos of Scepticism in religion and politics, in life-theory and
life-practice; in his poverty, in his dust and dimness, with the sick
body
and the rusty coat: he made it do for him, like a brave man. Not wholly
without a loadstar in the Eternal; he had still a loadstar, as the brave
all need to have: with his eye set on that, he would change his course

for
nothing in these confused vortices of the lower sea of Time. "To the Spirit of Lies, bearing death and hunger, he would in nowise strike his flag." Brave old Samuel: ultimus Romanorum!

Of Rousseau and his Heroism I cannot say so much. He is not what I call

a
strong man. A morbid, excitable, spasmodic man; at best, intense rather than strong. He had not "the talent of Silence," an invaluable talent; which few Frenchmen, or indeed men of any sort in these times, excel in! The suffering man ought really "to consume his own smoke;" there is no

good
in emitting smoke till you have made it into fire, --which, in the metaphorical sense too, all smoke is capable of becoming! Rousseau has

not
depth or width, not calm force for difficulty; the first characteristic

of
true greatness. A fundamental mistake to call vehemence and rigidity strength! A man is not strong who takes convulsion-fits; though six men cannot hold him then. He that can walk under the heaviest weight without staggering, he is the strong man. We need forever, especially in these loud-shrieking days, to remind ourselves of that. A man who cannot hold his peace, till the time come for speaking and acting, is no right man.

Poor Rousseau's face is to me expressive of him. A high but narrow contracted intensity in it: bony brows; deep, strait-set eyes, in which there is something bewildered-looking, --bewildered, peering with lynx-eagerness. A face full of misery, even ignoble misery, and also of the antagonism against that; something mean, plebeian there, redeemed

only
by intensity: the face of what is called a Fanatic, --a sadly contracted Hero! We name him here because, with all his drawbacks, and they are many, he has the first and chief characteristic of a Hero: he

is
heartily in earnest. In earnest, if ever man was; as none of these French Philosophers were. Nay, one would say, of an earnestness too

great
for his otherwise sensitive, rather feeble nature; and which indeed in

the
end drove him into the strangest incoherences, almost delirations. There had come, at last, to be a kind of madness in him: his Ideas possessed him like demons; hurried him so about, drove him over steep places! --

The fault and misery of Rousseau was what we easily name by a single

word,
Egoism; which is indeed the source and summary of all faults and

miseries
whatsoever. He had not perfected himself into victory over mere Desire;

a
mean Hunger, in many sorts, was still the motive principle of him. I am afraid he was a very vain man; hungry for the praises of men. You

remember
Genlis's experience of him. She took Jean Jacques to the Theatre; he bargaining for a strict incognito, --"He would not be seen there for the world!" The curtain did happen nevertheless to be drawn aside: the Pit

recognized Jean Jacques, but took no great notice of him! He expressed

the

bitterest indignation; gloomed all evening, spoke no other than surly words. The glib Countess remained entirely convinced that his anger was not at being seen, but at not being applauded when seen. How the whole nature of the man is poisoned; nothing but suspicion, self-isolation, fierce moody ways! He could not live with anybody. A man of some rank from the country, who visited him often, and used to sit with him, expressing all reverence and affection for him, comes one day; finds Jean Jacques full of the sourest unintelligible humor. "Monsieur," said Jean Jacques, with flaming eyes, "I know why you come here. You come to see what a poor life I lead; how little is in my poor pot that is boiling there. Well, look into the pot! There is half a pound of meat, one

carrot

and three onions; that is all: go and tell the whole world that, if you like, Monsieur!"--A man of this sort was far gone. The whole world got itself supplied with anecdotes, for light laughter, for a certain theatrical interest, from these perversions and contortions of poor Jean Jacques. Alas, to him they were not laughing or theatrical; too real to him! The contortions of a dying gladiator: the crowded amphitheatre

looks

on with entertainment; but the gladiator is in agonies and dying.

And yet this Rousseau, as we say, with his passionate appeals to Mothers, with his contrat-social, with his celebrations of Nature, even of

savage

life in Nature, did once more touch upon Reality, struggle towards

Reality;

was doing the function of a Prophet to his Time. As he could, and as the Time could! Strangely through all that defacement, degradation and

almost

madness, there is in the inmost heart of poor Rousseau a spark of real heavenly fire. Once more, out of the element of that withered mocking Philosophism, Scepticism and Persiflage, there has arisen in this man the ineradicable feeling and knowledge that this Life of ours is true: not a Scepticism, Theorem, or Persiflage, but a Fact, an awful Reality. Nature had made that revelation to him; had ordered him to speak it out. He got it spoken out; if not well and clearly, then ill and dimly, --as clearly

as

he could. Nay what are all errors and perversities of his, even those stealings of ribbons, aimless confused miseries and vagabondisms, if we will interpret them kindly, but the blinkard dazzlement and staggerings

to

and fro of a man sent on an errand he is too weak for, by a path he

cannot

yet find? Men are led by strange ways. One should have tolerance for a man, hope of him; leave him to try yet what he will do. While life

lasts,

hope lasts for every man.

Of Rousseau's literary talents, greatly celebrated still among his countrymen, I do not say much. His Books, like himself, are what I call unhealthy; not the good sort of Books. There is a sensuality in

Rousseau.

Combined with such an intellectual gift as his, it makes pictures of a certain gorgeous attractiveness: but they are not genuinely poetical.

Not

white sunlight: something _operatic_; a kind of rose-pink, artificial bedizenment. It is frequent, or rather it is universal, among the French since his time. Madame de Stael has something of it; St. Pierre; and

down

onwards to the present astonishing convulsionsary "Literature of Desperation," it is everywhere abundant. That same _rose-pink_ is not

the

right hue. Look at a Shakspeare, at a Goethe, even at a Walter Scott!

He

who has once seen into this, has seen the difference of the True from the Sham-True, and will discriminate them ever afterwards.

We had to observe in Johnson how much good a Prophet, under all disadvantages and disorganizations, can accomplish for the world. In Rousseau we are called to look rather at the fearful amount of evil

which,

under such disorganization, may accompany the good. Historically it is a most pregnant spectacle, that of Rousseau. Banned into Paris garrets,

in

the gloomy company of his own Thoughts and Necessities there; driven from post to pillar; fretted, exasperated till the heart of him went mad, he

had

grown to feel deeply that the world was not his friend nor the world's

law.

It was expedient, if any way possible, that such a man should _not_ have been set in flat hostility with the world. He could be cooped into garrets, laughed at as a maniac, left to starve like a wild beast in his cage; --but he could not be hindered from setting the world on fire. The French Revolution found its Evangelist in Rousseau. His semi-delirious speculations on the miseries of civilized life, the preferability of the savage to the civilized, and such like, helped well to produce a whole delirium in France generally. True, you may well ask, What could the world, the governors of the world, do with such a man? Difficult to say what the governors of the world could do with him! What he could do with them is unhappily clear enough, --_guillotine_ a great many of them!

Enough

now of Rousseau.

It was a curious phenomenon, in the withered, unbelieving second-hand Eighteenth Century, that of a Hero starting up, among the artificial pasteboard figures and productions, in the guise of a Robert Burns. Like

a

little well in the rocky desert places, --like a sudden splendor of Heaven in the artificial Vauxhall! People knew not what to make of it. They

took

it for a piece of the Vauxhall fire-work; alas, it _let_ itself be so taken, though struggling half-blindly, as in bitterness of death, against that! Perhaps no man had such a false reception from his fellow-men.

Once

more a very wasteful life-drama was enacted under the sun.

The tragedy of Burns's life is known to all of you. Surely we may say,

if

discrepancy between place held and place merited constitute perverseness

of

lot for a man, no lot could be more perverse than Burns's. Among those second-hand acting-figures, mimes for most part, of the Eighteenth Century, once more a giant Original Man; one of those men who reach down

to the perennial Deeps, who take rank with the Heroic among men: and he was born in a poor Ayrshire hut. The largest soul of all the British lands came among us in the shape of a hard-handed Scottish Peasant.

His Father, a poor toiling man, tried various things; did not succeed in any; was involved in continual difficulties. The Steward, Factor as the Scotch call him, used to send letters and threatenings, Burns says,

"which threw us all into tears." The brave, hard-toiling, hard-suffering

Father, his brave heroine of a wife; and those children, of whom Robert was one! In this Earth, so wide otherwise, no shelter for them. The letters "threw us all into tears:" figure it. The brave Father, I say

always; --a silent Hero and Poet; without whom the son had never been a speaking

one! Burns's Schoolmaster came afterwards to London, learnt what good society was; but declares that in no meeting of men did he ever enjoy better discourse than at the hearth of this peasant. And his poor "seven acres

of nursery-ground," --not that, nor the miserable patch of clay-farm, nor anything he tried to get a living by, would prosper with him; he had a

sore unequal battle all his days. But he stood to it valiantly; a wise, faithful, unconquerable man; --swallowing down how many sore sufferings daily into silence; fighting like an unseen Hero, --nobody publishing newspaper paragraphs about his nobleness; voting pieces of plate to him! However, he was not lost; nothing is lost. Robert is there the outcome

of him, --and indeed of many generations of such as him.

This Burns appeared under every disadvantage: uninstructed, poor, born only to hard manual toil; and writing, when it came to that, in a rustic special dialect, known only to a small province of the country he lived

in. Had he written, even what he did write, in the general language of

England, I doubt not he had already become universally recognized as being, or capable to be, one of our greatest men. That he should have tempted so many to penetrate through the rough husk of that dialect of his, is proof that there lay something far from common within it. He has gained a certain recognition, and is continuing to do so over all quarters of our wide Saxon world: wheresoever a Saxon dialect is spoken, it begins to be understood, by personal inspection of this and the other, that one of the most considerable Saxon men of the Eighteenth Century was an Ayrshire Peasant named Robert Burns. Yes, I will say, here too was a piece of the right Saxon stuff: strong as the Harz-rock, rooted in the depths of the world; --rock, yet with wells of living softness in it! A wild impetuous whirlwind of passion and faculty slumbered quiet there; such heavenly melody dwelling in the heart of it. A noble rough genuineness; homely, rustic, honest; true simplicity of strength; with its lightning-fire,

with its soft dewy pity; --like the old Norse Thor, the Peasant-god!

Burns's Brother Gilbert, a man of much sense and worth, has told me that Robert, in his young days, in spite of their hardship, was usually the gayest of speech; a fellow of infinite frolic, laughter, sense and heart; far pleasanter to hear there, stripped cutting peats in the bog, or such like, than he ever afterwards knew him. I can well believe it. This

basis

of mirth ("_fond gaillard_," as old Marquis Mirabeau calls it), a primal element of sunshine and joyfulness, coupled with his other deep and

earnest

qualities, is one of the most attractive characteristics of Burns. A

large

fund of Hope dwells in him; spite of his tragical history, he is not a mourning man. He shakes his sorrows gallantly aside; bounds forth victorious over them. It is as the lion shaking "dew-drops from his

mane; "

as the swift-bounding horse, that _laughs_ at the shaking of the spear.--But indeed, Hope, Mirth, of the sort like Burns's, are they not

the

outcome properly of warm generous affection, --such as is the beginning of all to every man?

You would think it strange if I called Burns the most gifted British soul we had in all that century of his: and yet I believe the day is coming when there will be little danger in saying so. His writings, all that he _did_ under such obstructions, are only a poor fragment of him.

Professor

Stewart remarked very justly, what indeed is true of all Poets good for much, that his poetry was not any particular faculty; but the general result of a naturally vigorous original mind expressing itself in that

way.

Burns's gifts, expressed in conversation, are the theme of all that ever heard him. All kinds of gifts: from the gracefulest utterances of courtesy, to the highest fire of passionate speech; loud floods of mirth, soft wailings of affection, laconic emphasis, clear piercing insight; all was in him. Witty duchesses celebrate him as a man whose speech "led

them

off their feet." This is beautiful: but still more beautiful that which Mr. Lockhart has recorded, which I have more than once alluded to, How

the

waiters and ostlers at inns would get out of bed, and come crowding to

hear

this man speak! Waiters and ostlers: --they too were men, and here was a man! I have heard much about his speech; but one of the best things I

ever

heard of it was, last year, from a venerable gentleman long familiar with him. That it was speech distinguished by always _having something in

it_.

"He spoke rather little than much," this old man told me; "sat rather silent in those early days, as in the company of persons above him; and always when he did speak, it was to throw new light on the matter." I

know

not why any one should ever speak otherwise! --But if we look at his

general

force of soul, his healthy _robustness_ every way, the rugged downrightness, penetration, generous valor and manfulness that was in

him, --where shall we readily find a better-gifted man?

