

RALPH WALDO EMERSON'S PREOCCUPATION
WITH HEALTH AND DEATH

by

MARY ATHRIA MARNEY BALTZELLE

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INTRODUCTION

"A writer who obtains his full purpose," said Doctor Samuel Johnson, "loses himself in his own lustre." Doctor Johnson's statement is peculiarly significant in the case of the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson; not only has Emerson, as an individual, been lost to the average reader in the pages of his writing, but often his writings have been misinterpreted, because of a failure to understand his initial purpose in recording his thoughts and the subsequent development of his philosophy. Most of the biographies of Emerson offer little help in interpreting any relationship that might have existed between the events of his life and the essays he produced. Critical discussions of Emerson's philosophy echo the phrases, shallow optimism, an optimist unfamiliar with suffering, lack of organization, and those discussions which praise Emerson are apt to speak of him as a happy, healthy, sane man, a contented individual whose optimistic philosophy was a reflection of his inner unity and harmony of spirit. Few of the writers refer to Emerson's journals, the basic source for information concerning his personality and personal outlook on life. The error of reading Emerson's personality into a superficial analysis of his essays has resulted in the false beliefs that Ralph Waldo Emerson was a simple optimist, that he was always healthy, that he was wholly content, that he was completely sane, that he intended his philosophy to be universally applicable. In short, Emersonianism, a type of the most insipid and illogical optimism, has been confused with the real Emerson.

Newton Arvin recognized the harm which could be done by labeling Emerson a happy optimist, the result of which is to make Emerson's writings appear to be the calm and meaningless thoughts of a recluse divorced from life and suffering.¹ Mr. Arvin stated, "It is now almost impossible, in turning one's eyes back in his direction, to see Emerson himself: what one sees is so largely just the 'glad' glow of Emersonianism." He defined Emersonianism as a "vulgar, optimistic superstition, a cast of self-seeking concealed beneath a butter of altruism, a gospel for the aggressive, the unscrupulous, the interested." With this definition in mind, a review of some of the statements made about Emerson will help to illustrate how widespread is the confusion of Emerson's philosophy with the superficial Emersonianism.

James Truslow Adams also cast unrestrained scorn upon Emerson's so-called optimism:

If we find him lacking in depth and virility, is it not because he allowed himself to become a victim to that vast American optimism with its refusal to recognize and wrestle with the problem of evil? One turns to Aeschylus and reads:

'Affliction knows no rest,
But rolls from breast to breast its vagrant
tide.'

Perhaps American letters, like American men, will not grow beyond the simple optimism and, in one aspect, the shallow doctrine of Emerson until they too shall have suffered and sorrowed. Emerson, in his weakness as in his strength, is American through and through. He could have been the product in his entirety, of no other land, and that land will not outgrow him until

¹Newton Arvin, "Brooks's Life of Emerson," The New Republic, May 11, 1932, 70:357-8.

It has some day passed through the fire² of a suffering unfelt by him and as yet escaped by it.²

Mr. Adams called Emerson a simple optimist with the inference, had Emerson suffered and sorrowed, he would have outgrown his shallowness. It is true that Emerson had a positive outlook toward life, but this outlook was not a result of unqualified optimism about life but faith in himself to be equal to any situation. Life was not easy for Emerson, as Mr. Adams insinuated. Born into a large family of children, the brood of a minister who died while Emerson was still a child, Emerson, during his boyhood, knew the meaning of hard work in a boarding house to supply food that was not always adequate. He did not even possess an overcoat of his own but shared one with his brother, Edward, and knew a child's humiliation at the taunts of his wealthier school mates. He worked his way through college, became partially blind possibly because of nervous strain, became a victim to tuberculosis, suffered spells of the most extreme depression due to his failure as a school teacher, fell hopelessly in love with and married the beautiful Ellen Tucker, endured the long months of her dying, saw his brilliant brother Edward become a maniac, feared the loss of his own sanity and life, resigned from the ministry, remarried and suffered the death of his first son, Waldo, and his brother, Charles, within a short period of time. If the endurance of these events cannot be called suffering, Mr.

²James Truslow Adams, "Emerson Re-read," Atlantic Monthly, October, 1930, 146, 1484-92.

Adams must have had very little feeling for human emotions or, more probably, chose to ignore Emerson's journals.

Adams is not the only author who has called Emerson an optimist untainted by suffering or inner conflicts. Henry Seidel Canby, in reviewing Van Wyck Brooks's Life of Emerson, stated that "Emerson can only be presented as a happy man, happy as a man thinking, happy in the arduous and often defeated pursuit of a creative idealism."³ An earlier writer, Matthew Arnold, agreed with Canby's statement. He stated that Emerson's "persistent optimism is the root of his greatness and the source of his charm."⁴ Arnold stated that Emerson was optimistic about everything in the world around him: "Strong.... was Emerson's optimism and unconquerable.... was his belief in good results to emerge from all which he saw going on around him."⁵ In the chapter "An unwilling Schoolmaster" of the Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ralph Leslie Rusk referred to Emerson's underlying tone of optimism, even though his portrayal of the events of Emerson's life is not happy or optimistic. In the chapter on school teaching in A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Elliot Cabot called Emerson's school-teaching years "the only gloomy period of his life," even though his portrayal of Emerson's life, like Rusk's, is not uniformly optimistic. No single quotation can prove to

³Henry Seidel Canby, "The Happy Thinker," Saturday Review of Literature, April 30, 1932, 8:698.

⁴Matthew Arnold, Discourses in America, 1894, p. 174.

⁵Ibid, p. 189.

how great an extent Emerson was not a happy man, but, later in this paper, a discussion of the development of Emerson's theory of compensation should prove beyond any reasonable doubt that, during the years in which the thoughts later to be presented in his essays were first recorded, Emerson was not a happy but a desperate man, a tired man, courageously searching for some attitude within his own mind to ease the pain years of ill health and the death of his closest loved ones had inflicted upon him.

In his book on Emerson, Newton Dillaway seems particularly misleading, because truth and fiction are presented together in a persuasive manner, with no attempt to prove any of the statements, other than by quoting what other authors have said about Emerson. Mr. Dillaway explained that Emerson was not an easy optimist:

He expected nothing of the universe, to start with, and was cheered to find, as he advanced in spiritual perception, that there is 'intelligence and good will at the heart of things'.... Samuel McChord Crothers has rightly called Emerson a 'discriminating optimist.'⁶

If one defines a "discriminating optimist" as a person who is optimistic about a few chosen things, in Emerson's case, the power of his own spiritual strength, but pessimistic about the events of life in general, no argument can be stated against this quotation from Mr. Dillaway. However, Dillaway left the realm of established fact very shortly. He agreed with Dr. Holmes in declaring that Emerson was "eminently sane." Some excuse may be offered for Dr. Holmes, whose biography was published in 1885 before the re-

⁶Newton Dillaway, Prophet of America, 1936, p. 1.

lease of Emerson's journals, but no excuse can be made for Newton Dillaway who, in 1936, had full access to the journals which tell of prolonged illnesses from early adolescence until after the death of his first wife, of periods of the most severe mental depression in which Emerson was obsessed by the idea of early death and the slipping of his intellectual powers, a period in which there is every reason to believe many of his illnesses could have been of a psychosomatic origin. The facts of Emerson's life already pointed out prove the fallacy of the remaining quotations from Dillaway:

'Emerson had the good fortune,' says Mumford, 'to live a healthy and symmetrical life: he answered Tolstoi's demand for essential greatness--he had no kinks.'⁷

Such inner unity and simplicity breed optimism
.... Emerson's optimism was the fruit of a good tone,
in mind and body.⁸

That Newton Dillaway and others have written statements about Emerson that cannot be proved by primary sources of information seems not so important, unless one considers the vast number of readers who have read these statements, accepted them as truth, and the teachers who have passed the picture of a shallow, insipid optimism on to thousands of school children, who rejected Emerson, finding nothing admirable about a man who whistled happy tunes to himself in a comfortable ivory palace. Mrs. Annie Nathan Meyer recognized this dilemma in speaking of the school

⁷Dillaway, op. cit., p. 9.

⁸Ibid, p. 19.

situation; "According to my teacher friends, in the New York schools, the students either know nothing whatever of Emerson, or from what they have been told, they regard him with positive aversion."⁹

The purpose of this study will be to approach Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy as related to certain fears and tragedies within his personal life, thus illustrating not only what he believed but why he believed it. Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy was not intended to be the final representation of the Transcendental movement in America but merely the expression of that form of spiritual faith one man had found most acceptable for his private use. Certain basic beliefs of his--the theory of compensation, the independence of individual man, the faith in nature and immortality, the rejection of earthly material standards--were partially formulated as a reaction to the combined threats of ill health, poverty, and early death which had plagued the Emerson family from his earliest childhood. The fears for his own health were certainly not without basis. A sickly child, Ralph Waldo was troubled in later life by the loss of eyesight and the possibility of tuberculosis, the same disease that claimed two of his brothers and his first wife. Ralph had never been considered in the least outstanding until he reached full maturity, and, when his brilliant brother, Edward, lost all sanity and became a raving maniac, he feared for his own mental health and for the sick

⁹Mrs. Annie Nathan Meyer, "Do We Need Emerson Today?", Vital Speeches, 5:261-4.

body that seemed unwilling to fulfill the smallest ambitions of life, and Emerson was cursed--indeed, almost obsessed--by the strongest of ambitions. Time and time again in his college and school teaching days he spoke of the fleeting years and the unrealized hopes; he wanted not so much to be remembered as to be respected, not so much to be a worldly success as to have his own self-respect for the full development of his talents. A more social person might not have allowed unfulfilled ambition to be a thorn in his spirit, but Ralph was a shy boy and a shy man. As a child, he was under the constant influence of his ever-praying mother who looked forward to heaven as a release from trouble on earth and his neurotic and ambitious Aunt Mary, who preached to the boys that they were all to be great men, until the phrase echoed in their boyish dreams. Many doors had been automatically closed to Ralph because of his poverty and ill health; success in school teaching or the ministry seemed doubtful; the death of Ellen Tucker pushed his thoughts further into the secret corners of his own breast. He was a lonely man, an unfulfilled man; to assert that principles were more important than happenings was a natural escape from the too harsh realities of his everyday life, but that he learned to have real faith in this theory and seek comfort from it brings to critics a renewed picture of an Emerson who suffered and thought and triumphed.

In order to trace the development of Emerson's beliefs from the viewpoint of his preoccupation with health and death, wide use has been made of his letters, his journals, and some of his sermons. When Emerson speaks and interprets his own state of

mind day by day over a lifetime, why should other people's statements about what Emerson might have been thinking even be considered, except as by means of comparison? The biographies written by Cabot and Rusk offer the most detailed information about individual events in Emerson's life, but other biographies have been considered, particularly for those periods of Emerson's life about which there might be some controversy. Emerson's writings are valuable as the polished expression of his creeds but offer little aid in tracing the development of his thoughts. It is interesting to note that practically all of the material and all of the ideas expressed in the essays are taken from the journals. Because the journals and the essays have this close connection, the journals are especially helpful in closing the gap between the picture of Emerson, the man, and Emerson, the philosopher. Because Emerson's development followed an orderly pattern, the chapters in this paper will follow, on the whole, a chronological order.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

In order to understand why Emerson had the fear of ill health and early death, the longing for success and the horror of failure, so deeply ingrained within his nature, one must first understand the personalities of those people who first influenced him--his temperamental father, his pious mother, the contradictory Aunt Mary Moody Emerson--and the nature of the home into which he was born. For authoritative information concerning this period in Emerson's life the reader must lean very heavily on a few important biographies and the statements Emerson himself made in his mature years about his boyhood. The biography written by Oliver Wendell Holmes, published in 1884, should certainly be considered because it is the first biography of Emerson. The two volumes written by James Elliot Cabot in 1887 deserve notice, since Cabot made use of letters, journals, and unpublished writings that were not discussed in Holmes' book. Van Wyck Brook's The Life of Emerson, published in 1932, is especially interesting, because this book presents Emerson as a thoroughly happy optimist, free of doubts or pessimism. Ralph Leslie Rusk's biography, 1949, is the most recent and comprehensive study of Emerson attempted. Each of these authors has some sort of statement to make about Emerson's early life and will be considered individually.

In his "Introduction" Holmes made a statement which very well summarized his portrayal of Emerson:

He (Emerson) delineates himself so perfectly in his various writings that the careful reader sees his nature just as it was in all its essentials, and has

little more to learn than those human accidents which individualize him in space and time.

Those "human accidents" referred to seem to deserve more attention than was given to them by Holmes. The inference here is that Emerson's writings offer the complete picture of Emerson, the man; such a statement is risky and demands proof. Holmes offered none aside from the superficial and prejudiced observations of Emerson's contemporaries, observations written after Emerson had become a well known literary figure and naturally influenced by his fame. Holmes spent a great many pages dealing with the genealogy of Emerson.¹ He spoke of the Emerson family as being one of the "Academic Rades", a family in which the aptitude for the acquisition of knowledge was bred". A youth born into such a family will have features "more pliable," a voice "more flexible," a nature "more plastic." He uses the adjectives honourable, distinguished, learned, genteel, pious in describing Emerson's ancestors and emphasizes their connection with the clergy. Having established the fact that the Emerson family was for generations well educated and of the professional class, Holmes turned to a discussion of Emerson's parents.

The description of Emerson's father, as given by Holmes, is as conventional and respectful as that of the previous ancestors.² The Reverend William Emerson is described as being personally "attractive" in appearance, possessing a "melodious" and clear

¹Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1885, pp. 2-10.

²Ibid, pp. 11-13.

voice, and "agreeable manner." "He was a faithful and generous friend and knew how to forgive an enemy." "He was an honest man Mr. Emerson was a man of good sense. His conversation was edifying and useful; never foolish or undignified. In his theological opinions he was, to say the least, far from having any sympathy with Calvinism." After illustrating the fact that Reverend William Emerson was fairly well known and well thought of as a moral citizen of Boston, Holmes spent a few sentences in dealing with his theological beliefs and then closes the discussion of Emerson's father. Little understanding is to be gained from such a discussion. What did William Emerson think about himself as a person? What was his relationship with his family? What influence did he have over Ralph? What was Ralph's feeling for his father? Without so much as a glance in their direction, Holmes left such pertinent questions unanswered.

As in the case of Ralph's father, Ruth Haskins Emerson, Ralph's mother, is granted only the most superficial surveyal by Holmes. In speaking of her, he merely quotes Dr. Frothingham in an article in the *Christian Examiner*.³

She was a woman of great patience and fortitude, of the serenest trust in God, of a discerning spirit, and a most courteous bearing, one who knew how to guide the affairs of her own house, as long as she was responsible for that, with the sweetest authority, and knew how to give the least trouble and the greatest happiness after that authority was resigned. Both her mind and her character were of a superior order, and they set their stamp upon manners of peculiar softness and natural grace and quiet dignity. Her sensible and kindly speech was al-

³Holmes, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

ways as good as the best instruction; her smile, though it was ever ready, was a reward.

Mary Moody Emerson, the third adult who influenced Ralph's childhood, fared somewhat better in Holmes' biography than did William and Ruth. Aside from listing some of her favorite books, he did not attempt to characterize Mary but referred the reader to the article written about her by Ralph, a wise decision in light of the particularly wordy and impersonal pictures of the two parents. In speaking of Aunt Mary's "still more powerful influence on his (Ralph's) character" than the parents and in discussing the parallels in mood and subject matter to be found in her writings and in Ralph's, he pointed out a family similarity that deserves analysis.

After this analysis of the family background, Holmes moved on to a treatment of Ralph's "Birthplace," "Boyhood," and "College Life," a task accomplished in ten pages; this number may be compared to the fifty-nine pages by Rusk and the thirty-six pages by Cabot that deal with the same subject. The bulk of the chapter is spent in discussing other famous people who had been born in Boston and in quoting contemporaries' commonplace tributes to Ralph's nobility of spirit. Two important facts are established, the mediocrity of Ralph as a student and his lack of wide popularity among the college students. A schoolmate's portrayal of Ralph as a "spiritual looking boy in blue mankeen" is quoted. In summary, Holmes has said that Emerson was born of a well educated family, having a minister father and a religious mother, that he was not intellectually outstanding as a youth but

that he appeared to be "spiritual."

The inadequacy of Holmes' chapters on Emerson's family background is obvious, but this inadequate treatment is also dangerous. Holmes admired Emerson; possibly he even understood his basic philosophy, but this understanding has not been conveyed to the readers of his biography. It cannot be said that he ignored the letters and journals which would have illuminated his thinking because these were not available for his use⁴, but he should have confessed the limits of his resources in writing in order that the careless reader would not swallow his words as the final authority. Since he did not have the journals and letters to prove such a statement, he should have avoided saying that Emerson, the individual, was completely portrayed in his essays. Holmes gave to succeeding generations few new facts about Emerson's boyhood and he ignored its connection with Emerson's later attitudes in a fashion that has become traditional.

In contrast to Holmes' superficial treatment of Emerson's family, Van Wyck Brooks attempted a vivid dramatization of the Emersons. A detailed discussion of Emerson's parents is lacking, but Mary Moody Emerson is treated at length.⁵

She was a dwarf, four feet three inches tall, with a bold, pinkish face, a blue flash in her eyes, and yellow hair cropped close under a mobcap. She was an autocrat and a prophetess and as fiery as the pit.... She was queerer than Dick's hatband. She was thought to

⁴James Elliot Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol. I, 1888, p. iii.

⁵Van Wyck Brooks, The Life of Emerson, 1932, Chapter I.

have the power of uttering more disagreeable things in twenty minutes than any other person living.... She had received, she said, the fatal gift of penetration, and her mission was to undermine the vanity of the shallow.

Her eccentricities alienated her from those people who insisted on a more sympathetic and conventional approach to human weaknesses, and so she turned her back on the world:

Loving the world, the world that had passed her by, she had fallen in love with death: no 'easeful death' but the flaming death of the saints. She had her bed made in the form of a coffin. She invoked the worms as the Beatrice who would lead her to paradise.... 'O dear worm!' she wrote. 'Most valuable companions!'

For years she lived in the shroud of the grave, a shroud she had made herself, but death did not come, so she turned to thinking and writing with a vengeance. A lover of solitude, of perfection in human nature, of careful frugality in living, she was a child of poverty, dramatically passionate in her religious faith, an intensive reader of the literary classics.

Brooks introduced some excerpts from Mary Moody's journals but did not point out the parallel attitudes to be found in her writings and in Emerson's. Brooks could have drawn an even more obvious comparison between Ralph's and Mary's reactions to the events of their lives. Mary was neither an attractive nor an agreeable woman; she would have shattered a man's ego at the first opportunity, so the doors of matrimony were not readily opened for her. Poverty had closed other doors, those of travel or education in Europe; generations later she might have found an outlet for her excessive wit and energy in a profession, but, with this door also closed, she turned to thoughts of the Divine, of immortality,

to ease the discontent she felt with life on earth. A quotation from her journal discloses her thoughts:

We exist in Eternity. Dissolve the body and the night is gone, the stars are extinguished, and we measure duration by the number of our thoughts, by the activity of reason, the discovery of truths, the acquirement of virtue, the approach to God.

The events of Ralph's early life were similar to his Aunt's experiences. Poverty, ill health, the death of his first wife and his two favorite brothers shut off desired avenues of living and aroused powerful fears that success and happiness were not to be his. An excerpt from his journal, when faced with the same uneasiness Mary had felt, echoes her previous statement. "Material beauty perishes or palls. Intellectual beauty limits admiration to seasons and ages; hath its ebbs and flows of delight.... But moral beauty is lovely, imperishable, perfect."⁶ This relationship between Emerson's thoughts and his Aunt Mary's is especially significant in underlining the important influence her philosophy had on Ralph during his childhood. After the death of William Emerson, when Ralph was eight years old, Mary was a frequent visitor in Ralph's home. She assisted Ruth Haskins in the boarding house and acted as a guardian for the boys. Her ambitions for her nephews were unlimited. "They were never to travel," she told them, "with the souls of other men. They were born to bring fire and light to the race of mortals." Brooks gave the following interpretation of her relationship with Ralph:

⁶Ralph Waldo Emerson, Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol. I, 1909, p. 345.

She, more than any one else, had taught him to write; she had put him on his mettle, she had supervised his studies, exhorted, rebuked, incited him. With what fervour she had reproved him in his college days because Caesar and Cicero stirred him more than the memory of his own Revolutionary grandfather! His ancestors were the constant theme of her discourse. Not praise, not men's acceptance of their doing, had absorbed their thought, but the Spirit's errand through them.⁷

A brilliant, if overly frank, conversationalist, Mary was determined that her nephews would not be the followers but the rulers of men, proud of their religious ancestors, true seekers of knowledge, rejecting the world's mediocre standards for spiritual creeds. Aunt Mary was a fascinating preacher of intellectual ambition and family pride to Ralph, and the echoes of her doctrines were to haunt all of his days.