Among the great men of the Eighteenth Century, I sometimes feel as if

Burns

might be found to resemble Mirabeau more than any other. They differ widely in vesture; yet look at them intrinsically. There is the same

burly

thick-necked strength of body as of soul; --built, in both cases, on what the old Marquis calls a fond gaillard. By nature, by course of

breeding,

indeed by nation, Mirabeau has much more of bluster; a noisy, forward, unresting man. But the characteristic of Mirabeau too is veracity and sense, power of true insight, superiority of vision. The thing that he says is worth remembering. It is a flash of insight into some object or other: so do both these men speak. The same raging passions; capable

too

in both of manifesting themselves as the tenderest noble affections.

Wit;

wild laughter, energy, directness, sincerity: these were in both. The types of the two men are not dissimilar. Burns too could have governed, debated in National Assemblies; politicized, as few could. Alas, the courage which had to exhibit itself in capture of smuggling schooners in the Solway Frith; in keeping silence over so much, where no good

speech,

but only inarticulate rage was possible: this might have bellowed forth Ushers de Breze and the like; and made itself visible to all men, in managing of kingdoms, in ruling of great ever-memorable epochs! But they said to him reprovingly, his Official Superiors said, and wrote: "You

are

to work, not think." Of your thinking-faculty, the greatest in this land, we have no need; you are to gauge beer there; for that only are you wanted. Very notable; --and worth mentioning, though we know what is to

be

said and answered! As if Thought, Power of Thinking, were not, at all times, in all places and situations of the world, precisely the thing

that

was wanted. The fatal man, is he not always the unthinking man, the man who cannot think and see; but only grope, and hallucinate, and mis-see the nature of the thing he works with? He mis-sees it, mis-takes it as

we

say; takes it for one thing, and it is another thing, --and leaves him standing like a Futility there! He is the fatal man; unutterably fatal, put in the high places of men. --"Why complain of this?" say some: "Strength is mournfully denied its arena; that was true from of old." Doubtless; and the worse for the arena, answer I! Complaining

profits

little; stating of the truth may profit. That a Europe, with its French Revolution just breaking out, finds no need of a Burns except for gauging beer, --is a thing I, for one, cannot rejoice at! --

Once more we have to say here, that the chief quality of Burns is the sincerity of him. So in his Poetry, so in his Life. The song he sings is not of fantasticalities; it is of a thing felt, really there; the

prime

merit of this, as of all in him, and of his Life generally, is truth.

The

Life of Burns is what we may call a great tragic sincerity. A sort of savage sincerity, --not cruel, far from that; but wild, wrestling naked

with the truth of things. In that sense, there is something of the savage in all great men.

Hero-worship, --Odin, Burns? Well; these Men of Letters too were not without a kind of Hero-worship: but what a strange condition has that

got into now! The waiters and ostlers of Scotch inns, prying about the door, eager to catch any word that fell from Burns, were doing unconscious reverence to the Heroic. Johnson had his Boswell for worshipper.

Rousseau had worshippers enough; princes calling on him in his mean garret; the great, the beautiful doing reverence to the poor moon-struck man. For himself a most portentous contradiction; the two ends of his life not to

be brought into harmony. He sits at the tables of grandees; and has to copy music for his own living. He cannot even get his music copied: "By dint of dining out," says he, "I run the risk of dying by starvation at home." For his worshippers too a most questionable thing! If doing Hero-worship well or badly be the test of vital well-being or ill-being to a

generation, can we say that _these_ generations are very first-rate?--And yet our heroic Men of Letters do teach, govern, are kings, priests, or what you like to call them; intrinsically there is no preventing it by any means whatever. The world has to obey him who thinks and sees in the world.

The world can alter the manner of that; can either have it as blessed continuous summer sunshine, or as unblessed black thunder and tornado, --with unspeakable difference of profit for the world! The

manner of it is very alterable; the matter and fact of it is not alterable by

any power under the sky. Light; or, failing that, lightning: the world can take its choice. Not whether we call an Odin god, prophet, priest, or

what we call him; but whether we believe the word he tells us: there it all lies. If it be a true word, we shall have to believe it; believing it,

we shall have to do it. What _name_ or welcome we give him or it, is a

point that concerns ourselves mainly. _It_, the new Truth, new deeper

revealing of the Secret of this Universe, is verily of the nature of a message from on high; and must and will have itself obeyed. --

My last remark is on that notablest phasis of Burns's history, --his visit to Edinburgh. Often it seems to me as if his demeanor there were the highest proof he gave of what a fund of worth and genuine manhood was in him. If we think of it, few heavier burdens could be laid on the

strength of a man. So sudden; all common _Lionism_. which ruins innumerable men, was as nothing to this. It is as if Napoleon had been made a King of,

not

gradually, but at once from the Artillery Lieutenancy in the Regiment La Fere. Burns, still only in his twenty-seventh year, is no longer even a ploughman; he is flying to the West Indies to escape disgrace and a jail. This month he is a ruined peasant, his wages seven pounds a year, and

these
gone from him: next month he is in the blaze of rank and beauty, handing down jewelled Duchesses to dinner; the cynosure of all eyes! Adversity

is
sometimes hard upon a man; but for one man who can stand prosperity,

there
are a hundred that will stand adversity. I admire much the way in which Burns met all this. Perhaps no man one could point out, was ever so

sorely
tried, and so little forgot himself. Tranquil, unastonished; not

abashed,
not inflated, neither awkwardness nor affectation: he feels that he
there is the man Robert Burns; that the "rank is but the guinea-stamp;"
that the celebrity is but the candle-light, which will show what man,

not
in the least make him a better or other man! Alas, it may readily,

unless
he look to it, make him a worse man; a wretched inflated
wind-bag, --inflated till he burst, and become a dead lion; for whom,

as
some one has said, "there is no resurrection of the body;" worse than a
living dog! --Burns is admirable here.

And yet, alas, as I have observed elsewhere, these Lion-hunters were the
ruin and death of Burns. It was they that rendered it impossible for him
to live! They gathered round him in his Farm; hindered his industry; no
place was remote enough from them. He could not get his Lionism

forgotten,
honestly as he was disposed to do so. He falls into discontents, into
miseries, faults; the world getting ever more desolate for him; health,
character, peace of mind, all gone; --solitary enough now. It is tragical
to think of! These men came but to see him; it was out of no sympathy
with him, nor no hatred to him. They came to get a little amusement;

they
got their amusement; --and the Hero's life went for it!

Richter says, in the Island of Sumatra there is a kind of

"Light-chafers,"
large Fire-flies, which people stick upon spits, and illuminate the ways
with at night. Persons of condition can thus travel with a pleasant
radiance, which they much admire. Great honor to the Fire-flies! But--!

[May 22, 1840.]

LECTURE VI.

THE HERO AS KING. CROMWELL, NAPOLEON: MODERN REVOLUTIONISM.

We come now to the last form of Heroism; that which we call Kingship.

The
Commander over Men; he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated,

and
loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be

reckoned the most important of Great Men. He is practically the summary for us of _all_ the various figures of Heroism; Priest, Teacher,

whatsoever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here, to _command_ over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to _do_. He is called _Rex_, Regulator, _Roi_: our own name is still better;

King, _Konning_, which means _Can_-ning, Able-man.

Numerous considerations, pointing towards deep, questionable, and indeed unfathomable regions, present themselves here: on the most of which we must resolutely for the present forbear to speak at all. As Burke said that perhaps fair _Trial by Jury_ was the soul of Government, and that

all legislation, administration, parliamentary debating, and the rest of it, went on, in "order to bring twelve impartial men into a jury-box;"--so,

by much stronger reason, may I say here, that the finding of your _Ableman_ and getting him invested with the _symbols of ability_, with dignity, worship (_worth_-ship), royalty, kingship, or whatever we call it, so

that _he_ may actually have room to guide according to his faculty of doing it,--is the business, well or ill accomplished, of all social procedure whatsoever in this world! Hustings-speeches, Parliamentary motions,

Reform Bills, French Revolutions, all mean at heart this; or else nothing. Find in any country the Ablest Man that exists there; raise _him_ to the

supreme place, and loyally reverence him: you have a perfect government for that country; no ballot-box, parliamentary eloquence, voting, constitution-building, or other machinery whatsoever can improve it a

whit. It is in the perfect state; an ideal country. The Ablest Man; he means also the truest-hearted, justest, the Noblest Man: what he _tells_ us to do_ must be precisely the wisest, fittest, that we could anywhere or

anyhow learn;--the thing which it will in all ways behoove US, with right loyal thankfulness and nothing doubting, to do! Our _doing_ and life were

then, so far as government could regulate it, well regulated; that were the

ideal of constitutions.

Alas, we know very well that Ideals can never be completely embodied in practice. Ideals must ever lie a very great way off; and we will right thankfully content ourselves with any not intolerable approximation thereto! Let no man, as Schiller says, too querulously "measure by a

scale of perfection the meagre product of reality" in this poor world of ours. We will esteem him no wise man; we will esteem him a sickly,

discontented, foolish man. And yet, on the other hand, it is never to be forgotten

that Ideals do exist; that if they be not approximated to at all, the whole

matter goes to wreck! Infallibly. No bricklayer builds a wall

perfectly

perpendicular, mathematically this is not possible; a certain degree of perpendicularity suffices him; and he, like a good bricklayer, who must have done with his job, leaves it so. And yet if he sway _too much_ from the perpendicular; above all, if he throw plummet and level quite away

from

him, and pile brick on brick heedless, just as it comes to hand--! Such bricklayer, I think, is in a bad way. He has forgotten himself: but the Law of Gravitation does not forget to act on him; he and his wall rush

down

into confused welter of ruin!--

This is the history of all rebellions, French Revolutions, social explosions in ancient or modern times. You have put the too _Un_able Man at the head of affairs! The too ignoble, unvaliant, fatuous man. You

have

forgotten that there is any rule, or natural necessity whatever, of

putting

the Able Man there. Brick must lie on brick as it may and can. Unable Simulacrum of Ability, _quack_, in a word, must adjust himself with

quack,

in all manner of administration of human things; --which accordingly lie unadministered, fermenting into unmeasured masses of failure, of indigent misery: in the outward, and in the inward or spiritual, miserable

millions

stretch out the hand for their due supply, and it is not there. The "Law of gravitation" acts; Nature's laws do none of them forget to act. The miserable millions burst forth into Sansculottism, or some other sort of madness: bricks and bricklayer lie as a fatal chaos!--

Much sorry stuff, written some hundred years ago or more, about the

"Divine

right of Kings," moulders unread now in the Public Libraries of this country. Far be it from us to disturb the calm process by which it is disappearing harmlessly from the earth, in those repositories! At the

same

time, not to let the immense rubbish go without leaving us, as it ought, some soul of it behind--I will say that it did mean something; something true, which it is important for us and all men to keep in mind. To

assert

that in whatever man you chose to lay hold of (by this or the other plan

of

clutching at him); and claps a round piece of metal on the head of, and called King, --there straightway came to reside a divine virtue, so that _he_ became a kind of god, and a Divinity inspired him with faculty and right to rule over you to all lengths: this, --what can we do with this

but

leave it to rot silently in the Public Libraries? But I will say withal, and that is what these Divine-right men meant, That in Kings, and in all human Authorities, and relations that men god-created can form among each other, there is verily either a Divine Right or else a Diabolic Wrong;

one

or the other of these two! For it is false altogether, what the last Sceptical Century taught us, that this world is a steam-engine. There is

a

God in this world; and a God's-sanction, or else the violation of such, does look out from all ruling and obedience, from all moral acts of men. There is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience. Woe to him that claims obedience when it is not due; woe to him that refuses it when it is! God's law is in that, I say, however the Parchment-laws may run: there is a Divine Right or else a Diabolic Wrong at the heart of every claim that one man makes upon another.

It can do none of us harm to reflect on this: in all the relations of

life

it will concern us; in Loyalty and Royalty, the highest of these. I

esteem

the modern error, That all goes by self-interest and the checking and balancing of greedy knaveries, and that in short, there is nothing divine whatever in the association of men, a still more despicable error,

natural

as it is to an unbelieving century, than that of a "divine right" in

people

called Kings. I say, Find me the true _Konning_, King, or Able-man,

and

he _has_ a divine right over me. That we knew in some tolerable measure how to find him, and that all men were ready to acknowledge his divine right when found: this is precisely the healing which a sick world is everywhere, in these ages, seeking after! The true King, as guide of the practical, has ever something of the Pontiff in him, --guide of the spiritual, from which all practice has its rise. This too is a true saying, That the _King_ is head of the _Church_. --But we will leave the Polemic stuff of a dead century to lie quiet on its bookshelves.