Cabot's comments on Mary Moody Emerson are adequate but do not interpret the influence she had on the young Ralph to any greater extent than did Brooks'. The material introduced by Cabot about Emerson's parents, an area almost completely ignored by Brooks, is identical in content with the material presented by Ralph Leslie Rusk. Since Rusk's treatment of Emerson's parents is more comprehensive, his portrayal will be considered. Neither of these authors attempts to interpret to any great degree the facts they present about Emerson's parents in relationship to the development of Emerson's personality and the subsequent growth of his individual philosophy.

After the early death of his own father, William Emerson was

⁷Brooks, op. cit., p. 18.

left with the problem of self-education and self-support. Following a period of school keeping, which he found most unsatisfying and disagreeable, he entered and graduated from Harvard College, was ordained as a minister, and accepted a little church at the village of Harvard. Receiving only the most meager of salaries, discontented with the dull small-town atmosphere, irritated by the parish dissensions, he recorded in his journals of this period a mental depression and conflict of ambitions not unlike that of Ralph's feelings during his school keeping and preaching days. William was a music-loving person; he enjoyed long evenings of friendly conversation, checker games, and singing. The unfriendly conservatives in the Harvard community criticized his liberal views in religion, particularly his use of musical instruments in the church services, and he began to doubt the wisdom of his own strong but diffuse ambitions.

From his early days as a minister until his death a basic conflict existed in William's nature, the love of society and its standards versus the yearning for scholarship and its sacrificial devotion to one cause. At times William would assert that he had no interest in the world or financial gain and dedicate himself to a daily schedule of reading and sermonizing with no time left for social evenings. In moods of more self-indulgence, he would assert to his journal, that, after all, he could accomplish as much work and be a happier person by spending one third of his day with friends. Despite these conflicting moods, three tendencies were always present in his nature--a longing for success, a love of literature, and a respect for the almighty dollar. Poverty and

indebtedness since the age of twelve had left their mark on his thinking. Rusk related that "on his (Williams) twenty-sixth birthday he was compelled to reflect how much of his life had been carelessly spent." In his journal William admonished himself for his laziness:

Count the hours which I have consumed in sleep, dress, amusements, and in mere saunterings, and what have I left? O shame and compunction fill my soul.... May God almighty take me into his holy keeping!

This pious ambition was short lived, and the future of the minister at Harvard would have been dubious indeed, his present sprinkled as it was by wine drinking and socializing, had it not been for his marriage to Ruth Haskins.

Ruth Haskins was the tenth of the sixteen children of a wealthy distiller in Boston; by the summer of 1795 William was seriously "courting" her. Descriptions found in Rusk, Cabot, and Emerson's journals offer a picture of Ruth as a pious, gentle, unimaginative person, who probably was completely subdued by William's more enthusiastic zeal for life. All of her childhood Ruth had been overshadowed by a strong-willed father, a bold person who had run away to sea as a youth and had returned to Boston to make a fortune, and an equally willful mother, who consistently refused to attend her husband's church. Thus Ruth grew to maturity as a well disciplined but submissive girl and found in William a person she could not only lean on but could help by her more steady, calm, practical nature. Mary Moody Emerson's portrayal of Ruth can be considered accurate:⁸

⁸Ralph Leslie Rusk, The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1949, p. 5.

Be it as it may, of the amiable Ruth I must write.... I have already told you that she is virtues self. And I repeat it, that in her look and manners is combined every thing which gives an idea of the whole assemblage of mild and amiable virtues. Added to this a natural good understanding and a uniform sense of propriety which characterises her every action and enables her to make a proper estimate of every occurrence. Yet true it is, my dear Ruth, thou dost not possess those energies,--those keen vibrations of soul which seizes pleasure--which immortalizes moments and which give to life all the zest of enjoyment!

One doubts if William entertained any romantic notions about Ruth before their marriage; his journal relates that "he talked with her on the subject of matrimony" and some time later married "the pious and amiable Ruth Haskins." Shortly after their marriage, William was offered a position as minister of the First Church of Boston, which he gladly accepted because of increase in salary and social opportunities. With the aid of Ruth's steadying influence he soon satisfied his varied ambitions by becoming a leader in political, civic, literary, and religious circles. His social calendar became so crowded over the years that he had little time to spend with his family; on the day of Ralph's birth he was away from home on business, and, upon returning, merely commented in his journal that the household had been blessed by the birth of another son.

The personalities of the two parents must be discussed in relation to their direct influence on Ralph. First of all, it should be noted that, although William became well known in Boston society, he was unable to accumulate any savings from his minister's salary; before his death, the family was able to live comfortably

enough, but after his death, the Emerson clan was without any steady income, without property, without savings, and a very real poverty resulted that marked all the children's lives. Secondly, in dealing with his children, William either entirely ignored the fact that, as a young man, he had been something of a gay blade or, remembering his own youth, tried to guide his children away from frivolity; in either case, the result was the same. He insisted that the youngsters were born to be educated, to be disciplined; if his many outside activities and his natural restraint did not permit him to be an affectionate father, he certainly did not neglect his duties as an educator and spiritual guider. While away from home, in a letter to his wife, he urged that Ralph especially should be given help in the reading lessons. William tended to be a stern, unemotional father, a man respected but somewhat feared by his children.

When just a middle aged man, William began to suffer long periods of illness, and the fear of death entered the family. Shortly before his health forced him to stop working, he felt the old conflict grow within his bosom, the desire for social gentility versus the ambition for serious scholarship, and he devised a rigorous schedule that reveals the same tendency toward overwork that was to prove disastrous to two of his sons. At six he was to arise and follow alternating periods of reading, sermonizing, and praying until bedtime at eleven in the evening. It was not his social calendar but the conservation of his life that caused him to abandon this last yearning for intellectual sainthood, stop his work, and travel to Portland to rest. Because tubercu-

losis had threatened him off and on for many years and in 1807 he had suffered a severe hemorrhage from the lungs, the doctors were uncertain as to the cause of his final illness. He jested about their conflicting opinions, knowing that death was near, and worried only about the support and education of his children if he were to die. Rusk interpreted William's belief in immortality as an answer to problems on earth, a belief that later was to be very strong in Ralph's personality.⁹

Next day it seemed as if he heard a voice from heaven ordering him to hand in his final accounts, but he was unshaken. 'Whilst it is necessarily the knell of terror and sadness to my terrestrial hopes, it brings no dismay to my celestial expectations.' when he died, on May 12, 1811, his sister Mary Moody Emerson, remembering his 'state of long invalidity' and his 'defective' theology, could not grieve for him.

William's final legacy to his children was poverty and ambition.

After William's death, the First Church of Boston granted to Ruth Emerson five hundred dollars annually for seven years. This generosity on the part of the church was offered to a woman whose six small children would still need money to attend college and to start in their professions after the seven year period was ended. Ruth met the situation bravely with two characteristic attitudes. The children were born to be educated; her husband had believed it and hoped for it, and she agreed with him. All of her plans would have to help fulfill their education. With this first attitude in mind, she opened a boarding house in Boston because the better schools were in the city. Her second

⁹Rusk, op. cit., p. 29.

attitude arose in part from her own religious nature and in part from the straitened circumstances of the family. Her feeling was that life on earth could be very cruel, and the only way to face hard circumstances was to remember that the next life, that of immortality, would be kinder. She turned to Mary Moody Emerson to help her in the organization of the fatherless household. The fact has already been established from quotations from Mary's journals that she, too, looked forward to death as an escape from life's punishments. This attitude was undoubtedly conveyed to the children under the care of these two women.

Another aspect of the Emerson household has previously been mentioned, the lack of outward affection in William's treatment of his children, but this emotional reserve should be underlined in the case of Ruth who was in more direct contact with the children than was their father. Cabot quoted Ralph as saying that his father was a "somewhat social gentleman but severe to his children" and interprets the relationship found between the mother and the children:¹⁰

Even his mother, the most loving of women, was so far from making them feel her tenderness that once, when he (Ralph) and William had wandered off upon some holiday and spent the day away from home, they were much surprised, on their return, at her exclaiming: 'My sons, I have been in an agony for you!' 'I went to bed,' Ralph said, 'in bliss at the interest she showed.'

This habitual emotional restraint on the part of Ruth seems very similar to the "coldness" of temperament Ralph complained about in himself in later years. Such an absence of warmth in the

¹⁰Cabot, op. cit., p. 35.

mother added little to make life gayer for the young boys who went about their tedious chores in the boarding house, attended school in patched clothing, and studied and read in their few spare hours.

By way of summary, it can be stated that those attitudes that were later to produce Ralph's philosophy--ambition for scholarship, the love of literature, an interpretation of death and immortality as rewards for life's hardships, severe poverty, an emotional restraint that was habitual, the keeping of daily journals--were outstanding in his immediate family even before the time of his birth. His parents and his Aunt Mary had adopted them, not as a part of any organized movement or religious group, but as a reaction to the events in their own lives. The pattern was established, and it only remained for some incidents in Ralph's life, ill health and fear of insanity and death, to urge him to cling to these inherited attitudes, to these family tendencies, to record his thoughts in his journals during his adolescence and early manhood, and later to rearrange these youthful speculations and publish them in the form of essays.

BOYHOOD

Had the boyhood of Ralph Waldo Emerson been a normal period of childish games, boisterous growth, and emotional stability, it might not deserve a detailed study, but it was not. In studying this period of Emerson's life, the student relies again on the principal biographies, statements from Emerson's journals, and comments by other authors.

Concerning the nature of Emerson's childhood, two schools of thought exist. The first contends that Emerson was a chubby, dreamy, responsive little boy, forever frolicing in some game of his own imagination, forever happy, forever wondering at nature's bountiful universe. Van Wyck Brooks expresses this opinion in his portrayal of Emerson's boyhood. Traces of this same attitude are to be found in Rusk's biography, although he, characteristically, does not make the positive and controversial statement that Emerson's was a happy childhood. The second school holds to the idea that Emerson's was not a normal boyhood, that he did not dwell in a gay or carefree existence, and that the insecurity of this period in his life tended to make him a shy, sensitive, melancholy person. Rusk's presentation of the family's troubles, of the young Ralph's solemn poetry, and of Ralph's recurrent periods of illness tend to support this viewpoint, as does, more positively, the material presented in Cabot's biography. In order to determine which of the two schools is more accurate in its opinions, an analysis must be undertaken of the differing statements and the factual sources on which they are based.

Brooks' picture of Emerson's boyhood seems to be based largely on selected material taken from Emerson's essay, "Domestic Life," on chance statements made by friends that Ralph seemed "responsive," and on the attitude Emerson expressed toward nature in his mature years. Brooks' reasoning seems to have been: here is a boy who grew up to deify nature, as a child someone called him responsive, somewhere in his journals he remarks that he was once chubby--the perfect picture: a happy, chubby, responsive lad who one day became a great writer. Brooks does not use footnotes in his biography nor does he include a bibliography; there exists no evidence in Emerson's journals or in any other of the outstanding biographies of Emerson to prove that such interpretations as the following are anything but Brooks' own imaginative creations.¹

He was always listening. An obscure little boy, chubby, awkward, affectionate as a puppy, with a sluggish mind, a mind heavy and overcast, like a summer sky that is charged with electricity. At a word, a gesture, at the trembling of a petal, the flutter of a bird's wing in some elm on the Common, a flash as of lightning traverse him. His eyes blazed; then all was cloudy once more. A shrinking, retreating little creature, but full of wonder, he was all suggestibility, and so easily pleased.... He was naturally, unreasonably cheerful, this quivering little boy who loved to roam over the Common spouting Scott and Campbell.

Brooks sketches the boy's wondering happiness in seeing ripe pears, sheeny insects, in playing with carnelians and agates, in listening to the stately conversation of Doctor Ripley and the imaginative anecdotes of his Aunt Mary. Perhaps all of these statements are true to the extent that Emerson was impressed by

¹Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

these things. Because of statements he made about them in his mature years, there is every reason to believe that Emerson did think Doctor Ripley and his Aunt Mary were almost magical people; there is ample reason to believe he enjoyed being outdoors and seeing flowers and insects as much as any normal child, but there is no reason for believing that wonder and amazement constituted all of Emerson's personality as a boy or even the major part of it. Brooks has selected the positive statements about childhood joys in "Domestic Life," applied them directly to Emerson's own experiences, and exaggerated them until they are completely misleading. Having read some very pretty description in Brooks, some unusually dramatic phrases, the reader still does not know what actually happened to Emerson when he was a child and, not knowing this, no conjectures about the normalcy or the happiness of this period can be proved.

The Emerson family was a large one, beset by illnesses and early deaths. Ralph Waldo, the fourth child and third son of William and Ruth Emerson, was born May 25, 1803. Phebe Ripley, the first child, was born in 1798 and died in 1800; John Clarke was born in 1800, William in 1801, Edward in 1805, Bulkeley in 1807, Charles in 1808, and Mary Caroline in 1811. The illness of his father had already cast a spell of gloomy uneasiness over the young Ralph's life, and, in 1807, when his oldest brother, John Clarke, died of tuberculosis, he was thrust into a period of family grief from which none of the children could have been protected. This year, 1807, marked the beginning of another family tragedy, the birth of Bulkeley, a mentally defective boy, who

grew to adulthood with a child's mind and a child's emotional disposition, creating an added financial burden to an already distressed household.

Shortly after the death of William Emerson the elder, a new blow was struck the family in the death of three year old Mary Caroline, the only sister Ralph had known. Within a couple of years after her death he remembered her in lines addressed to a playmate who had suffered a similar loss:

Ne'er since my own loved sister met her doom,
has such a pang assailed my bleeding heart
as when your sister felt the fatal dart.

This death made no permanent mark of grief on Ralph, who soon was to remember only her beautiful eyelashes and that he "used to drag her to school in her wagon," but her death must have added to the emotional insecurity of the family. In addition to the family problems, Ralph was suffering from illnesses of his own that could not have made the world seem a very joyful place to him.

Ample evidence exists to prove that Ralph was a rather sickly boy. Before his third birthday he had been through a serious illness blamed on worms, Rusk relates, and in 1809, the year in which he was six years old, he was taken for the sake of his health from Boston for a brief stay in Concord. During this period Ralph learned not to fear his illness so much as the harsh curative baths that were forced upon him and the stern father who pushed him into the hateful salt water.

There (in Concord) he tried dock tea and bathing
as cures for some eruptive disease, perhaps what he
afterwards remembered under the vague label of salt

rheum. Even in Boston, he could not escape the supposedly curative baths. He rebelled till dislike of them, strengthened by fear of deep water, became a phobia. William Emerson's insistence on carrying out the doctor's advice stirred up a long-loved resentment in the boy. Some forty years later Ralph could not forget the severity of a father "who twice or thrice put me in mortal terror by forcing me into the salt water off some wharf or bathing house and.... the fright with which, after some of this salt experience, I heard his voice one day, (as Adam that of the Lord God in the garden), summoning us to a new bath, and I vainly endeavouring to hide myself.²

After his father's death, there is no record of any long period of illness in Ralph's life, until he entered college, but his health does not seem to have been strong during this time. In his journals and in letters to his brothers he complained of petty colds and minor ailments fairly frequently, but these periods of illness did not particularly seem to worry him then.

Emerson's early illnesses and his "dullness" as a scholar may have had some connection, but there is no necessary reason to believe that this is so. By the time he was three years old he was going to his teacher, a Mrs. Whitwell, but six months earlier he had already been classified as "rather a dull scholar." In the dame school Mrs. Whitwell was succeeded by Miss Nancy Dickson, but neither of these women seemed to have made a great impression on Ralph. The third teacher of the school, however, Lawson Lyon, was more outstanding in all of his charges' memories because of his severity. Rusk relates that Lyon would take a big apple, illustrate it as a globe of the earth, then sit contentedly munching while the boys watched hungrily. Mary Moody Emerson

²Rusk, op. cit., p. 23.

served as Ralph's most memorable teacher and companion; her insistence on perfection and her fiery words of wisdom were more vivid lessons than those of the dull school room.

Outside of school, because of poverty, Ralph's life was an endless repetition of studying, worshipping, and chores. His mother had been permitted to remain in the parsonage for one year; toward the end of this period the people of the church requested that the new minister, a bachelor, be permitted to live in the home also, and Ruth, fearing her reputation and realizing the extra work involved with the addition of a boarder, appealed to Mary Moody to live with them, for the sense of propriety, and to take the dead father's place in caring for the children. Mary stubbornly waited a few months but arrived and immediately undertook the personal supervision of Ralph's studies. She encouraged Ruth, who felt a new shame at her diminished prosperity and the lowering of her social position, to think of easeful death and heaven's rewards. After a while Ruth bought a large house on Beacon Street and took in boarders. The increased work forced all of the boys to help with the chores. For a time Ralph's particular job was scouring knives for use in the household, and he wrote a foolish rhyme describing the dubious pleasures of this job. In the autumn of 1816 Ruth moved her family from Beacon Street to Hancock Street in the same neighborhood, then the best area for boarding houses. However attractive the new location may have seemed to boarders acquainted with worse conditions, this new house was still a dismal place for children. From the basement, where he was confined during an illness, Ralph could

look out upon what he describes as a dirty yard.

By boards and dirt and rubbish marr'd
pil'd up aloft a mountain steep
of broken chairs and beams a heap.³

Farther on he could see five tall chimneys, doubtless those of the antiquated County Jail in Court Street, some distance away.

Poverty consisted of more than an unattractive dwelling. According to Rusk, one of the most memorable experiences of Ralph's childhood was his anxious search in the fallen poplar leaves for a dollar bill he had lost when he was sent out to buy himself a pair of shoes. The incident of Edward's and Ralph's sharing the same coat has already been mentioned, as has the lack of fuel which caused Edward to associate the reading of Plato with the smell of a huge wool overcoat, but the lack of sufficient food was a more serious problem. According to family tradition, once, when Aunt Ripley visited the household, she found the boys in a state of nervous exaltation because they had given their last loaf of bread to some other poor person and Aunt Mary was telling them stories of heroism to keep them from feeling hungry. The idea that belief in principles was stronger than pain, that faith would sustain hope, when life was unbearable, was conveyed again to the young Ralph.

A letter from Ralph to his Aunt Mary described a way of life that entirely differs from the description presented by Brooks:

Dear Aunt,--I am much obliged to you for your kind letter. I mean now to give you an account of what I do

³Rusk, op. cit., p. 60

commonly in one day, if that is what you meant by giving an account of one single day in my life. Friday, 9th, I choose for the day of telling what I did. In the morning I rose, as I commonly do, about five minutes before six. I then help Wm. in making the fire, after which I set table for Prayers. I then call mamma about quarter after six, we spell as we did before you went away. I confess I often feel an angry passion start in one quarter of my heart when one of my Brothers get above me, which I think sometimes they do by unfair means, after which we eat our breakfast; then I have from about quarter after seven till eight to read or play. I then go to school, where I hope I can say I study more than I did a little while ago.... after I come home I do mamma her little errands if she has any; then I bring in my wood to supply the breakfast room. I then have some time to play and eat my supper. After that we say our hymns or chapters, and then take our turns in reading Rollin, as we did before you went. We retire to bed at different times. I go at a little after eight, and retire to my private devotions, and then close my eyes in sleep, and there ends the toils of the day.⁴

The phrase, "the toils of the day", would never have been uttered by the glad, bubbling little creature Brooks presented. The serious tone of the letter agrees in mood with the comment made by Dr. William Henry Furness in recollecting that Ralph scarcely had a chance to be a normal boy and always tended to be studious.

I can recall but one image of him as playing, and that was on the floor of my mother's chamber. I don't think he ever engaged in boy's plays; not because of any physical inability, but simply because, from his earliest years, he dwelt in a higher sphere. My one deep impression is that, from his earliest childhood, our friend lived and moved and had his being in an atmosphere of letters, quite apart by himself.⁵

Remembering the emphasis Mary and his parents put on education, Ralph's living in an "atmosphere of letters" can not be consid-

⁴Cabot, op. cit., pp. 35-37.

⁵Ibid, p. 5.

ered to be entirely his own choice. Cabot relates that all of the children were not only expected to read and study in their few spare hours, but were questioned by their elders as to the accuracy with which they remembered their lessons; after each church service they attended, they were expected to review the main points of the sermon and were scolded if they had been inattentive. In his letters to Mary and to other adults, Ralph was encouraged to list and explain the new books he studied in school; his letter writing of this period was sprinkled with rhymes, occasionally foolish when writing to his brothers, but more often serious, dealing with literary themes, or even gloomy, telling of the death of some friend or relative.