Certainly it is a fearful business, that of having your Ableman to

seek

and not knowing in what manner to proceed about it! That is the world's sad predicament in these times of ours. They are times of revolution,

and

have long been. The bricklayer with his bricks, no longer heedful of plummet or the law of gravitation, have toppled, tumbled, and it all welters as we see! But the beginning of it was not the French

Revolution;

that is rather the _end_, we can hope. It were truer to say, the _beginning_ was three centuries farther back: in the Reformation of Luther. That the thing which still called itself Christian Church had become a Falsehood, and brazenly went about pretending to pardon men's

sins

for metallic coined money, and to do much else which in the everlasting truth of Nature it did _not_ now do: here lay the vital malady. The inward being wrong, all outward went ever more and more wrong. Belief

died

away; all was Doubt, Disbelief. The builder cast _away_ his plummet;

said

to himself, "What is gravitation? Brick lies on brick there!" Alas,

does

it not still sound strange to many of us, the assertion that there _is_ a God's-truth in the business of god-created men; that all is not a kind of grimace, an "expediency," diplomacy, one knows not what! --

From that first necessary assertion of Luther's, "You, self-styled
Papa,
you are no Father in God at all; you are--a Chimera, whom I know not how
to
name in polite language!"--from that onwards to the shout which rose
round
Camille Desmoulins in the Palais-Royal, "_Aux armes_!" when the people
had
burst up against _all_ manner of Chimeras,--I find a natural historical
sequence. That shout too, so frightful, half-infernal, was a great
matter.
Once more the voice of awakened nations;--starting confusedly, as out of
nightmare, as out of death-sleep, into some dim feeling that Life was
real;
that God's-world was not an expediency and diplomacy! Infernal;--yes,
since they would not have it otherwise. Infernal, since not celestial or
terrestrial! Hollowness, insincerity _has_ to cease; sincerity of some
sort has to begin. Cost what it may, reigns of terror, horrors of French
Revolution or what else, we have to return to truth. Here is a Truth, as
I
said: a Truth clad in hell-fire, since they would not but have it so!--
A common theory among considerable parties of men in England and
elsewhere
used to be, that the French Nation had, in those days, as it were gone
mad; that the French Revolution was a general act of insanity, a
temporary conversion of France and large sections of the world into a
kind
of Bedlam. The Event had risen and raged; but was a madness and
nonentity,--gone now happily into the region of Dreams and the
Picturesque!--To such comfortable philosophers, the Three Days of July,
1830, must have been a surprising phenomenon. Here is the French Nation
risen again, in musketry and death-struggle, out shooting and being shot,
to make that same mad French Revolution good! The sons and grandsons of
those men, it would seem, persist in the enterprise: they do not disown
it; they will have it made good; will have themselves shot, if it be not
made good. To philosophers who had made up their life-system, on that
"madness" quietus, no phenomenon could be more alarming. Poor Niebuhr,
they say, the Prussian Professor and Historian, fell broken-hearted in
consequence; sickened, if we can believe it, and died of the Three Days!
It was surely not a very heroic death;--little better than Racine's,
dying
because Louis Fourteenth looked sternly on him once. The world had stood
some considerable shocks, in its time; might have been expected to
survive
the Three Days too, and be found turning on its axis after even them!
The
Three Days told all mortals that the old French Revolution, mad as it
might
look, was not a transitory ebullition of Bedlam, but a genuine product of
this Earth where we all live; that it was verily a Fact, and that the
world
in general would do well everywhere to regard it as such.
Truly, without the French Revolution, one would not know what to make of

an
age like this at all. We will hail the French Revolution, as shipwrecked
mariners might the sternest rock, in a world otherwise all of baseless

sea
and waves. A true Apocalypse, though a terrible one, to this false
withered artificial time; testifying once more that Nature is
_preter_natural; if not divine, then diabolic; that Semblance is not
Reality; that it has to become Reality, or the world will take fire under
it, --burn_it_ into what it is, namely Nothing! Plausibility has ended;
empty Routine has ended; much has ended. This, as with a Trump of Doom,
has been proclaimed to all men. They are the wisest who will learn it
soonest. Long confused generations before it be learned; peace

impossible
till it be! The earnest man, surrounded, as ever, with a world of
inconsistencies, can await patiently, patiently strive to do _his_ work,

in
the midst of that. Sentence of Death is written down in Heaven against

all
that; sentence of Death is now proclaimed on the Earth against it: this

he
with his eyes may see. And surely, I should say, considering the other
side of the matter, what enormous difficulties lie there, and how fast,
fearfully fast, in all countries, the inexorable demand for solution of
them is pressing on, --he may easily find other work to do than laboring

in
the Sansculottic province at this time of day!

To me, in these circumstances, that of "Hero-worship" becomes a fact
inexpressibly precious; the most solacing fact one sees in the world at
present. There is an everlasting hope in it for the management of the
world. Had all traditions, arrangements, creeds, societies that men ever
instituted, sunk away, this would remain. The certainty of Heroes being
sent us; our faculty, our necessity, to reverence Heroes when sent: it
shines like a polestar through smoke-clouds, dust-clouds, and all manner

of
down-rushing and conflagration.

Hero-worship would have sounded very strange to those workers and

fighters
in the French Revolution. Not reverence for Great Men; not any hope or
belief, or even wish, that Great Men could again appear in the world!
Nature, turned into a "Machine," was as if effete now; could not any

longer
produce Great Men: --I can tell her, she may give up the trade altogether,
then; we cannot do without Great Men! --But neither have I any quarrel

with
that of "Liberty and Equality;" with the faith that, wise great men being
impossible, a level immensity of foolish small men would suffice. It was

a
natural faith then and there. "Liberty and Equality; no Authority needed
any longer. Hero-worship, reverence for _such_ Authorities, has proved
false, is itself a falsehood; no more of it! We have had such

forgeries,
we will now trust nothing. So many base plated coins passing in the
market, the belief has now become common that no gold any longer
exists, --and even that we can do very well without gold!" I find this,

among other things, in that universal cry of Liberty and Equality; and
find
it very natural, as matters then stood.

And yet surely it is but the transition from false to true.

Considered
as the whole truth, it is false altogether; --the product of entire
sceptical blindness, as yet only struggling to see. Hero-worship

exists
forever, and everywhere: not Loyalty alone; it extends from divine
adoration down to the lowest practical regions of life. "Bending before
men," if it is not to be a mere empty grimace, better dispensed with than
practiced, is Hero-worship, --a recognition that there does dwell in that
presence of our brother something divine; that every created man, as
Novalis said, is a "revelation in the Flesh." They were Poets too, that
devised all those graceful courtesies which make life noble! Courtesy is
not a falsehood or grimace; it need not be such. And Loyalty, religious
Worship itself, are still possible; nay still inevitable.

May we not say, moreover, while so many of our late Heroes have worked
rather as revolutionary men, that nevertheless every Great Man, every
genuine man, is by the nature of him a son of Order, not of Disorder? It
is a tragical position for a true man to work in revolutions. He seems

an
anarchist; and indeed a painful element of anarchy does encumber him at
every step, --him to whose whole soul anarchy is hostile, hateful. His
mission is Order; every man's is. He is here to make what was

disorderly,
chaotic, into a thing ruled, regular. He is the missionary of Order. Is
not all work of man in this world a making of Order? The carpenter

finds
rough trees; shapes them, constrains them into square fitness, into

purpose
and use. We are all born enemies of Disorder: it is tragical for us all
to be concerned in image-breaking and down-pulling; for the Great Man,
more a man than we, it is doubly tragical.

Thus too all human things, maddest French Sansculottisms, do and must

work
towards Order. I say, there is not a man in them, raging in the

thickest
of the madness, but is impelled withal, at all moments, towards Order.

His
very life means that; Disorder is dissolution, death. No chaos but it
seeks a centre to revolve round. While man is man, some Cromwell or
Napoleon is the necessary finish of a Sansculottism. --Curious: in those
days when Hero-worship was the most incredible thing to every one, how it
does come out nevertheless, and assert itself practically, in a way which
all have to credit. Divine right, take it on the great scale, is found
to mean divine might withal! While old false Formulas are getting
trampled everywhere into destruction, new genuine Substances unexpectedly
unfold themselves indestructible. In rebellious ages, when Kingship

itself
seems dead and abolished, Cromwell, Napoleon step forth again as Kings.
The history of these men is what we have now to look at, as our last

phasis
of Heroism. The old ages are brought back to us; the manner in which

Kings

were made, and Kingship itself first took rise, is again exhibited in the history of these Two.

We have had many civil wars in England; wars of Red and White Roses, wars of Simon de Montfort; wars enough, which are not very memorable. But

that

war of the Puritans has a significance which belongs to no one of the others. Trusting to your candor, which will suggest on the other side

what

I have not room to say, I will call it a section once more of that great universal war which alone makes up the true History of the World, --the

war

of Belief against Unbelief! The struggle of men intent on the real

essence

of things, against men intent on the semblances and forms of things. The Puritans, to many, seem mere savage Iconoclasts, fierce destroyers of Forms; but it were more just to call them haters of untrue Forms. I

hope

we know how to respect Laud and his King as well as them. Poor Laud

seems

to me to have been weak and ill-starred, not dishonest an unfortunate Pedant rather than anything worse. His "Dreams" and superstitions, at which they laugh so, have an affectionate, lovable kind of character. He is like a College-Tutor, whose whole world is forms, College-rules; whose notion is that these are the life and safety of the world. He is placed suddenly, with that unalterable luckless notion of his, at the head not

of

a College but of a Nation, to regulate the most complex deep-reaching interests of men. He thinks they ought to go by the old decent regulations; nay that their salvation will lie in extending and improving these. Like a weak man, he drives with spasmodic vehemence towards his purpose; cramps himself to it, heeding no voice of prudence, no cry of pity: He will have his College-rules obeyed by his Collegians; that

first;

and till that, nothing. He is an ill-starred Pedant, as I said. He

would

have it the world was a College of that kind, and the world was not

that.

Alas, was not his doom stern enough? Whatever wrongs he did, were they

not

all frightfully avenged on him?

It is meritorious to insist on forms; Religion and all else naturally clothes itself in forms. Everywhere the formed world is the only habitable one. The naked formlessness of Puritanism is not the thing I praise in the Puritans; it is the thing I pity, --praising only the spirit which had rendered that inevitable! All substances clothe themselves in forms: but there are suitable true forms, and then there are untrue unsuitable. As the briefest definition, one might say, Forms which

grow

round a substance, if we rightly understand that, will correspond to the real nature and purport of it, will be true, good; forms which are consciously put round a substance, bad. I invite you to reflect on

this.

It distinguishes true from false in Ceremonial Form, earnest solemnity
from
empty pageant, in all human things.

There must be a veracity, a natural spontaneity in forms. In the
commonest
meeting of men, a person making, what we call, "set speeches," is not he
an

offence? In the mere drawing-room, whatsoever courtesies you see to be
grimaces, prompted by no spontaneous reality within, are a thing you wish
to get away from. But suppose now it were some matter of vital
concernment, some transcendent matter (as Divine Worship is), about which
your whole soul, struck dumb with its excess of feeling, knew not how to
form itself into utterance at all, and preferred formless silence to

any
utterance there possible, --what should we say of a man coming forward to
represent or utter it for you in the way of upholsterer-mummery? Such a
man, --let him depart swiftly, if he love himself! You have lost your

only
son; are mute, struck down, without even tears: an importunate man
importunately offers to celebrate Funeral Games for him in the manner of
the Greeks! Such mummery is not only not to be accepted, --it is hateful,
unendurable. It is what the old Prophets called "Idolatry," worshipping

of
hollow _shows_; what all earnest men do and will reject. We can partly
understand what those poor Puritans meant. Laud dedicating that St.
Catherine Creed's Church, in the manner we have it described; with his
multiplied ceremonial bowings, gesticulations, exclamations: surely it

is
rather the rigorous formal Pedant, intent on his "College-rules," than

the
earnest Prophet intent on the essence of the matter!

Puritanism found _such_ forms insupportable; trampled on such forms; --we
have to excuse it for saying, No form at all rather than such! It stood
preaching in its bare pulpit, with nothing but the Bible in its hand.

Nay,
a man preaching from his earnest _soul_ into the earnest _souls_ of men:
is not this virtually the essence of all Churches whatsoever? The
nakedest, savagest reality, I say, is preferable to any semblance,

however
dignified. Besides, it will clothe itself with _due_ semblance by and

by,
if it be real. No fear of that; actually no fear at all. Given the

living
man, there will be found _clothes_ for him; he will find himself

clothes.
But the suit-of-clothes pretending that _it_ is both clothes and man--!

We
cannot "fight the French" by three hundred thousand red uniforms; there
must be _men_ in the inside of them! Semblance, I assert, must actually
not divorce itself from Reality. If Semblance do, --why then there must
be men found to rebel against Semblance, for it has become a lie! These
two Antagonisms at war here, in the case of Laud and the Puritans, are as

old nearly as the world. They went to fierce battle over England in that age; and fought out their confused controversy to a certain length, with many results for all of us.