If Ralph had been permitted even the free choice of friends his own age, he might have indulged in boyish sports more frequently and turned away from his serious studies and writings, but his mother encouraged him to play with his brothers and stay away from rougher boys. Cabot's opinion is that Ralph would never have dared to use a sled, had he had one, "for fear of the Round-Pointers,'--rough boys from Windmill Point and the South End, who 'were always coming'; taking Summer Street on their way to the Common, where they had pitched battles with the West-Enders." When cautioned to play in his own yard and beware of the rude boys on the street, he stood wistfully within the safety of his own gate, anxious to see what "rude boys" were like.

The lack of normal playfellows, warm clothing, proper food, attractive surroundings and the superabundance of books, prayers, and chores, combined with the insistence on intellectual achieve-

ments and proper religious attitudes do not, in Rusk's opinion, "add up to a realistic childhood for any boy." Facts must be accepted as they stand, however, and the facts available reveal that Ralph lived in a home in which fear of ill health and death and fear of the hardships of life were just barely iced over by the soothing balm of religious piety and practical economy. Certainly it was not an average boyhood, but it was the boyhood of Ralph Emerson. In his journals Emerson himself asserted that his boyhood was not a happy time. The insertion for January 4, 1825, verifies this statement:

I turn now to my lamp and my tomes. I have nothing to do with society. My unpleasing boyhood is past, my youth wanes into the age of man, and what are the unsuppressed glee, the cheering games, the golden hair and shining eyes of youth unto me?⁶

A letter to his Aunt Mary expresses this same feeling toward his childhood. He stated, "You know--none can know better--on what straitened lines we have all walked up to manhood. In poverty and many troubles the seeds of our prosperity were sown." This letter was written January 6, 1829, shortly before he married Ellen Tucker, and, if ever had reason to rejoice in the present day without remembering the past, it was during this period of his life, but the memory of unhappier years darkened the present moment for him. Throughout his journal entries during his early manhood, he refers to the long cherished ambitions he fears will remain unfulfilled; there is reason to believe these ambitions were born during and because of the harsh circumstances of his

⁶Journals, Vol. II, p. 36.

early days. In 1823, while teaching school, he wrote in his journal, "The dreams of my childhood are all fading away and giving place to some very sober and very disgusting views of a quiet mediocrity of talents and condition." The dreams of childhood were to be the ambitions of youth; in another spot he admits that his recollections of his early days were not very pleasant. If Ralph Emerson said his childhood was unhappy repeatedly over a period of years, surely it is wiser to accept his judgment than that of later authors who feel that his viewpoint is "unrealistic"

Other authors besides Cabot have agreed with Emerson's own negative evaluation of his boyhood. Raymer McQuiston gave the following interpretation:

Emerson seems not to have had a normal boyhood. He was from early youth of a shy, retiring temperament, with a strong tendency to be a solitary and reflective. The congenial home life, the strong family affections, and the necessity for intensive application to his studies--all probably accentuated this tendency, and combined with it to keep him out of those rough sports of boyhood which are said to be the ordinary, dependable means of acquiring knowledge of human nature, especially in its social aspects.⁷

Augustus Strong reveals the same viewpoint in his writings about Emerson:

Ralph Waldo lived in an atmosphere of letters.... There was no education of the playground or the nursery. Aunt Mary frowned upon mirth or frivolity in the children. The boy lived a life apart, and never learned to mingle freely with his fellows.⁸

⁷Raymer McQuiston, The Relations of Ralph Waldo Emerson to Public Affairs, 1923, p. 7.

⁸Augustus Hopkins Strong, American Poets and Their Theology, 1916, p. 52.

With a clearer picture of Emerson's boyhood in mind, with an awareness of his unpreparedness for any type of social situation, the developments of the next phase of his life, the college years, do not seem so unusual. The retiring lad, who had been given books instead of toys, principles instead of clothing, the hope of immortality rather than the enjoyment of immediate pleasures, who had lived in an atmosphere of early deaths and disease since his baby days, was sent to college at the age of fourteen, and, during the college years, his attitudes toward life began to organize themselves in the form of philosophy.

LIFE AT HARVARD COLLEGE

When Ralph was fourteen years old, he was ready to enter Harvard College, but the necessary funds were not completely available. He was awarded the Penn Legacy, a total of ten pounds annually, from a fund established for the education of needy and worthy students. President Kirkland of Harvard gave him a job as the president's freshman, a combination faculty errand boy and student orderly; in exchange for these services he was given a free room in the president's home. Other expenses remained to be met--wood for his fireplace, food in the freshman dining hall, books for classes. His mother took in extra boarders to meet these expenses, and friends of the family continued to give additional financial assistance. Ralph felt responsible for his expenses, was worried about the extra work his mother was forced to do, and, during the second quarter of his college year, secured a job as a waiter in the college dining hall; this employment paid for all but one fourth of his meals. From the very beginning of his college life he dedicated himself to frugality, accumulating no fines for misconduct, using only the minimum of fuel in his fireplace, avoiding those courses that required fees, buying as few of the necessary books as possible, spending little or no money on clothes or entertainment. During the summers he taught school to earn extra money.

The constant lack of funds made college life seem more of a weary problem than a challenging experience to Ralph, and, even for the easy going spendthrifts, Harvard College was not a gay

institution. Rusk reviews some of the set college rules. Harvard College was a school for boys only. There were to be no parties at the college or in its vicinity except at commencement or on very special occasions. Any type of theatrical entertainment in Cambridge could not be attended by an undergraduate. The boys' chief purpose at college was scholarship, and their mode of living was to be religious. All students must "constantly and seasonably attend prayers, each morning and evening, and public worship on the Lord's day, on public fasts and thanksgivings, and the annual Dudleian Lecture." On Saturday evening the Sabbath began and was observed according to the strict Puritan tradition. In the library certain books were set aside as being most suitable for undergraduates; no others could be read without a special license, and the procuring of this license was a tedious affair that would discourage any but the most persevering enthusiast. These strict rules should not have bothered Ralph, accustomed to a disciplined and religious home atmosphere; he had no money to pay fines, and, as the president's orderly, was not only expected to obey all rules but to influence other students to follow his good example.

In contrast to Rusk's portrayal of the stern rules of Harvard College, Brooks' picture of the social life is gaily uninhibited. Brooks speaks of the "wine parties of the gilded few, the fast horses, the dancing, the swaggering ways of the Southerners with their elegant swallowtail coats and their famous calfskin boots." He pictures Ralph as being excluded from these activities because of his lack of money but fascinated by the

splendor, the gaiety. Ralph's lack of money must have barred him partially from the more boisterous social clubs, and these did exist, Rusk and Brooks both agree, in spite of the strict college rules.

Poverty is not the complete explanation for Ralph's social failure. He was reserved to the point of aloofness, shy to the point of awkwardness--according to Rusk, he simply was not the type of person the social sets were seeking. Even among the quieter, more scholarly students he was slow to make friends. Younger than most of his class members, he must have felt at a slight disadvantage, although his height and serious carriage made him seem older. Even though his position as the president's orderly brought him in contact with many persons on a superficial level, he did not assert himself to be particularly intimate with anyone, and few students bothered to try to break down his barrier of timidity. Mr. John Boynton Hill, one of Emerson's classmates, commented:

Although he had a brother (William) in the senior class, to introduce him to the ways of college life, he became acquainted with his companions slowly. The noisy ways of those jolly fellows who first hail newcomers were distasteful to him; and the proximity of his room to the President's study was equally distasteful to them.¹

Mr. Hill explained that some of the more scholarly students sought Ralph's acquaintanceship, found him unusually well read if not a thorough scholar of the established curriculum. Ralph joined a few clubs devoted to religion, creative writing, and

¹Cabot, op. cit., p. 59.

oratory. In addition to participating in a religious circle, the Adelphoi Theologia, he helped to organize a nameless group interested in writing and extemporaneous speaking. The group was very small; Ralph served as its secretary for a while and helped to keep it alive and active through his senior year. He was recognized by its members as a person of some talent, and he won everyone's gratitude, at the last recorded meeting, by buying two bottles of wine to heighten the mood of the occasion.

According to Rusk, Ralph admitted that he keenly enjoyed scenes of merriment and that he liked to be thought of as a "good fellow". During his junior year he was honored to be elected to the Pythologian Club, a group organized for extemporaneous discussion, because, he thought, some of the smartest boys in the school were in this club. Membership in clubs was not enough to alleviate Ralph's sense of loneliness and insecurity as a social human being. It should be noted that the few clubs he did participate in were related to those interests in religion and self expression through writing that had been predominant in his home background and in his introspective way of life. He was acutely aware of his lack of close human contacts. His own evaluation of his relationships with other students was that he was "a spectator rather than a fellow." Rusk attributes this lack of belonging to "his dreamy nature, his age, and in some cases his good sense." Ralph was afterwards to remember or fancy "that he had been in disfavor with the other boys at the Latin School during the latter part of his period there and that this disfavor lasted into college."

In the realm of scholarship Ralph was no more outstanding than he was in social activities. The educational system at Harvard was based on memorization and rote recitation of the lessons. The dry, methodical method of studying set subjects did not arouse Ralph's enthusiasm, and he tended to read those authors he found most interesting--Shakespeare, Montaigne, the English dramatists--and search for thoughts which seemed personally applicable to write about in his journal. A particularly clever phrase (or an unusual line of reasoning) always met with his praise, but he made no attempt to remember, word for word, all that he read. He was a dabbler rather than a thorough scholar. Doubtless, his teachers who discovered his literary turn of mind and interest in writing essays and poetry were disappointed that he did not always adequately fulfill the standards for serious scholarship. Cabot doubts if Ralph would ever have been a student of textbooks under any educational system, no matter how liberal, being unfitted, as Ralph himself later commented in "Experience", to deal with other people's facts. In Latin and Greek he was rated as being "fair," but in mathematics he met the unsurmountable object and termed himself a complete "dunce." The development of history fascinated him, and declamations always offered a rewarding experience as another form of organized self expression. It should not be thought that Ralph was totally complacent in the pursuit of his own method of learning; he later expressed the feeling that in college he considered himself a failure. During his senior year his younger and more brilliant brother Edward shared his room; this accomplished brother's tri-

umphs must have added to his own feeling of defeat, although he took great pride in Edward's accomplishments. In one of his later journals he praised "the instinct which leads the youth who has no faculty for mathematics, and weeps over the impossible Analytical Geometry, to console his defeats with Chaucer and Montaigne, with Plutarch and Plato at night." Judged as a whole, he felt that the college curriculum had little to offer him, had aided him little, and had left him totally unprepared for the pursuit of any life vocation.

If he was lax in his class work, Ralph was overly active in the writing of his journals. He continued to write and read poetry. Any penetrating thought found in his Aunt Mary's letters was carefully recorded to serve as material for a poem or a sermon at a later date. He wrote humorous verses for some of his class's social occasions and a long poem, "Improvement," for the Pytholgian Club. He took two Bowdoin prizes for dissertation, one on the character of Socrates, and one on the "Present State of Ethical Philosophy." His interest in philosophy led him into many new books; he sought ideas on which to build his own code of life. For a declamation he won a thirty dollar Boylston prize and proudly took the money home to his mother, eager to buy her a shawl or some other pretty luxury, but was disappointed to discover the money was needed to pay the baker's bill. Rusk comments that this intensive writing of poetry may have made Ralph unpopular with the other boys at college; they must have regarded him as a bit odd, particularly since he was very reserved. One of his latter verses reflects the feeling that the

austere, formal atmosphere at Harvard chilled his developing muse:

I went to Cambridge when a boy
To hear the gownsmen
And found more sense
In the way than in the hall
To poet vowed to solitude
Best society is rude.²

This turning away from society is reflected in another of his little poems that compares the dull, rumbling lectures of a professor to the gaier, more meaningful song of a robin outside the classroom:

How drearily in College hall
The Doctor stretched the hours,
But in each pause we heard the call
Of robins out of doors.³

In nature Ralph found imagination and beauty, solace and truth; his dependence on nature's virtues was to develop and become a predominant theme in many of his later essays.

The financial worries, the seeking for some sort of success, the apparent failure as a scholar and as a social human being frequently left Ralph in periods of temporary depression; his journals record flights of imaginative fancy for which there is no easy explanation. During his junior and senior years in college he was attracted by a boy his own age but two classes behind him, Martin Gay. Gay must have been a rather good looking fellow but self-contained to the point of coldness; "cool" Gay was the name his classmates gave him. Ralph did not know Gay personally, had never spoken to him or been introduced to him, although, he

²Rusk, op. cit., p. 66.

³Ibid, p. 71.

confessed to his journal, they exchanged some "probing" glances. Ralph thought that Gay's features revealed strength of character, and he made frequent insertions in his journal about the admirable qualities of this "ideal" boy. Gradually he began a sort of secret analysis; one day his journal would be filled with praise for Gay; the next day Ralph would dissect Gay's glances, his gestures, his every action, searching for hidden meanings, some flaw of character to pounce upon and criticize. Although the fascination was great, Ralph thought about but never attempted to talk to Gay, possibly fearing his dreamy illusion of perfection might be broken. This fascination is termed an "infatuation" by Rusk, but the relationship is not mentioned by Cabot, Brooks, or Holmes. Rusk explains Ralph's infatuation as a "delvesing" into "his unconscious self." Exactly what Rusk means by this term is unexplained, but the relationship indicates Ralph's state of mind and might be explained in terms of his loneliness and almost morbid self-dissatisfaction. Having no close friends, he created an imaginary "ideal" friend, and, disappointed in his own college record, he attributed to this ideal friend all of those virtues that he wished were embodied in himself. Whether or not this explanation is satisfactory, Ralph felt a peculiar kinship, an identification, with Gay; this identification was later to be discredited upon hearing some unfavorable comments about Gay's conduct, and this apparent ignorance of the true nature of Gay's character points up the theory that the whole relationship was based on nothing but the workings of a highly imaginative and lonely mind.

There is little doubt that college was not a pleasant experience for Ralph, and the outward reasons for this unhappiness have already been discussed. His failure to justify or fulfill his ambitions pushed him more and more into a life of introspection. Although there is no record of any serious illnesses, he was acutely aware of every small change in his mental attitudes or in his physical health. The gradual growth of melancholy introspection is reflected in a journal insertion he made at the age of seventeen.

I find myself often idle, vagrant, stupid, and hollow. This is somewhat appalling and, if I do not discipline myself with diligent care, I shall suffer severely from remorse and the sense of inferiority hereafter. All around me are industrious and will be great, I am indolent and shall be insignificant. Avert it, heaven! avert it, virtue! I need excitement.⁴

It is obvious from the mood of the passage that he was already suffering from "remorse and the sense of inferiority" and was resorting to self-discipline to fulfill some of his ambitions and justify himself in his own eyes. This passage expresses a mild self-dissatisfaction, but a later journal passage, written during his senior year in college, is more morbid, as he worries about his failure, according to the school's standards, and his failure to have any great purpose in life, by his own standards. A period of ill health had aroused in him the fear that death might come before he had made his existence on earth prove a profitable period for himself or for others. He found a certain com-

⁴Journals, Vol. I, p. 70.

pensation in illness, since the fear of death stimulated his slumbering senses, his wavering ambitions, to a greater awareness of the work still to be done.

I am sick--if I should die what would become of me? We forget ourselves and our destinies in health, and the chief use of temporary sickness is to remind us of these concerns. I must improve my time better. I must prepare for the great profession I have purposed to undertake. I am to give my soul to God and withdraw from sin and the world the idle or vicious time and thoughts I have sacrificed to them; and let me consider this as a resolution by which I pledge myself to act in all variety of circumstances, and to which I must recur often in times of carelessness and temptation, to measure my conduct by the rule of conscience.⁵

By this time Ralph had decided to become a minister, a follower of "the great profession"; it was natural that he should decide to enter his father's profession, the same that his older brother William was preparing for, in order to fulfill the dream of his mother and his Aunt Mary that he be a worthy follower of religion, a leader of men as the head of a church congregation. His plan for "improving his time" is an echo of the many daily schedules his father outlined in attempting to be a success in the church.

The two most significant ideas arising from this temporary illness are the desire to withdraw from the world's standards and to follow his own conscience's rule in all of his actions. The leaning on self, a well disciplined self, was the basis for many of his later writings. The idea of self reliance was not born at the time of the writing of his published essays but in

⁵Journals, Vol. I, p. 78.

the college years as a direct answer to the failures as a social being and a scholar, as a balm to his fear that he would die an unfulfilled, vagrant creature. He was not in an optimistic but in a very pessimistic mood when he declared that self reliance was superior to dependence on the world. The journal passage just quoted is identical in idea with the following quotations from the essay, "Self Reliance."

Trust thyself; every heart vibrates to that iron string.... No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature.... The only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong, what is against it.... My life is for itself and not for a spectacle.⁶

During this period of illness, in which Ralph turned his thoughts away from the world's mediocrity and toward the strict discipline of his own conscience, he prayed that his health might improve, that he might be able to fulfill his ambitions. His thoughts pondered the mystery of the Almighty, the nature of a God who gave gifts without comment, who left man free to discover his individual purpose on earth.

Is it a wise dispensation that we can never know what influence our own prayers have in restoring the health we have prayed God to restore? This manner of giving gifts without expressing the reason for which they are bestowed, and leaving it to the heart to make the application and to discover the giver, is worthy of a supreme, ineffable intelligence.⁷

Ralph's concurrent beliefs in self reliance and reliance on God indicate a trend of thought that was to evolve into the Over-Soul. He turned to those standards in his nature higher than

⁶Frederic I. Carpenter, Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1934, pp. 92-93.

⁷Journals, Vol. I, p. 79.

those of the world, standards that had their source in the part of God in his own nature.

At the end of the four years at Harvard College, Ralph took a final examination in moral philosophy, metaphysics, and theology, receiving a rank of "number thirty in a class of fifty-nine", and, according to Rusk, might have been lower except for his good conduct record. By the standards of the school that emphasized a methodical reading and remembering of books, Ralph was not outstanding. He had not read methodically or thoroughly but had dipped into many authors and clutched those thoughts he found personally applicable and those phrases which might serve as models in improving his power of expression. From his letters Mary Moody noted the improvement in his writing style and praised him for his progress in this area. His scholastic rating was just high enough to rate him a small part in the commencement program. His preference was to write a poem for his class, but he was assigned the task of discussing John Knox; according to Sam Bradford, a boyhood friend, he was so disappointed in his assignment that he didn't start memorizing his part until the program began and leaned heavily on a prompter throughout the recitation. He expressed no enthusiasm for the graduation procedure; he wrote a gloomy invitation to his Aunt Ripley:

I shall not have a dinner and have not asked anybody--for a conference is a stupid thing.... if you think of coming we shall be very happy to see you; Mother and Aunt and a host of brothers will be there.

In remembering his college years, he was to comment that he "was not often highly flattered by success and was every day mort-

ified by my own ill fate or ill conduct." His "ill conduct" referred to his lack of application to the established curriculum, but in his later years he was to defend his actions. "I was the true philosopher in college," he stated, "and Mr. Farrar and Mr. Hedge and Dr. Ware the false, yet what seemed then to me less probable?" Rusk interprets this statement as Ralph's "transmuting an unhappy emotional experience into a satisfying theory of the proper conduct of one's life." When Ralph graduated from Harvard, he was far from being either a happy, unified, or optimistic person; he believed in self reliance, in following one's own aims, one's own faith, but his future, as yet, was not a bright picture. He had decided to be a minister but had no money to spend on further education; he was faced with school teaching, the "family purgatory," until he could afford to enter a theological seminary. The idea of teaching indefinitely did not appeal to his timid nature; he thought himself a failure and feared the strength of his body and will might falter before he ever became noted in any profession. In a mood of introspective pessimism Ralph left college to become a self supporting individual.

A SCHOOLMASTER'S PROBLEMS

The years Ralph spent as a school teacher have been called, by Cabot, "the gloomiest period of his life." Rusk refers to Ralph's school teaching as a necessary banishment into the "family purgatory." Brooks states that "nothing had ever made him (Ralph) so unhappy" as school teaching and that during the school teaching period Ralph entered the "House of Pain." During this period Emerson's journals reveal the workings of a depressed mind, the worrying over serious seiges of illnesses, the fear of mediocrity, the concern for many family problems. The mental depression was the result of the threat of tuberculosis and rapidly failing eyesight combined with a sense of humiliation at his failure in the class room and lack of achievement in any other field. In contrast to his own obscurity, three of his brothers were making seemingly brilliant progress during this time--Edward and Charles in their collegiate achievements and William in his studies in Germany. The harsh comparison between the bright futures that seemed to lie before his brothers and the disillusioned dreams that were to be his increased his unhappiness. Ralph could not wholly accept defeat, however; when faced with what seemed to be an unbearable situation, he began to write again in his journals, elaborating on the philosophy he had started in college, seeking for some consolation through faith. Compensation was the most obvious answer to his troubles--the world was of a dual nature. If evil were always to be his lot in life, immortality provided the hope of a continuing and per-

haps happier life. This was the same attitude his mother had taken in her first experience with a boarding house. He pondered the nature of a God that would permit evil to remain on the earth. What purpose could there be in human suffering, what benefit to the victim? Finally he thought of self reliance, that comforting if strenuous doctrine that permitted him to turn his back on the world. His experience on a farm when he was teaching in his uncle's school gave him many of his ideas about nature. With the exception of one doctrine, immortality, that was to become fully developed and a meaningful part of his faith after Ellen Tucker's death, Emerson's entire philosophy, as represented in the essays, was formed in its fundamentals during the Harvard and school teaching periods. His writings were more than mere personal rationalization, but they also provided an answer to, an explanation of his suffering; they were not the light creations of a continually harmonious and unified mind.