In the age which directly followed that of the Puritans, their cause or themselves were little likely to have justice done them. Charles Second and his Rochesters were not the kind of men you would set to judge what

the worth or meaning of such men might have been. That there could be any faith or truth in the life of a man, was what these poor Rochesters, and the age they ushered in, had forgotten. Puritanism was hung on gibbets, --like the bones of the leading Puritans. Its work nevertheless went on accomplishing itself. All true work of a man, hang the author of it on what gibbet you like, must and will accomplish itself. We have our Habeas-Corpus, our free Representation of the People; acknowledgment, wide as the world, that all men are, or else must, shall, and will

become, what we call free men; --men with their life grounded on reality and justice, not on tradition, which has become unjust and a chimera! This

in part, and much besides this, was the work of the Puritans.

And indeed, as these things became gradually manifest, the character of

the Puritans began to clear itself. Their memories were, one after another, taken down from the gibbet; nay a certain portion of them are now, in these days, as good as canonized. Eliot, Hampden, Pym, nay Ludlow, Hutchinson, Vane himself, are admitted to be a kind of Heroes; political Conscript Fathers, to whom in no small degree we owe what makes us a free England: it would not be safe for anybody to designate these men as

wicked now. Few Puritans of note but find their apologists somewhere, and have

a certain reverence paid them by earnest men. One Puritan, I think, and almost he alone, our poor Cromwell, seems to hang yet on the gibbet, and find no hearty apologist anywhere. Him neither saint nor sinner will acquit of great wickedness. A man of ability, infinite talent, courage, and so forth: but he betrayed the Cause. Selfish ambition, dishonesty, duplicity; a fierce, coarse, hypocritical Tartuffe; turning all that noble Struggle for constitutional Liberty into a sorry farce played for

his own benefit: this and worse is the character they give of Cromwell. And then there come contrasts with Washington and others; above all, with

these noble Pym and Hampdens, whose noble work he stole for himself, and

ruined into a futility and deformity.

This view of Cromwell seems to me the not unnatural product of a century like the Eighteenth. As we said of the Valet, so of the Sceptic: He

does not know a Hero when he sees him! The Valet expected purple mantles,

gilt sceptres, bodyguards and flourishes of trumpets: the Sceptic of the Eighteenth century looks for regulated respectable Formulas,

"Principles,"

or what else he may call them; a style of speech and conduct which has

got

to seem "respectable," which can plead for itself in a handsome

articulate

manner, and gain the suffrages of an enlightened sceptical Eighteenth century! It is, at bottom, the same thing that both the Valet and he expect: the garnitures of some _acknowledged_ royalty, which _then_ they will acknowledge! The King coming to them in the rugged _un_formularistic state shall be no King.

For my own share, far be it from me to say or insinuate a word of disparagement against such characters as Hampden, Elliot, Pym; whom I believe to have been right worthy and useful men. I have read diligently what books and documents about them I could come at; --with the honestest wish to admire, to love and worship them like Heroes; but I am sorry to say, if the real truth must be told, with very indifferent success! At bottom, I found that it would not do. They are very noble men, these;

step

along in their stately way, with their measured euphemisms, philosophies, parliamentary eloquences, Ship-moneys, _Monarchies of Man_; a most constitutional, unblamable, dignified set of men. But the heart remains cold before them; the fancy alone endeavors to get up some worship of

them.

What man's heart does, in reality, break forth into any fire of brotherly love for these men? They are become dreadfully dull men! One breaks

down

often enough in the constitutional eloquence of the admirable Pym, with

his

"seventhly and lastly." You find that it may be the admirablest thing in the world, but that it is heavy, --heavy as lead, barren as brick-clay; that, in a word, for you there is little or nothing now surviving there! One leaves all these Nobilities standing in their niches of honor: the rugged outcast Cromwell, he is the man of them all in whom one still

finds

human stuff. The great savage _Baresark_: he could write no euphemistic _Monarchy of Man_; did not speak, did not work with glib regularity; had

no

straight story to tell for himself anywhere. But he stood bare, not

cased

in euphemistic coat-of-mail; he grappled like a giant, face to face,

heart

to heart, with the naked truth of things! That, after all, is the sort

of

man for one. I plead guilty to valuing such a man beyond all other sorts of men. Smooth-shaven Respectabilities not a few one finds, that are not good for much. Small thanks to a man for keeping his hands clean, who would not touch the work but with gloves on!

Neither, on the whole, does this constitutional tolerance of the

Eighteenth

century for the other happier Puritans seem to be a very great matter.

One

might say, it is but a piece of Formulism and Scepticism, like the rest. They tell us, It was a sorrowful thing to consider that the foundation of our English Liberties should have been laid by "Superstition." These Puritans came forward with Calvinistic incredible Creeds, Anti-Laudisms,

Westminster Confessions; demanding, chiefly of all, that they should have liberty to worship in their own way. Liberty to tax themselves:

that
was the thing they should have demanded! It was Superstition,

Fanaticism,
disgraceful ignorance of Constitutional Philosophy to insist on the other thing! --Liberty to tax oneself? Not to pay out money from your pocket except on reason shown? No century, I think, but a rather barren one

would
have fixed on that as the first right of man! I should say, on the contrary, A just man will generally have better cause than money in

what
shape soever, before deciding to revolt against his Government. Ours is

a
most confused world; in which a good man will be thankful to see any kind of Government maintain itself in a not insupportable manner: and here in England, to this hour, if he is not ready to pay a great many taxes which he can see very small reason in, it will not go well with him, I think!

He
must try some other climate than this. Tax-gatherer? Money? He will

say:
"Take my money, since you can, and it is so desirable to you; take it, --and take yourself away with it; and leave me alone to my work here.

I
am still here; can still work, after all the money you have taken from

me!"
But if they come to him, and say, "Acknowledge a Lie; pretend to say you are worshipping God, when you are not doing it: believe not the thing

that
you find true, but the thing that I find, or pretend to find true!" He will answer: "No; by God's help, no! You may take my purse; but I

cannot
have my moral Self annihilated. The purse is any Highwayman's who might meet me with a loaded pistol: but the Self is mine and God my Maker's;

it
is not yours; and I will resist you to the death, and revolt against you, and, on the whole, front all manner of extremities, accusations and confusions, in defence of that!"--

Really, it seems to me the one reason which could justify revolting, this of the Puritans. It has been the soul of all just revolts among men.

Not
Hunger alone produced even the French Revolution; no, but the feeling

of
the insupportable all-pervading Falsehood which had now embodied itself in Hunger, in universal material Scarcity and Nonentity, and thereby

become
indisputably false in the eyes of all! We will leave the Eighteenth century with its "liberty to tax itself." We will not astonish ourselves that the meaning of such men as the Puritans remained dim to it. To men who believe in no reality at all, how shall a real human soul, the intensest of all realities, as it were the Voice of this world's Maker still speaking to us, --be intelligible? What it cannot reduce into constitutional doctrines relative to "taxing," or other the like material

interest, gross, palpable to the sense, such a century will needs reject
as
an amorphous heap of rubbish. Hampdens, Pym and Ship-money will be the
theme of much constitutional eloquence, striving to be fervid; --which

will
glitter, if not as fire does, then as ice does: and the irreducible
Cromwell will remain a chaotic mass of "madness," "hypocrisy," and much
else.

From of old, I will confess, this theory of Cromwell's falsity has been
incredible to me. Nay I cannot believe the like, of any Great Man
whatever. Multitudes of Great Men figure in History as false selfish

men;
but if we will consider it, they are but _figures_ for us, unintelligible
shadows; we do not see into them as men that could have existed at all.

A
superficial unbelieving generation only, with no eye but for the surfaces
and semblances of things, could form such notions of Great Men. Can a
great soul be possible without a _conscience_ in it, the essence of all
real souls, great or small?--No, we cannot figure Cromwell as a Falsity
and Fatuity; the longer I study him and his career, I believe this the
less. Why should we? There is no evidence of it. Is it not strange

that,
after all the mountains of calumny this man has been subject to, after
being represented as the very prince of liars, who never, or hardly ever,
spoke truth, but always some cunning counterfeit of truth, there should

not
yet have been one falsehood brought clearly home to him? A prince of
liars, and no lie spoken by him. Not one that I could yet get sight of.
It is like Pococke asking Grotius, Where is your _proof_ of Mahomet's
Pigeon? No proof! --Let us leave all these calumnious chimeras, as

chimeras
ought to be left. They are not portraits of the man; they are distracted
phantasms of him, the joint product of hatred and darkness.

Looking at the man's life with our own eyes, it seems to me, a very
different hypothesis suggests itself. What little we know of his earlier
obscure years, distorted as it has come down to us, does it not all

betoken
an earnest, affectionate, sincere kind of man? His nervous melancholic
temperament indicates rather a seriousness _too_ deep for him. Of those
stories of "Spectres;" of the white Spectre in broad daylight, predicting
that he should be King of England, we are not bound to believe
much; --probably no more than of the other black Spectre, or Devil in
person, to whom the Officer _saw_ him sell himself before Worcester

Fight!
But the mournful, oversensitive, hypochondriac humor of Oliver, in his
young years, is otherwise indisputably known. The Huntingdon Physician
told Sir Philip Warwick himself, He had often been sent for at midnight;
Mr. Cromwell was full of hypochondria, thought himself near dying, and

"had
fancies about the Town-cross." These things are significant. Such an
excitable deep-feeling nature, in that rugged stubborn strength of his,

is
not the symptom of falsehood; it is the symptom and promise of quite

other

than falsehood!

The young Oliver is sent to study Law; falls, or is said to have fallen, for a little period, into some of the dissipations of youth; but if so, speedily repents, abandons all this: not much above twenty, he is

married,

settled as an altogether grave and quiet man. "He pays back what money

he

had won at gambling," says the story; --he does not think any gain of that kind could be really his. It is very interesting, very natural, this "conversion," as they well name it; this awakening of a great true soul from the worldly slough, to see into the awful truth of things; --to see that Time and its shows all rested on Eternity, and this poor Earth of

ours

was the threshold either of Heaven or of Hell! Oliver's life at St. Ives and Ely, as a sober industrious Farmer, is it not altogether as that of a true and devout man? He has renounced the world and its ways; its

prizes

are not the thing that can enrich him. He tills the earth; he reads his Bible; daily assembles his servants round him to worship God. He

comforts

persecuted ministers, is fond of preachers; nay can himself preach, --exhorts his neighbors to be wise, to redeem the time. In all

this

what "hypocrisy," "ambition," "cant," or other falsity? The man's hopes,

I

do believe, were fixed on the other Higher World; his aim to get well thither, by walking well through his humble course in this world. He courts no notice: what could notice here do for him? "Ever in his great Taskmaster's eye."

It is striking, too, how he comes out once into public view; he, since no other is willing to come: in resistance to a public grievance. I mean,

in

that matter of the Bedford Fens. No one else will go to law with Authority; therefore he will. That matter once settled, he returns back into obscurity, to his Bible and his Plough. "Gain influence"? His influence is the most legitimate; derived from personal knowledge of him, as a just, religious, reasonable and determined man. In this way he has lived till past forty; old age is now in view of him, and the earnest portal of Death and Eternity; it was at this point that he suddenly

became

"ambitious"! I do not interpret his Parliamentary mission in that way!

His successes in Parliament, his successes through the war, are honest successes of a brave man; who has more resolution in the heart of him,

more

light in the head of him than other men. His prayers to God; his spoken thanks to the God of Victory, who had preserved him safe, and carried him forward so far, through the furious clash of a world all set in conflict, through desperate-looking envelopments at Dunbar; through the death-hail

of

so many battles; mercy after mercy; to the "crowning mercy" of Worcester Fight: all this is good and genuine for a deep-hearted Calvinistic Cromwell. Only to vain unbelieving Cavaliers, worshipping not God but their own "love-locks," frivolities and formalities, living quite apart from contemplations of God, living without God in the world, need it

seem
hypocritical.