Ralph's older brother, William, had set an example for all of the Emerson boys as a "self-made" man; despite poverty, he had established a school for girls at the age of eighteen and had started his preparation for the ministry. The girls' school was located in his mother's boarding house, and, when Ralph graduated from Harvard College, he was expected to serve there as a teacher. The prospect did not appeal to Ralph; William had realized great success as a teacher, but, in Ralph's words, "My brother was early old; his mind was method; his constitution was order; and, though, quiet and amiable, the tap of his pencil could easily enforce a silence and attention which the spasmodic activity of

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other teachers cannot command."¹ He spoke of William at eighteen as "a grave and experienced professor." Ralph's experiences while teaching in the summers during his college years had not been pleasant. While at Waltham, his uncle Samuel Ripley's school, he had written William in an ironically humorous mood, "Well, my dear brother, here I am, safe and sound, as yet unmuzzled and unsnowbelled." With his journal he had been more honest in expressing his feeling of disgust:

I claim and clasp a moment's respite from this irksome school to saunter in the fields of my own wayward thought. But when I came out from the hot, steaming, stoved, stinking, dirty A B spelling-school, I almost soared and mounted the atmosphere at breathing the free, magnificent air, the breath of life. It was² a delightful exhilaration, but it soon passed off.

The girls' school would not be a "stinking, dirty" place nor would it be unprofitable--Ralph estimated that he earned between two and three thousand dollars while teaching and could live for two hundred dollars a year--but the teaching of girls was a frightening prospect. He "had grown up without sisters" and was terrified at "my timidities at French, the infirmities of my cheek, and my occasional admiration of some of my pupils.... and the vexation of spirit when the will of the pupils was a little too strong for the will of the teacher."³ Nevertheless, before the year had ended, Ralph joined William at the girls' school,

¹Cabot, op. cit., p. 70.

²Ibid, p. 69.

³Ibid, p. 70.

taught with William for another year, then assumed full responsibility for the school while William went to Europe to prepare for the ministry.

A year after Ralph left college he began to feel that the dreams of his boyhood might prove fruitless ambitions. He spoke of himself as a "hopeless schoolmaster" who could not even consider himself a success in the class room; "the good suspect me and the geese dislike me." Hope had proved a "cheat." Rusk feels that Ralph must have been mistaken in thinking his students disliked him; he partially proves his theory by referring to an incident in which the girls suppressed their laughter when Ralph fell backwards in his chair, in order to save the timid young teacher additional embarrassment. Cabot is in accord with Rusk's statement in quoting one of Ralph's pupils who stated that he was "much beloved and respected in the school." Ralph's feeling of unpopularity was probably the result of his timidity. His growing sense of inferiority made him doubt if he could ever be a success in any profession. He felt that were his "chances of success" to be judged by his past record, "they would be very low." Perhaps the lack of sympathy with his students gave birth to the worry that, by nature, he was unsuited to deal with human beings. He spoke of a "defect of character which neutralizes in great part the just influence my talents ought to have." This defect, he feared, tended to make him unsure of himself, as was certainly the case in the girls' school, and antisocial.

Whether that defect be in the address.... or deeper seated in an absence of common sympathies, or

even in a levity of the understanding, I cannot tell. But its bitter fruits are a sore uneasiness in the company of most men and women, a frigid fear of offending and jealousy of disrespect, an inability to lead and an unwillingness to follow the current conversation, which contrive to make me second with all those among whom chiefly I wish to be first.⁴

He complained that he criticized "with hardness," applauded lavishly," argued "weakly," and wondered "with a 'foolish face of praise'." His constant self analysis was growing into the form of an obsession; perhaps his observations were "sharper," as Rusk has said, but this "merciless introspection" left Ralph in an even more depressed state of mind.

Comparing his fortunes with his brothers' was inevitable. The brilliant Edward had heaped honors on top of honors during his college career and had begun to teach and to study law at the same time. Edward was recognized as an accomplished orator and was considered the most promising of the Emerson brothers. Charles ran a close second in the race for fame; his collegiate career had been equally brilliant and he too was proving himself to be a self confident person behind a speaker's stand. The mature and persevering William was recognized as a scholar in Germany, and, although his religious faith was wavering from orthodoxy, there was no doubt that his future would be secure, if not flashily brilliant, in any field. Beneath two inscriptions written upon a wall at the Old Manse, one by his father and one by Edward, Ralph wrote, "Peace to the Soul of the blessed dead, honor to the ambition of the living." Rusk interprets this inscrip-

⁴Rusk, op. cit., 1949, p. 104.

tion as meaning that Ralph thought of himself as a spectator, incapacitated for action, while Edward's ambitions would be fulfilled.

About this time the Emerson family moved from the city of Boston to the little village of Roxbury, possibly for health's sake or the more pleasant living conditions in the country. Ralph traveled to Boston to teach and thought of the city as the "House of Pride." Rejoicing in this move away from the "proud world" to his "own hearth stone" in the country near the "warbling.... sweet summer birds," he expressed his love of nature in a poem in his journal:

Good bye, proud world, I'm going home
Thou'rt not my friend and I'm not thine
Long I've been tossed like the salt sea foam
All day mid weary crowds I roam.

However unpolished the verse may be, his sentiment was obviously sincere. The family finances had greatly improved by the time of the writing of this poem and by January 4, 1825, Ralph was able to write, "I have closed my school. I have begun a new year." Remembering that he had written in his journal, "It takes philosopher or fool to build a fire or keep a school," the reader cannot doubt that it was with a temporary sense of relief that he entered the Harvard Theological Seminary in February, hoping, at last, that he could begin to prepare for his life's work.

Ralph's study at the Theological Seminary was soon to be ended because of failing eyesight. The course of study for theological students included "Hebrew, Biblical history and criticism, natural and revealed religion, Christian theology, Chris-

tian institutions, ecclesiastical powers, and the rights, duties, and relations of the pastoral office." Rusk suggests that Ralph's dislike for formal theology may have been the explanation for his failing eyesight. Such an organized course of study could not have proved a great inspiration to Ralph; in March of 1825 he recorded in his journal that he had "lost the use of my eye for study." Rusk states that it may have been about this time that he went to Andrews Norton, the professor of sacred literature, and, having explained that his eyes would not allow him to take an active part, received permission to attend lectures without reciting. The other biographers of Emerson make no attempt to explain the cause of his loss of eyesight or to connect this event with the mental depression he was suffering during this time. Rusk gives Aunt Mary's reaction to the event:

Aunt Mary, that summer, listed his school-teaching 'and Roxbury fasts' as the definite causes of his ailment, as if there could be no doubt. But a little later she not only confessed her ignorance of 'the history rise and progress and prospects of W-- eyes' but rated his defective sight a calamitous as well as unexpected blow.⁵

Eventually Ralph was forced to leave his room at Divinity Hall in Cambridge and begin teaching at a boys' school in Chelmsford, hoping that his eyes would improve with the elimination of study. Chelmsford was a small farm community some ten miles from Concord and it is possible that he worked on a farm as well as taught. During this time he lived "close to the soil," spending the "autumn and winter among these hills and plains." Nature

⁵Rusk, op. cit., p. 112.

proved something of a consolation to him; his eyes seemed partly healed, but other members of his family were suffering from disasters that burdened his mind with additional worries. Edward, whose combined school teaching and legal studies, had strained his strength to the breaking point, was forced to leave his teaching position in Roxbury, abandon his law books, and leave for Europe to travel, rest, and regain his health. Charles was worried about his feelings of "dejection and melancholy," while waiting for another college year to begin. William arrived home from Germany with the startling news that he could not conscientiously enter the ministry. Bulkeley was "completely deranged" for months at a time and had to be cared for by Ralph. In the face of all of these difficulties, Ralph left his school at Chelmsford and began teaching Edward's pupils at Roxbury, beginning another unhappy year chained to the school master's desk.

Wide World Number II, the journal recording the period Ralph spent at Roxbury, shows more clearly than ever the fear, which had become constant in his mind, of unfulfilled ambitions, his religious doubts, and his poor health. These fears were interlocked. He doubted the complete goodness of a God that would allow him to suffer without reason; his fear of ill health brought with it the frightful thought that an early death or long periods of illness might kill any chance of success. His answer to these fears was a reassertion of the belief in immortality and compensation.

Time and again Ralph mourned his fall from an ambitious youth into mediocre manhood. He thought that "few men ever suf-

ferred more genuine misery than I have suffered." In his journal he reminded himself of his failures:

Little was yet done to establish my consideration among my contemporaries, and less to get a memory when I am gone. I confess the foolish ambition to be valued, with qualification. I do not want to be known by them that know me not, but where my name is mentioned I would have it respected.

This desire to be respected by a limited few was reflected years later in a letter to Carlyle; hoping that his influence would increase its sale, Carlyle had written a flowery introduction to one of Emerson's books, and Emerson quickly retorted that he did not write for the general public but only for those few people who felt a kinship with him. However small was his respect for the general world's mediocre standards, Ralph's personal ambitions tormented him; he regretted his past failures and lamented that "my recollections of early life are not very pleasant."

Ralph's thoughts about his health did not end with the narrow field of his own frustrated ambitions. In his own mind he generalized the situation until he represented sometimes suffering, sometimes happy humanity. The answer to the problem of evil with its implied questioning of God's nature was found in the doctrine of compensation:

If God is good, why are any of his creatures unhappy? Those who consider the foundations of human happiness find that it is a contrasted and comparative thing.... High and multiplied sources of pleasure are often in our possession, without being enjoyed, for they never were lacking; God disturbs or removes them for a time; and he is dull, who sees no wisdom in this mode of giving them value and sharpening the blunted edge of appetite. Thus Health and Peace are insipid goods, until you have been able to compare them with the torments of Pain and the visitation of War. And

after this comparison⁶ has once been made, man runs riot in holding them.