Nor will his participation in the King's death involve him in
condemnation
with us. It is a stern business killing of a King! But if you once go
to
war with him, it lies there; this and all else lies there. Once at
war,

you have made wagers of battle with him: it is he to die, or else you.
Reconciliation is problematic; may be possible, or, far more likely, is
impossible. It is now pretty generally admitted that the Parliament,
having vanquished Charles First, had no way of making any tenable
arrangement with him. The large Presbyterian party, apprehensive now of
the Independents, were most anxious to do so; anxious indeed as for their
own existence; but it could not be. The unhappy Charles, in those final
Hampton-Court negotiations, shows himself as a man fatally incapable of
being dealt with. A man who, once for all, could not and would not
understand:--whose thought did not in any measure represent to him the
real fact of the matter; nay worse, whose word did not at all represent
his thought. We may say this of him without cruelty, with deep pity
rather: but it is true and undeniable. Forsaken there of all but the
name of Kingship, he still, finding himself treated with outward

respect
as a King, fancied that he might play off party against party, and

smuggle
himself into his old power by deceiving both. Alas, they both

discovered
that he was deceiving them. A man whose word will not inform you at
all
what he means or will do, is not a man you can bargain with. You must

get
out of that man's way, or put him out of yours! The Presbyterians, in
their despair, were still for believing Charles, though found false,
unbelievable again and again. Not so Cromwell: "For all our fighting,"
says he, "we are to have a little bit of paper?" No! --

In fact, everywhere we have to note the decisive practical eye of this
man; how he drives towards the practical and practicable; has a genuine
insight into what is fact. Such an intellect, I maintain, does not
belong to a false man: the false man sees false shows, plausibilities,
expediences: the true man is needed to discern even practical truth.
Cromwell's advice about the Parliament's Army, early in the contest, How
they were to dismiss their city-tapsters, flimsy riotous persons, and
choose substantial yeomen, whose heart was in the work, to be soldiers

for
them: this is advice by a man who saw. Fact answers, if you see into
Fact! Cromwell's Ironsides were the embodiment of this insight of his;
men fearing God; and without any other fear. No more conclusively

genuine
set of fighters ever trod the soil of England, or of any other land.

Neither will we blame greatly that word of Cromwell's to them; which was

so
blamed: "If the King should meet me in battle, I would kill the King."
Why not? These words were spoken to men who stood as before a Higher

than

Kings. They had set more than their own lives on the cast. The Parliament may call it, in official language, a fighting "_for_ the King;" but we, for our share, cannot understand that. To us it is no dilettante work, no sleek officiality; it is sheer rough death and earnest. They have brought it to the calling-forth of War; horrid internecine fight, man grappling with man in fire-eyed rage, --the _infernal_ element in man called forth, to try it by that! _Do_ that therefore; since that is the thing to be done. --The successes of Cromwell seem to me a very natural thing! Since he was not shot in battle, they were an inevitable thing. That such a man, with the eye to see, with the heart to dare, should advance, from post to post, from victory to victory, till the Huntingdon Farmer became, by whatever name you might call him, the acknowledged Strongest Man in England, virtually the King of England, requires no magic to explain it! --

Truly it is a sad thing for a people, as for a man, to fall into Scepticism, into dilettantism, insincerity; not to know Sincerity when they see it. For this world, and for all worlds, what curse is so fatal? The heart lying dead, the eye cannot see. What intellect remains is merely the _vulpine_ intellect. That a true _King_ be sent them is of small use; they do not know him when sent. They say scornfully, Is this your King? The Hero wastes his heroic faculty in bootless contradiction from the unworthy; and can accomplish little. For himself he does accomplish a heroic life, which is much, which is all; but for the world he accomplishes comparatively nothing. The wild rude Sincerity, direct from Nature, is not glib in answering from the witness-box: in your small-debt _pie-powder_ court, he is scouted as a counterfeit. The vulpine intellect "detects" him. For being a man worth any thousand men, the response your Knox, your Cromwell gets, is an argument for two centuries whether he was a man at all. God's greatest gift to this Earth is sneeringly flung away. The miraculous talisman is a paltry plated coin, not fit to pass in the shops as a common guinea.

Lamentable this! I say, this must be remedied. Till this be remedied in some measure, there is nothing remedied. "Detect quacks"? Yes do, for Heaven's sake; but know withal the men that are to be trusted! Till we know that, what is all our knowledge; how shall we even so much as "detect"? For the vulpine sharpness, which considers itself to be knowledge, and "detects" in that fashion, is far mistaken. Dupes indeed are many: but, of all _dupes_, there is none so fatally situated as he

who lives in undue terror of being duped. The world does exist; the world has

truth in it, or it would not exist! First recognize what is true, we shall
then discern what is false; and properly never till then.

"Know the men that are to be trusted:" alas, this is yet, in these days, very far from us. The sincere alone can recognize sincerity. Not a Hero only is needed, but a world fit for him; a world not of Valets; --the

Hero comes almost in vain to it otherwise! Yes, it is far from us: but it

must come; thank God, it is visibly coming. Till it do come, what have we? Ballot-boxes, suffrages, French Revolutions: --if we are as Valets, and do not know the Hero when we see him, what good are all these? A heroic Cromwell comes; and for a hundred and fifty years he cannot have a vote from us. Why, the insincere, unbelieving world is the natural property of the Quack, and of the Father of quacks and quackeries! Misery, confusion, unverity are alone possible there. By ballot-boxes we alter the figure of our Quack; but the substance of him continues. The Valet-World has to be governed by the Sham-Hero, by the King merely dressed in King-gear. It is his; he is its! In brief, one of two things: We shall either learn to know a Hero, a true Governor and

Captain, somewhat better, when we see him; or else go on to be forever governed by the Unheroic; --had we ballot-boxes clattering at every street-corner,

there were no remedy in these.

Poor Cromwell, --great Cromwell! The inarticulate Prophet; Prophet who could not speak. Rude, confused, struggling to utter himself, with his savage depth, with his wild sincerity; and he looked so strange, among

the elegant Euphemisms, dainty little Falklands, didactic Chillingworths, diplomatic Clarendons! Consider him. An outer hull of chaotic

confusion, visions of the Devil, nervous dreams, almost semi-madness; and yet such a clear determinate man's-energy working in the heart of that. A kind of chaotic man. The ray as of pure starlight and fire, working in such an element of boundless hypochondria, unformed black of darkness! And yet withal this hypochondria, what was it but the very greatness of the man? The depth and tenderness of his wild affections: the quantity of sympathy he had with things, --the quantity of insight he would yet get into the heart of things, the mastery he would yet get over things: this was his hypochondria. The man's misery, as man's misery always does,

came of his greatness. Samuel Johnson too is that kind of man. Sorrow-stricken, half-distracted; the wide element of mournful black enveloping him, --wide as the world. It is the character of a prophetic man; a man with his whole soul seeing, and struggling to see.

On this ground, too, I explain to myself Cromwell's reputed confusion of speech. To himself the internal meaning was sun-clear; but the material with which he was to clothe it in utterance was not there. He had

lived silent; a great unnamed sea of Thought round him all his days; and in his way of life little call to attempt naming or uttering that. With his sharp power of vision, resolute power of action, I doubt not he could

have learned to write Books withal, and speak fluently enough; --he did harder things than writing of Books. This kind of man is precisely he who is

fit
for doing manfully all things you will set him on doing. Intellect is

not
speaking and logicizing; it is seeing and ascertaining. Virtue, Virtues,
manhood, hero-hood, is not fair-spoken immaculate regularity; it is

first
of all, what the Germans well name it, Tugend (Taugend, doing or
Dough-tines), Courage and the Faculty to do. This basis of the

matter
Cromwell had in him.

One understands moreover how, though he could not speak in Parliament, he might preach, rhapsodic preaching; above all, how he might be great in extempore prayer. These are the free outpouring utterances of what is in the heart: method is not required in them; warmth, depth, sincerity are all that is required. Cromwell's habit of prayer is a notable feature of him. All his great enterprises were commenced with prayer. In dark inextricable-looking difficulties, his Officers and he used to assemble, and pray alternately, for hours, for days, till some definite resolution rose among them, some "door of hope," as they would name it, disclosed itself. Consider that. In tears, in fervent prayers, and cries to the great God, to have pity on them, to make His light shine before them. They, armed Soldiers of Christ, as they felt themselves to be; a little band of Christian Brothers, who had drawn the sword against a great black devouring world not Christian, but Mammonish, Devilish, --they cried to

God
in their straits, in their extreme need, not to forsake the Cause that

was
His. The light which now rose upon them, --how could a human soul, by any means at all, get better light? Was not the purpose so formed like to be precisely the best, wisest, the one to be followed without hesitation any more? To them it was as the shining of Heaven's own Splendor in the waste-howling darkness; the Pillar of Fire by night, that was to guide

them
on their desolate perilous way. Was it not such? Can a man's soul, to this hour, get guidance by any other method than intrinsically by that same, --devout prostration of the earnest struggling soul before the Highest, the Giver of all Light; be such prayer a spoken, articulate,

or
be it a voiceless, inarticulate one? There is no other method. "Hypocrisy"? One begins to be weary of all that. They who call it so, have no right to speak on such matters. They never formed a purpose,

what
one can call a purpose. They went about balancing expediencies, plausibilities; gathering votes, advices; they never were alone with the truth of a thing at all. --Cromwell's prayers were likely to be "eloquent," and much more than that. His was the heart of a man who could pray.

But indeed his actual Speeches, I apprehend, were not nearly so

ineloquent,
incondite, as they look. We find he was, what all speakers aim to be, an impressive speaker, even in Parliament; one who, from the first, had weight. With that rude passionate voice of his, he was always understood to mean something, and men wished to know what. He disregarded eloquence, nay despised and disliked it; spoke always without

premediation
of the words he was to use. The Reporters, too, in those days seem to

have
been singularly candid; and to have given the Printer precisely what they found on their own note-paper. And withal, what a strange proof is it of Cromwell's being the premeditative ever-calculating hypocrite, acting a play before the world, that to the last he took no more charge of his Speeches! How came he not to study his words a little, before flinging them out to the public? If the words were true words, they could be left to shift for themselves.

But with regard to Cromwell's "lying," we will make one remark. This, I suppose, or something like this, to have been the nature of it. All parties found themselves deceived in him; each party understood him to be meaning this, heard him even say so, and behold he turns out to have

been meaning that! He was, cry they, the chief of liars. But now, intrinsically, is not all this the inevitable fortune, not of a false man in such times, but simply of a superior man? Such a man must have reticences in him. If he walk wearing his heart upon his sleeve for

daws
to peck at, his journey will not extend far! There is no use for any

man's taking up his abode in a house built of glass. A man always is to be himself the judge how much of his mind he will show to other men; even to those he would have work along with him. There are impertinent inquiries made: your rule is, to leave the inquirer uninformed on that matter;

not, if you can help it, misinformed, but precisely as dark as he was! This, could one hit the right phrase of response, is what the wise and faithful man would aim to answer in such a case.

Cromwell, no doubt of it, spoke often in the dialect of small subaltern parties; uttered to them a part of his mind. Each little party thought him all its own. Hence their rage, one and all, to find him not of their party, but of his own party. Was it his blame? At all seasons of his history he must have felt, among such people, how, if he explained to

them the deeper insight he had, they must either have shuddered aghast at it,

or believing it, their own little compact hypothesis must have gone wholly

to wreck. They could not have worked in his province any more; nay perhaps they could not now have worked in their own province. It is the

inevitable position of a great man among small men. Small men, most active, useful, are to be seen everywhere, whose whole activity depends on some

conviction which to you is palpably a limited one; imperfect, what we call an

error. But would it be a kindness always, is it a duty always or often, to

disturb them in that? Many a man, doing loud work in the world, stands only on some thin traditionality, conventionalty; to him indubitable, to you incredible: break that beneath him, he sinks to endless depths! "I

might have my hand full of truth," said Fontenelle, "and open only my little finger."

And if this be the fact even in matters of doctrine, how much more in all departments of practice! He that cannot withal _keep his mind to

himself_

cannot practice any considerable thing whatever. And we call it "dissimulation," all this? What would you think of calling the general

of

an army a dissembler because he did not tell every corporal and private soldier, who pleased to put the question, what his thoughts were about everything?--Cromwell, I should rather say, managed all this in a manner

we

must admire for its perfection. An endless vortex of such questioning "corporals" rolled confusedly round him through his whole course; whom he did answer. It must have been as a great true-seeing man that he managed this too. Not one proved falsehood, as I said; not one! Of what man

that

ever wound himself through such a coil of things will you say so much?--

But in fact there are two errors, widely prevalent, which pervert to the very basis our judgments formed about such men as Cromwell; about their "ambition," "falsity," and such like. The first is what I might call substituting the _goal_ of their career for the course and starting-point of it. The vulgar Historian of a Cromwell fancies that he had determined on being Protector of England, at the time when he was ploughing the

marsh

lands of Cambridgeshire. His career lay all mapped out: a program of

the

whole drama; which he then step by step dramatically unfolded, with all manner of cunning, deceptive dramaturgy, as he went on, --the hollow, scheming [Gr.] _Upokrites_, or Play-actor, that he was! This is a

radical

perversion; all but universal in such cases. And think for an instant

how

different the fact is! How much does one of us foresee of his own life? Short way ahead of us it is all dim; an unwound skein of possibilities,

of

apprehensions, attemptabilities, vague-looming hopes. This Cromwell had _not_ his life lying all in that fashion of Program, which he needed

then,

with that unfathomable cunning of his, only to enact dramatically, scene after scene! Not so. We see it so; but to him it was in no measure so. What absurdities would fall away of themselves, were this one undeniable fact kept honestly in view by History! Historians indeed will tell you that they do keep it in view; --but look whether such is practically the fact! Vulgar History, as in this Cromwell's case, omits it altogether; even the best kinds of History only remember it now and then. To

remember

it duly with rigorous perfection, as in the fact it _stood_, requires indeed a rare faculty; rare, nay impossible. A very Shakspeare for faculty; or more than Shakspeare; who could _enact_ a brother man's biography, see with the brother man's eyes at all points of his course

what

things _he_ saw; in short, _know_ his course and him, as few "Historians" are like to do. Half or more of all the thick-plied perversions which distort our image of Cromwell, will disappear, if we honestly so much as try to represent them so; in sequence, as they _were_; not in the lump,

as
they are thrown down before us.

But a second error, which I think the generality commit, refers to this same "ambition" itself. We exaggerate the ambition of Great Men; we mistake what the nature of it is. Great Men are not ambitious in that sense; he is a small poor man that is ambitious so. Examine the man who lives in misery because he does not shine above other men; who goes about producing himself, prudently anxious about his gifts and claims; struggling to force everybody, as it were begging everybody for God's

sake,
to acknowledge him a great man, and set him over the heads of men! Such

a
creature is among the wretchedest sights seen under this sun. A great
man? A poor morbid prurient empty man; fitter for the ward of a

hospital,
than for a throne among men. I advise you to keep out of his way. He cannot walk on quiet paths; unless you will look at him, wonder at him, write paragraphs about him, he cannot live. It is the emptiness of the man, not his greatness. Because there is nothing in himself, he hungers and thirsts that you would find something in him. In good truth, I

believe
no great man, not so much as a genuine man who had health and real substance in him of whatever magnitude, was ever much tormented in this way.

Your Cromwell, what good could it do him to be "noticed" by noisy crowds

of
people? God his Maker already noticed him. He, Cromwell, was already there; no notice would make him other than he already was. Till his

hair
was grown gray; and Life from the down-hill slope was all seen to be limited, not infinite but finite, and all a measurable matter how it went, --he had been content to plough the ground, and read his Bible. He

in
his old days could not support it any longer, without selling himself to Falsehood, that he might ride in gilt carriages to Whitehall, and have clerks with bundles of papers haunting him, "Decide this, decide that," which in utmost sorrow of heart no man can perfectly decide! What could gilt carriages do for this man? From of old, was there not in his life a weight of meaning, a terror and a splendor as of Heaven itself? His existence there as man set him beyond the need of gilding. Death,

Judgment
and Eternity: these already lay as the background of whatsoever he

thought
or did. All his life lay begirt as in a sea of nameless Thoughts, which

no
speech of a mortal could name. God's Word, as the Puritan prophets of

that
time had read it: this was great, and all else was little to him. To

call
such a man "ambitious," to figure him as the prurient wind-bag described above, seems to me the poorest solecism. Such a man will say: "Keep

your
gilt carriages and huzzaiing mobs, keep your red-tape clerks, your

influentialities, your important businesses. Leave me alone, I leave me alone; there is too much of life in me already!" Old Samuel Johnson,

the
greatest soul in England in his day, was not ambitious. "Corsica

Boswell "

flaunted at public shows with printed ribbons round his hat; but the

great

old Samuel stayed at home. The world-wide soul wrapt up in its thoughts, in its sorrows; --what could paradiings, and ribbons in the hat, do for it?

Ah yes, I will say again: The great silent men! Looking round on the noisy inanity of the world, words with little meaning, actions with

little

worth, one loves to reflect on the great Empire of Silence. The noble silent men, scattered here and there, each in his department; silently thinking, silently working; whom no Morning Newspaper makes mention of! They are the salt of the Earth. A country that has none or few of these

is

in a bad way. Like a forest which had no roots; which had all turned into leaves and boughs; --which must soon wither and be no forest. Woe

for

us if we had nothing but what we can show, or speak. Silence, the

great

Empire of Silence: higher than the stars; deeper than the Kingdoms of Death! It alone is great; all else is small. --I hope we English will

long

maintain our grand talent pour le silence. Let others that cannot do without standing on barrel-heads, to spout, and be seen of all the market-place, cultivate speech exclusively, --become a most green forest without roots! Solomon says, There is a time to speak; but also a time

to

keep silence. Of some great silent Samuel, not urged to writing, as old Samuel Johnson says he was, by want of money, and nothing other, one might ask, "Why do not you too get up and speak; promulgate your system, found your sect?" "Truly," he will answer, "I am continent of my

thought

hitherto; happily I have yet had the ability to keep it in me, no compulsion strong enough to speak it. My 'system' is not for

promulgation

first of all; it is for serving myself to live by. That is the great purpose of it to me. And then the 'honor'? Alas, yes; --but as Cato said of the statue: So many statues in that Forum of yours, may it not be better if they ask, Where is Cato's statue?" --

But now, by way of counterpoise to this of Silence, let me say that there are two kinds of ambition; one wholly blamable, the other laudable and inevitable. Nature has provided that the great silent Samuel shall not

be

silent too long. The selfish wish to shine over others, let it be accounted altogether poor and miserable. "Seekest thou great things,

seek

them not:" this is most true. And yet, I say, there is an irrepressible tendency in every man to develop himself according to the magnitude which Nature has made him of; to speak out, to act out, what nature has laid in him. This is proper, fit, inevitable; nay it is a duty, and even the summary of duties for a man. The meaning of life here on earth might be

defined as consisting in this: To unfold your _self_, to work what thing you have the faculty for. It is a necessity for the human being, the

first

law of our existence. Coleridge beautifully remarks that the infant

learns

to _speak_ by this necessity it feels. --We will say therefore: To decide about ambition, whether it is bad or not, you have two things to take

into

view. Not the coveting of the place alone, but the fitness of the man

for

the place withal: that is the question. Perhaps the place was _his_; perhaps he had a natural right, and even obligation, to seek the place! Mirabeau's ambition to be Prime Minister, how shall we blame it, if he

were

"the only man in France that could have done any good there"? Hopefuler perhaps had he not so clearly _felt_ how much good he could do! But a

poor

Necker, who could do no good, and had even felt that he could do none,

yet

sitting broken-hearted because they had flung him out, and he was now

quit

of it, well might Gibbon mourn over him. --Nature, I say, has provided

amply

that the silent great man shall strive to speak withal; _too_ amply, rather!

Fancy, for example, you had revealed to the brave old Samuel Johnson, in his shrouded-up existence, that it was possible for him to do priceless divine work for his country and the whole world. That the perfect

Heavenly

Law might be made Law on this Earth; that the prayer he prayed daily,

"Thy

kingdom come," was at length to be fulfilled! If you had convinced his judgment of this; that it was possible, practicable; that he the mournful silent Samuel was called to take a part in it! Would not the whole soul

of

the man have flamed up into a divine clearness, into noble utterance and determination to act; casting all sorrows and misgivings under his feet, counting all affliction and contradiction small, --the whole dark element

of

his existence blazing into articulate radiance of light and lightning?

It

were a true ambition this! And think now how it actually was with Cromwell. From of old, the sufferings of God's Church, true zealous Preachers of the truth flung into dungeons, whips, set on pillories,

their

ears crops off, God's Gospel -cause trodden under foot of the unworthy:

all

this had lain heavy on his soul. Long years he had looked upon it, in silence, in prayer; seeing no remedy on Earth; trusting well that a

remedy

in Heaven's goodness would come, --that such a course was false, unjust,

and
could not last forever. And now behold the dawn of it; after twelve
years

silent waiting, all England stirs itself; there is to be once more a
Parliament, the Right will get a voice for itself: inexpressible
well-grounded hope has come again into the Earth. Was not such a
Parliament worth being a member of? Cromwell threw down his ploughs, and
hastened thither.

He spoke there, --rugged bursts of earnestness, of a self-seen truth,

where
we get a glimpse of them. He worked there; he fought and strove, like a
strong true giant of a man, through cannon-tumult and all else, --on and

on,
till the Cause triumphed, its once so formidable enemies all swept from
before it, and the dawn of hope had become clear light of victory and
certainty. That he stood there as the strongest soul of England, the
undisputed Hero of all England, --what of this? It was possible that the
Law of Christ's Gospel could now establish itself in the world! The
Theocracy which John Knox in his pulpit might dream of as a "devout
imagination," this practical man, experienced in the whole chaos of most
rough practice, dared to consider as capable of being realized. Those
that were highest in Christ's Church, the devoutest wisest men, were to
rule the land: in some considerable degree, it might be so and should be
so. Was it not true, God's truth? And if true, was it not then the
very thing to do? The strongest practical intellect in England dared to
answer, Yes! This I call a noble true purpose; is it not, in its own
dialect, the noblest that could enter into the heart of Statesman or man?
For a Knox to take it up was something; but for a Cromwell, with his

great
sound sense and experience of what our world was, --History, I think,
shows it only this once in such a degree. I account it the culminating
point of Protestantism; the most heroic phasis that "Faith in the Bible"
was appointed to exhibit here below. Fancy it: that it were made

mani fest
to one of us, how we could make the Right supremely victorious over

Wrong,
and all that we had longed and prayed for, as the highest good to England
and all lands, an attainable fact!

Well, I must say, the vulpine intellect, with its knowingness, its
alertness and expertness in "detecting hypocrites," seems to me a rather
sorry business. We have had but one such Statesman in England; one man,
that I can get sight of, who ever had in the heart of him any such

purpose
at all. One man, in the course of fifteen hundred years; and this was

his
welcome. He had adherents by the hundred or the ten; opponents by the
million. Had England rallied all round him, --why, then, England might

have
been a Christian land! As it is, vulpine knowingness sits yet at its
hopeless problem, "Given a world of Knaves, to educe an Honesty from

their
united action; "--how cumbrous a problem, you may see in Chancery
Law-Courts, and some other places! Till at length, by Heaven's just

anger,
but also by Heaven's great grace, the matter begins to stagnate; and this

problem is becoming to all men a palpably hopeless one. --

But with regard to Cromwell and his purposes: Hume, and a multitude following him, come upon me here with an admission that Cromwell was sincere at first; a sincere "Fanatic" at first, but gradually became a "Hypocrite" as things opened round him. This of the Fanatic-Hypocrite is Hume's theory of it; extensively applied since, --to Mahomet and many others. Think of it seriously, you will find something in it; not much, not all, very far from all. Sincere hero hearts do not sink in this miserable manner. The Sun flings forth impurities, gets balefully incrustated with spots; but it does not quench itself, and become no Sun at all, but a mass of Darkness! I will venture to say that such never

befell

a great deep Cromwell; I think, never. Nature's own lionhearted Son; Antaeus-like, his strength is got by touching the Earth, his Mother;

lift

him up from the Earth, lift him up into Hypocrisy, Inanity, his strength

is

gone. We will not assert that Cromwell was an immaculate man; that he

fell

into no faults, no insincerities among the rest. He was no dilettante professor of "perfections," "immaculate conducts." He was a rugged

Orson,

rending his rough way through actual true work, --doubtless with many

a

fall therein. Insincerities, faults, very many faults daily and

hourly:

it was too well known to him; known to God and him! The Sun was dimmed many a time; but the Sun had not himself grown a Dimness. Cromwell's

last

words, as he lay waiting for death, are those of a Christian heroic man. Broken prayers to God, that He would judge him and this Cause, He since

man

could not, in justice yet in pity. They are most touching words. He breathed out his wild great soul, its toils and sins all ended now, into the presence of his Maker, in this manner.

I, for one, will not call the man a Hypocrite! Hypocrite, mummer, the

life

of him a mere theatricality; empty barren quack, hungry for the shouts of mobs? The man had made obscurity do very well for him till his head was gray; and now he was, there as he stood recognized unblamed, the

virtual

King of England. Cannot a man do without King's Coaches and Cloaks? Is

it

such a blessedness to have clerks forever pestering you with bundles of papers in red tape? A simple Diocletian prefers planting of cabbages; a George Washington, no very immeasurable man, does the like. One would

say,

it is what any genuine man could do; and would do. The instant his real work were out in the matter of Kingship, --away with it!

Let us remark, meanwhile, how indispensable everywhere a King is, in

all

movements of men. It is strikingly shown, in this very War, what becomes of men when they cannot find a Chief Man, and their enemies can. The Scotch Nation was all but unanimous in Puritanism; zealous and of one

mind

about it, as in this English end of the Island was always far from being the case. But there was no great Cromwell among them; poor tremulous, hesitating, diplomatic Argyles and such like: none of them had a heart true enough for the truth, or durst commit himself to the truth. They

had

no leader; and the scattered Cavalier party in that country had one: Montrose, the noblest of all the Cavaliers; an accomplished, gallant-hearted, splendid man; what one may call the Hero-Cavalier.

Well,

look at it; on the one hand subjects without a King; on the other a King without subjects! The subjects without King can do nothing; the subjectless King can do something. This Montrose, with a handful of

Irish

or Highland savages, few of them so much as guns in their hands, dashes

at

the drilled Puritan armies like a wild whirlwind; sweeps them, time after time, some five times over, from the field before him. He was at one period, for a short while, master of all Scotland. One man; but he was a man; a million zealous men, but without the one; they against him were powerless! Perhaps of all the persons in that Puritan struggle, from

first

to last, the single indispensable one was verily Cromwell. To see and dare, and decide; to be a fixed pillar in the welter of uncertainty; --a King among them, whether they called him so or not.

Precisely here, however, lies the rub for Cromwell. His other

proceedings

have all found advocates, and stand generally justified; but this

dismissal

of the Rump Parliament and assumption of the Protectorship, is what no

one

can pardon him. He had fairly grown to be King in England; Chief Man of the victorious party in England: but it seems he could not do without

the

King's Cloak, and sold himself to perdition in order to get it. Let us

see

a little how this was.

England, Scotland, Ireland, all lying now subdued at the feet of the Puritan Parliament, the practical question arose, What was to be done

with

it? How will you govern these Nations, which Providence in a wondrous

way

has given up to your disposal? Clearly those hundred surviving members

of

the Long Parliament, who sit there as supreme authority, cannot continue forever to sit. What is to be done?--It was a question which

theoretical

constitution-builders may find easy to answer; but to Cromwell, looking

there into the real practical facts of it, there could be none more complicated. He asked of the Parliament, What it was they would decide upon? It was for the Parliament to say. Yet the Soldiers too, however contrary to Formula, they who had purchased this victory with their

blood,
it seemed to them that they also should have something to say in it! We will not "for all our fighting have nothing but a little piece of paper." We understand that the Law of God's Gospel, to which He through us has given the victory, shall establish itself, or try to establish itself, in this land!

For three years, Cromwell says, this question had been sounded in the

ears
of the Parliament. They could make no answer; nothing but talk, talk. Perhaps it lies in the nature of parliamentary bodies; perhaps no Parliament could in such case make any answer but even that of talk,

talk!
Nevertheless the question must and shall be answered. You sixty men

there,
becoming fast odious, even despicable, to the whole nation, whom the

nation
already calls Rump Parliament, you cannot continue to sit there: who or what then is to follow? "Free Parliament," right of Election, Constitutional Formulas of one sort or the other, --the thing is a hungry Fact coming on us, which we must answer or be devoured by it! And who

are
you that prate of Constitutional Formulas, rights of Parliament? You

have
had to kill your King, to make Pride's Purges, to expel and banish by the law of the stronger whosoever would not let your Cause prosper: there

are
but fifty or threescore of you left there, debating in these days. Tell

us
what we shall do; not in the way of Formula, but of practicable Fact!

How they did finally answer, remains obscure to this day. The diligent Godwin himself admits that he cannot make it out. The likeliest is, that this poor Parliament still would not, and indeed could not dissolve and disperse; that when it came to the point of actually dispersing, they again, for the tenth or twentieth time, adjourned it, --and Cromwell's patience failed him. But we will take the favorabest hypothesis ever started for the Parliament; the favorabest, though I believe it is not

the
true one, but too favorable.

According to this version: At the uttermost crisis, when Cromwell and

his
Officers were met on the one hand, and the fifty or sixty Rump Members on the other, it was suddenly told Cromwell that the Rump in its despair

was
answering in a very singular way; that in their splenetic envious

despair,
to keep out the Army at least, these men were hurrying through the House

a
kind of Reform Bill, --Parliament to be chosen by the whole of England;

equable electoral division into districts; free suffrage, and the rest of it! A very questionable, or indeed for them an unquestionable thing. Reform Bill, free suffrage of Englishmen? Why, the Royalists themselves, silenced indeed but not exterminated, perhaps outnumber us; the great numerical majority of England was always indifferent to our Cause, merely looked at it and submitted to it. It is in weight and force, not by counting of heads, that we are the majority! And now with your Formulas and Reform Bills, the whole matter, sorely won by our swords, shall again launch itself to sea; become a mere hope, and likelihood, small even as

a likelihood? And it is not a likelihood; it is a certainty, which we have won, by God's strength and our own right hands, and do now hold here. Cromwell walked down to these refractory Members; interrupted them in

that rapid speed of their Reform Bill; --ordered them to begone, and talk there no more. --Can we not forgive him? Can we not understand him? John

Milton, who looked on it all near at hand, could applaud him. The Reality had swept the Formulas away before it. I fancy, most men who were realities

in England might see into the necessity of that.

The strong daring man, therefore, has set all manner of Formulas and logical superficialities against him; has dared appeal to the genuine

Fact of this England, Whether it will support him or not? It is curious to

see how he struggles to govern in some constitutional way; find some

Parliament to support him; but cannot. His first Parliament, the one they call Barebones's Parliament, is, so to speak, a Convocation of the Notables. From all quarters of England the leading Ministers and chief Puritan Officials nominate the men most distinguished by religious reputation, influence and attachment to the true Cause: these are assembled to shape out a plan. They sanctioned what was past; shaped as they could what was to come. They were scornfully called Barebones's Parliament: the

man's name, it seems, was not Barebones, but Barbone, --a good enough man.

Nor was it a jest, their work; it was a most serious reality, --a trial on the part of these Puritan Notables how far the Law of Christ could become the Law of this England. There were men of sense among them, men of some quality; men of deep piety I suppose the most of them were. They failed, it seems, and broke down, endeavoring to reform the Court of Chancery! They dissolved themselves, as incompetent; delivered up their power again into the hands of the Lord General Cromwell, to do with it what he liked and could.

What will he do with it? The Lord General Cromwell,

"Commander-in-chief of all the Forces raised and to be raised;" he hereby sees himself, at

this unexampled juncture, as it were the one available Authority left in England, nothing between England and utter Anarchy but him alone. Such

is the undeniable Fact of his position and England's, there and then. What will he do with it? After deliberation, he decides that he will accept

it; will formally, with public solemnity, say and vow before God and men, "Yes, the Fact is so, and I will do the best I can with it!" Protectorship, Instrument of Government, --these are the external forms of the thing; worked out and sanctioned as they could in the circumstances

be,
by the Judges, by the leading Official people, "Council of Officers and Persons of interest in the Nation:" and as for the thing itself, undeniably enough, at the pass matters had now come to, there _was_ no alternative but Anarchy or that. Puritan England might accept it or not; but Puritan England was, in real truth, saved from suicide thereby! --I believe the Puritan People did, in an inarticulate, grumbling, yet on the whole grateful and real way, accept this anomalous act of Oliver's; at least, he and they together made it good, and always better to the last. But in their Parliamentary _articulate_ way, they had their difficulties, and never knew fully what to say to it! --

Oliver's second Parliament, properly his _first_ regular Parliament,

chosen
by the rule laid down in the Instrument of Government, did assemble, and worked; --but got, before long, into bottomless questions as to the Protector's _right_, as to "usurpation," and so forth; and had at the earliest legal day to be dismissed. Cromwell's concluding Speech to

these
men is a remarkable one. So likewise to his third Parliament, in similar rebuke for their pedantries and obstinacies. Most rude, chaotic, all

these
Speeches are; but most earnest-looking. You would say, it was a sincere helpless man; not used to _speak_ the great inorganic thought of him, but to act it rather! A helplessness of utterance, in such bursting fullness

of
meaning. He talks much about "births of Providence:" All these changes, so many victories and events, were not forethoughts, and theatrical contrivances of men, of _me_ or of men; it is blind blasphemers that will persist in calling them so! He insists with a heavy sulphurous wrathful emphasis on this. As he well might. As if a Cromwell in that dark huge game he had been playing, the world wholly thrown into chaos round him,

had
foreseen it all, and played it all off like a precontrived puppet-show

by
wood and wire! These things were foreseen by no man, he says; no man

could
tell what a day would bring forth: they were "births of Providence,"

God's
finger guided us on, and we came at last to clear height of victory,

God's
Cause triumphant in these Nations; and you as a Parliament could assemble together, and say in what manner all this could be _organized_, reduced into rational feasibility among the affairs of men. You were to help

with
your wise counsel in doing that. "You have had such an opportunity as no Parliament in England ever had." Christ's Law, the Right and True, was

to
be in some measure made the Law of this land. In place of that, you have got into your idle pedantries, constitutionalities, bottomless cavillings and questionings about written laws for my coming here; --and would send

the

whole matter into Chaos again, because I have no Notary's parchment, but only God's voice from the battle-whirlwind, for being President among

you!

That opportunity is gone; and we know not when it will return. You have had your constitutional Logic; and Mammon's Law, not Christ's Law, rules yet in this land. "God be judge between you and me!" These are his

final

words to them: Take you your constitution-formulas in your hand; and I

my

informal struggles, purposes, realities and acts; and "God be judge

between

you and me!"--

We said above what shapeless, involved chaotic things the printed

Speeches

of Cromwell are. Wilfully ambiguous, unintelligible, say the most: a hypocrite shrouding himself in confused Jesuitic jargon! To me they do

not

seem so. I will say rather, they afforded the first glimpses I could

ever

get into the reality of this Cromwell, nay into the possibility of him. Try to believe that he means something, search lovingly what that may be: you will find a real speech lying imprisoned in these broken rude tortuous utterances; a meaning in the great heart of this inarticulate

man!

You will, for the first time, begin to see that he was a man; not an enigmatic chimera, unintelligible to you, incredible to you. The

Histories

and Biographies written of this Cromwell, written in shallow sceptical generations that could not know or conceive of a deep believing man, are far more obscure than Cromwell's Speeches. You look through them only into the infinite vague of Black and the Inane. "Heats and jealousies," says Lord Clarendon himself: "heats and jealousies," mere crabbed whims, theories and crotchets; these induced slow sober quiet Englishmen to lay down their ploughs and work; and fly into red fury of confused war

against

the best-conditioned of Kings! Try if you can find that true.

Scepticism writing about Belief may have great gifts; but it is really ultra vires there. It is Blindness laying down the Laws of Optics.--

Cromwell's third Parliament split on the same rock as his second. Ever

the

constitutional Formula: How came you there? Show us some Notary parchment! Blind pedants:--"Why, surely the same power which makes you a Parliament, that, and something more, made me a Protector!" If my Protectorship is nothing, what in the name of wonder is your Parliameteership, a reflex and creation of that?--

Parliaments having failed, there remained nothing but the way of

Despotism.

Military Dictators, each with his district, to coerce the Royalist and other gainsayers, to govern them, if not by act of Parliament, then by

the

sword. Formula shall not carry it, while the Reality is here! I will

go

on, protecting oppressed Protestants abroad, appointing just judges, wise managers, at home, cherishing true Gospel ministers; doing the best I can to make England a Christian England, greater than old Rome, the Queen of Protestant Christianity; I, since you will not help me; I while God

leaves

me life! --Why did he not give it up; retire into obscurity again, since

the

Law would not acknowledge him? cry several. That is where they mistake. For him there was no giving of it up! Prime ministers have governed countries, Pitt, Pombal, Choiseul; and their word was a law while it

held:

but this Prime Minister was one that could not get resigned. Let him once resign, Charles Stuart and the Cavaliers waited to kill him; to kill the Cause and him. Once embarked, there is no retreat, no return.

This

Prime Minister could retire no-whither except into his tomb.

One is sorry for Cromwell in his old days. His complaint is incessant of the heavy burden Providence has laid on him. Heavy; which he must bear till death. Old Colonel Hutchinson, as his wife relates it, Hutchinson, his old battle-mate, coming to see him on some indispensable business,

much

against his will, --Cromwell "follows him to the door," in a most

fraternal,

domestic, conciliatory style; begs that he would be reconciled to him,

his

old brother in arms; says how much it grieves him to be misunderstood, deserted by true fellow-soldiers, dear to him from of old: the rigorous Hutchinson, cased in his Republican formula, sullenly goes his way. --And the man's head now white; his strong arm growing weary with its long

work!

I think always too of his poor Mother, now very old, living in that

Palace

of his; a right brave woman; as indeed they lived all an honest

God-fearing

Household there: if she heard a shot go off, she thought it was her son killed. He had to come to her at least once a day, that she might see

with

her own eyes that he was yet living. The poor old Mother! --What had this man gained; what had he gained? He had a life of sore strife and toil,

to

his last day. Fame, ambition, place in History? His dead body was hung

in

chains, his "place in History," --place in History forsooth! --has been a place of ignominy, accusation, blackness and disgrace; and here, this

day,

who knows if it is not rash in me to be among the first that ever

ventured

to pronounce him not a knave and liar, but a genuinely honest man! Peace to him. Did he not, in spite of all, accomplish much for us? We walk smoothly over his great rough heroic life; step over his body sunk in the ditch there. We need not spurn it, as we step on it! --Let the Hero

rest.

It was not to _men's_ judgment that he appealed; nor have men judged him very well.

Precisely a century and a year after this of Puritanism had got itself hushed up into decent composure, and its results made smooth, in 1688, there broke out a far deeper explosion, much more difficult to hush up, known to all mortals, and like to be long known, by the name of French Revolution. It is properly the third and final act of Protestantism; the explosive confused return of mankind to Reality and Fact, now that they were perishing of Semblance and Sham. We call our English Puritanism the second act: "Well then, the Bible is true; let us go by the Bible!" "In Church," said Luther; "In Church and State," said Cromwell, "let us go by what actually _is_ God's Truth." Men have to return to reality; they cannot live on semblance. The French Revolution, or third act, we may

well

call the final one; for lower than that savage _Sansculottism_ men cannot go. They stand there on the nakedest haggard Fact, undeniable in all seasons and circumstances; and may and must begin again confidently to build up from that. The French explosion, like the English one, got its King, --who had no Notary parchment to show for himself. We have still to glance for a moment at Napoleon, our second modern King.

Napoleon does by no means seem to me so great a man as Cromwell. His enormous victories which reached over all Europe, while Cromwell abode mainly in our little England, are but as the high _stilts_ on which the

man

is seen standing; the stature of the man is not altered thereby. I find

in

him no such _sincerity_ as in Cromwell; only a far inferior sort. No silent walking, through long years, with the Awful Unnamable of this Universe; "walking with God," as he called it; and faith and strength in that alone: _latent_ thought and valor, content to lie latent, then

burst

out as in blaze of Heaven's lightning! Napoleon lived in an age when God was no longer believed; the meaning of all Silence, Latency, was thought

to

be Nonentity: he had to begin not out of the Puritan Bible, but out of poor Sceptical _Encyclopedies_. This was the length the man carried it. Meritorious to get so far. His compact, prompt, every way articulate character is in itself perhaps small, compared with our great chaotic inarticulate Cromwell's. Instead of "dumb Prophet struggling to speak,"

we

have a portentous mixture of the Quack withal! Hume's notion of the Fanatic-Hypocrite, with such truth as it has, will apply much better to Napoleon than it did to Cromwell, to Mahomet or the like, --where indeed taken strictly it has hardly any truth at all. An element of blamable ambition shows itself, from the first, in this man; gets the victory over him at last, and involves him and his work in ruin.

"False as a bulletin" became a proverb in Napoleon's time. He makes what excuse he could for it: that it was necessary to mislead the enemy, to keep up his own men's courage, and so forth. On the whole, there are no excuses. A man in no case has liberty to tell lies. It had been, in the long-run, _better_ for Napoleon too if he had not told any. In fact, if

a

man have any purpose reaching beyond the hour and day, meant to be found extant _next_ day, what good can it ever be to promulgate lies? The lies are found out; ruinous penalty is exacted for them. No man will believe the liar next time even when he speaks truth, when it is of the last importance that he be believed. The old cry of wolf! --A Lie is no-thing; you cannot of nothing make something; you make _nothing_ at last, and

lose
your labor into the bargain.

Yet Napoleon had a sincerity: we are to distinguish between what is superficial and what is fundamental in insincerity. Across these outer manoeuvrings and quackeries of his, which were many and most blamable,

let
us discern withal that the man had a certain instinctive ineradicable feeling for reality; and did base himself upon fact, so long as he had

any
basis. He has an instinct of Nature better than his culture was. His savans, Bourrienne tells us, in that voyage to Egypt were one evening busily occupied arguing that there could be no God. They had proved it,

to
their satisfaction, by all manner of logic. Napoleon looking up into the stars, answers, "Very ingenious, Messieurs: but who made all that?"

The
Atheistic logic runs off from him like water; the great Fact stares him

in
the face: "Who made all that?" So too in Practice: he, as every man

that
can be great, or have victory in this world, sees, through all entanglements, the practical heart of the matter; drives straight towards that. When the steward of his Tuileries Palace was exhibiting the new upholstery, with praises, and demonstration how glorious it was, and how cheap withal, Napoleon, making little answer, asked for a pair of

scissors,
clips one of the gold tassels from a window-curtain, put it in his

pocket,
and walked on. Some days afterwards, he produced it at the right moment, to the horror of his upholstery functionary; it was not gold but tinsel! In St. Helena, it is notable how he still, to his last days, insists on

the
practical, the real. "Why talk and complain; above all, why quarrel with one another? There is no result in it; it comes to nothing that one

can
do. Say nothing, if one can do nothing!" He speaks often so, to his poor discontented followers; he is like a piece of silent strength in the middle of their morbid querulousness there.

And accordingly was there not what we can call a faith in him, genuine

so
far as it went? That this new enormous Democracy asserting itself here

in
the French Revolution is an unsuppressible Fact, which the whole world, with its old forces and institutions, cannot put down; this was a true insight of his, and took his conscience and enthusiasm along with it, --a faith. And did he not interpret the dim purport of it well? "La carriere ouverte aux talens", The implements to him who can handle them: "this actually is the truth, and even the whole truth; it includes

whatever
the French Revolution or any Revolution, could mean. Napoleon, in his first period, was a true Democrat. And yet by the nature of him,

fostered

too by his military trade, he knew that Democracy, if it were a true thing at all, could not be an anarchy: the man had a heart-hatred for anarchy. On that Twentieth of June (1792), Bourrienne and he sat in a

coffee-house, as the mob rolled by: Napoleon expresses the deepest contempt for

persons in authority that they do not restrain this rabble. On the Tenth of

August he wonders why there is no man to command these poor Swiss; they would conquer if there were. Such a faith in Democracy, yet hatred of anarchy, it is that carries Napoleon through all his great work. Through his brilliant Italian Campaigns, onwards to the Peace of Leoben, one would

say, his inspiration is: "Triumph to the French Revolution; assertion of it against these Austrian Simulacra that pretend to call it a Simulacrum!" Withal, however, he feels, and has a right to feel, how necessary a

strong Authority is; how the Revolution cannot prosper or last without such. To bridle in that great devouring, self-devouring French Revolution; to

tame it, so that its intrinsic purpose can be made good, that it may become _organic_, and be able to live among other organisms and _formed_ things, not as a wasting destruction alone: is not this still what he partly

aimed at, as the true purport of his life; nay what he actually managed to do? Through Wagrams, Austerlitzes; triumph after triumph, --he triumphed so

far. There was an eye to see in this man, a soul to dare and do. He rose naturally to be the King. All men saw that he _was_ such. The common soldiers used to say on the march: "These babbling _Avocats_, up at

Paris; all talk and no work! What wonder it runs all wrong? We shall have to

go and put our _Petit Caporal_ there!" They went, and put him there; they

and France at large. Chief-consulship, Emperorship, victory over

Europe; --till the poor Lieutenant of _La Fere_, not unnaturally, might seem to himself the greatest of all men that had been in the world for some ages.

But at this point, I think, the fatal charlatan-element got the upper hand.

He apostatized from his old faith in Facts, took to believing in Semblances; strove to connect himself with Austrian Dynasties, Popedoms, with the old false Feudalities which he once saw clearly to be false; --considered that _he_ would found "his Dynasty" and so forth; that the enormous French Revolution meant only that! The man was "given up to strong delusion, that he should believe a lie;" a fearful but most sure thing. He did not know true from false now when he looked at them, --the fearfullest penalty a man pays for yielding to untruth of heart. _Self_

and false ambition had now become his god: self-deception once yielded to, _all_ other deceptions follow naturally more and more. What a paltry

patchwork of theatrical paper-mantles, tinsel and mummery, had this man wrapt his own great reality in, thinking to make it more real thereby!

His hollow Pope's-Concordat, pretending to be a re-establishment of Catholicism, felt by himself to be the method of extirpating it, "la vaccine de la religion:" his ceremonial Coronations, consecrations by

the old Italian Chimera in Notre-Dame, --"wanting nothing to complete the pomp of it," as Augereau said, "nothing but the half-million of men who had

died to put an end to all that"! Cromwell's Inauguration was by the Sword and Bible; what we must call a genuinely true one. Sword and Bible were borne before him, without any chimera: were not these the real emblems of Puritanism; its true decoration and insignia? It had used them both

in a very real manner, and pretended to stand by them now! But this poor Napoleon mistook: he believed too much in the Dupability of men; saw

no fact deeper in man than Hunger and this! He was mistaken. Like a man

that should build upon cloud; his house and he fall down in confused wreck,

and depart out of the world.

Alas, in all of us this charlatan-element exists; and might be

developed, were the temptation strong enough. "Lead us not into temptation"! But

it is fatal, I say, that it be developed. The thing into which it enters

as a cognizable ingredient is doomed to be altogether transitory; and,

however huge it may look, is in itself small. Napoleon's working, accordingly, what was it with all the noise it made? A flash as of gunpowder wide-spread; a blazing-up as of dry heath. For an hour the whole

Universe seems wrapt in smoke and flame; but only for an hour. It goes out: the Universe with its old mountains and streams, its stars above and kind

soil beneath, is still there.

The Duke of Weimar told his friends always, To be of courage; this Napoleonism was unjust, a falsehood, and could not last. It is true doctrine. The heavier this Napoleon trampled on the world, holding it tyrannously down, the fiercer would the world's recoil against him be,

one day. Injustice pays itself with frightful compound-interest. I am not sure but he had better have lost his best park of artillery, or had his best regiment drowned in the sea, than shot that poor German Bookseller, Palm! It was a palpable tyrannous murderous injustice, which no man, let him paint an inch thick, could make out to be other. It burnt deep into the hearts of men, it and the like of it; suppressed fire flashed in the eyes of men, as they thought of it, --waiting their day! Which day

came:

Germany rose round him. --What Napoleon _did_ will in the long-run amount to what he did justly; what Nature with her laws will sanction. To what of reality was in him; to that and nothing more. The rest was all smoke and waste. La carrière ouverte aux talents: that great true Message, which has yet to articulate and fulfil itself everywhere, he left in a most inarticulate state. He was a great ebauche, a rude-draught never completed; as indeed what great man is other? Left in too rude a state, alas!

His notions of the world, as he expresses them there at St. Helena, are almost tragical to consider. He seems to feel the most unaffected

surprise that it has all gone so; that he is flung out on the rock here, and the World is still moving on its axis. France is great, and all-great: and

at bottom, he is France. England itself, he says, is by Nature only an appendage of France; "another Isle of Oleron to France." So it was by Nature, by Napoleon-Nature; and yet look how in fact--HERE AM I! He cannot understand it: inconceivable that the reality has not

corresponded to his program of it; that France was not all-great, that he was not France. "Strong delusion," that he should believe the thing to be which is not! The compact, clear-seeing, decisive Italian nature of him, strong, genuine, which he once had, has enveloped itself, half-dissolved itself, in a turbid atmosphere of French fanfaronade. The world was not disposed to be trodden down underfoot; to be bound into masses, and built together, as he liked, for a pedestal to France and him: the world had quite other purposes in view! Napoleon's astonishment is extreme. But alas, what help now? He had gone that way of his; and Nature also had

gone her way. Having once parted with Reality, he tumbles helpless in

Vacuity; no rescue for him. He had to sink there, mournfully as man seldom did;

and break his great heart, and die, --this poor Napoleon: a great implement

too soon wasted, till it was useless: our last Great Man!

Our last, in a double sense. For here finally these wide roamings of

ours through so many times and places, in search and study of Heroes, are to terminate. I am sorry for it: there was pleasure for me in this

business, if also much pain. It is a great subject, and a most grave and wide one, this which, not to be too grave about it, I have named Hero-worship.

It enters deeply, as I think, into the secret of Mankind's ways and vital est interests in this world, and is well worth explaining at present. With

six months, instead of six days, we might have done better. I promised to break ground on it; I know not whether I have even managed to do that. I have had to tear it up in the rudest manner in order to get into it at

all.

Often enough, with these abrupt utterances thrown out isolated, unexplained, has your tolerance been put to the trial. Tolerance,

patient candor, all-hoping favor and kindness, which I will not speak of at present. The accomplished and distinguished, the beautiful, the wise, something of what is best in England, have listened patiently to my rude words. With many feelings, I heartily thank you all; and say, Good be

with
you all!