Ralph wanted to believe that his illness would make him value health more and make him a more sensitive and sympathetic human being. The doctrine of compensation assured him that better health and greater happiness would eventually be his. Another vague conception of the Over-Soul was expressed in the laws whose goodness revealed itself in the universal plan of life. He felt that pleasure was intermingled with all experiences, and all experiences and all forms of life worked toward the greatest possible equalization of happiness for all forms of life. In his extreme illness and need of hope, he asserted that God was wise. "I am bound to adore the Beneficent Author of my life.... No representations of foreign misery can liquidate your debt to Heaven."

Another journal insertion elaborated on the goodness of the universe, regardless of the "superficial diversity of its appearances." All doubts about evil and, in particular, his ill health were answered by a religious humility: All things connected with God were good; all things were connected with God.

If we conceive the Divine Being inflicting pain upon these creatures, we cannot satisfy ourselves that even persecution authorises their rebellion against his will.... Hence, the first ground of moral obligation is this: That the Being who ordained it is the Source, the Support and the Principle of our existence, and it were a kind of denying our nature to reject that which is agreeable to him.⁷

⁶Journals, Vol. I, p. 252.

⁷Ibid, p. 194.

Despite his attempts to resolve all his doubts philosophically, Ralph could not overcome the fear of death. Was not Edward, whose future had seemed so brilliant, in danger of complete obscurity because of ill health? In addition to his failing eyesight, Ralph was suffering from new ailments--the aching joints of rheumatism, "a stricture in the chest." The threat of tuberculosis, that ugly disease that had haunted his father for years, loomed high in his mind. His talents had never been numerous; was Edward's fate a warning? A little poem, "The Bell," reflects his fear of death.

I love thy music, mellow bell,
I love thine iron chime,
To life or death, to heaven or hell,
Which calls the Sons of Time.

Thy voice upon the deep
The homebound sea-boy hails,
It charms his cares to sleep,
It cheers him as he sails.

To merry hall or house of God
Thy summons called our sires,
And good men thought thy awful voice
Disarmed the thunder's fires.

And soon thy music, sad Death-bell,
Shall sing its dirge once more
And mix my requiem with the gale
Which sweeps my native shore.⁸

In writing about his fear of death, perhaps he hoped to rid himself of anxiety. However, it was not writing but an improvement in his eyesight that brought about a happier frame of mind. During a vacation from school teaching, he submitted to an eye oper-

⁸Journals, Vol. I, p. 232.

ation that proved successful; from this time on, according to Rusk, he began to regain his sight.

The improvement of his eyesight allowed him to read a few hours each evening, resulting in a lightening of his pessimistic moods. A letter to his Aunt Mary in 1826 was almost confident in tone, compared with his depressed thoughts a few weeks earlier. "Rejoicing in better sight and better health," he expressed impatience at his increasing years, concluding the letter with the laconic statement that "loss of eyes is not exactly one of Socrates' superfluities." His admission of his concern about his eyesight was an indication of greater optimism; hitherto, he had attempted to rationalize his worries away. Once again, in his journal, he turned to religion for final comfort.

What is stoicism? What is Christianity? They are for nothing, if they cannot set the soul on an equilibrium, when it leans to the earth under the pressure⁹ of calamity. I bless God, there is virtue in them.

In better health Ralph began a more thorough analysis of his experience of depression and created more detailed answers for the doubts he had formed. The fear of lost ambitions, of mediocrity was eased first of all by the hope of immortality; this life on earth was but one phase of existence, and, as an immortal being, he could rightfully be self reliant.

But when I reflect that I am an immortal being, born to a destiny immeasurably high, deriving my moral and intellectual attributes directly from Almighty God, and that my existence and conditions as his child must

⁹Journals, Vol. II, p. 117.

be forever independent of the control or will of my fellow children,--I am elevated in my own eyes to a higher ground in life and a better self-esteem.¹⁰

Moral excellence was to be his goal. All ambitions on earth are petty trivialities, he reasoned, when compared with the moral excellence of man, the only means to immortality. A bit of rather bad verse expressed this sentiment in his journal:

The spirits of the wise sit on the clouds
And mock the ambition of man,
For his breath is vapour, his beauty the
 colour of a cloud,
And his body and soul are parted by a sun,
 a storm,
Or the feeble fork of a poor worm:
And who shall tell his household
Whither the soul of the dead man is gone?¹¹

Life was transient; worldly success was not the final measure of a man's true character, but, in a more realistic mood, Ralph reasserted his personal ambitions, justifying their moral value. He turned neither to immortality nor to passivity but to dependence on himself for the realization of his hopes. He was determined not to despair; past failures had nothing to do with today; he would forget the past. In making this brave declaration, he apparently ignored the fact that failures had helped to create his present strong ambitions.

I turn now to my lamp and my tomes. I have nothing to do with society. My unpleasant boyhood is past, my youth wanes into the age of man, and what are the unsuppressed glee, the cheering games, the golden hair and shining eyes of youth unto me? I will not believe that because I cannot unite dignity, as many can,

¹⁰Journals, Vol. I, p. 301.

¹¹Ibid, Vol. II, p. 130.

to folly, that I am not born to fill the eye of great expectation, to speak when the people listen, nor to cast my mite into the great treasury of morals and intellect. I will not quite despair, nor quench my flambeau in the dust of 'Easy live and quiet die.'¹²

The fear of death was likewise pushed aside, at least temporarily, by the statement in his journal, "We are reduced to put our views of death entirely upon his character and will, and Death will become more or less terrible according to our notions of the Lord of Death." If the Lord of Death was all wisdom, all goodness, why should he fear death itself? In a more humorous mood he shamed himself for even thinking of death. "Die? pale face, lily liver! go about your business, and when it comes to the point, then die like a gentleman."

These attempts at rationalization were not completely comforting but provided a convenient pillow to rest his weary hopes on when life seemed too futile; escape to the "other worlds" of self reliance and immortality was the only exit from worry or grief. This hearty whistling in the dark gave Ralph the reputation, even with his own family, of being very optimistic. It was Charles who, in a letter to Aunt Mary, had called Ralph a happy fellow who would "easy live and quiet die." Ralph obviously resented the remark. He was not unrealistic; he saw much of evil in life and had never been very happy. In his journal he confessed the "futility" of "expecting too much comfort" from idealistic creeds in the midst of troubles. Recognizing himself in youth as more the servant than the master of his fates, he

¹²Journals, Vol. II, p. 36.

despaired that his creeds led to many sloughs of despondency because of the comparison offered between their beautiful perfection and the ugly realities of everyday life. This truthful admission did not contradict the hope expressed in his journal that faith in immortality would divorce man, himself, in particular, from concern for external values: "Material beauty perishes or palls. Intellectual beauty limits admiration to season and ages; hath its ebbs and flows of delight. But moral beauty is lovely, imperishable, perfect." Moral beauty was the ideal, but, because of his own illness, he readily admitted that the evils on earth did affect mankind. Ralph began to write anew about all the implications of the doctrine of compensation.

Compensation explained present evils, not by denying their presence or their influence, but by unifying all of evil and all of good into one pattern that ended in final happiness. All experience had value. This idea was later written in the form of the essay, "Experience." The final passage of this essay is identical in thought to Ralph's feeling during his illness:

Never mind the ridicule, never mind the defeat;
up again, old heart!--it seems to say,--there is vic-
tory yet for all justice; and the true romance which
the world exists to realize will be the transforma-
tion of genius into practical power.

This passage was published in 1844, but some twenty years earlier Ralph asserted that experience brought greater courage, that the mind could be completely independent of external circumstances, that "compensation has been woven to want, loss to gain, good to evil, and good to good, with the same industry, and the same concealment of an intelligent cause." In God was hope. "It is not

certain that God exists, but that he does not is a most bewildering and improbable chimaera." The very duplicity of human life proved the existence of God:

The whole of what we know is a system of compensations. Every defect in one manner is made up in another. Every suffering is rewarded; every sacrifice is made up; every debt is paid. The history of retributions is a strange and awful story; it will confirm the faith that wavers, and more than any other moral feature, is perhaps susceptible of examination and analysis, and, more than any other, fit to establish the doctrine of Divine Providence.¹³

In the world of compensation all things had their price. Purity was the price at which impurity might be sold, but, whatever changes might occur within a man's life, all experiences made the soul wealthier; every moment of life made man a more powerful being. As to the happiness of man, it was not an absolute thing, since good and evil were intermingled, but unhappiness prompted the body and mind to the attainment and greater appreciation of good. "All unhnppiness tends to happiness.... 'Tis a droll life and the only humour proper to it seems quiet astonishment. Others laugh, weep, sell or proselyte. I admire."¹⁴

In order to retain any hope of success or any faith in himself or in God, Ralph converted his school teaching years into a period of deep thinking and great writing. Out of his "morbid introspection" caused by his loss of eyesight and illnesses and out of his creative individuality had come one central doctrine, the power of the individual; interlocked in this doctrine were

¹³Journals, Vol. II, p. 72.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 111.

the beliefs in the Over-Soul, immortality, nature, compensation, and experience.

The school teaching period is only hastily discussed by Brooks, who does not connect it in any way with Ralph's philosophy and who tends to suggest, by the hastiness of his discussion, that the period was not very important. Rusk outlines the events of this time in great detail, as does Cabot to a lesser degree, and partially connects its events with the development of the basic doctrines of Ralph's philosophy. Neither Rusk nor Cabot state that the philosophy had an important relationship to Ralph's troubles. Holmes' discussion of the period tends to be factual and superficial.

By the summer of 1827 Ralph was seriously concerned about the "stricture in my chest" that threatened to turn into a serious tubercular ailment. His family feared that another winter in the harsh northern climate might be fatal. In October of 1826 he had received a license to preach, but it seemed unlikely that he would be able to use it regularly within the next year. Finally he resigned himself to the threat of tuberculosis and decided to travel south to conserve his life. Edward had returned from Europe and he, in addition to Aunt Mary and the doctor, urged Ralph to leave early in the autumn. His Uncle Samuel Ripley rose to the emergency and lent him seventy dollars for the voyage with "letters of credit for additional cash." In October Ralph wrote in his journal, "I give up my school this week. I journey next I know not where. I am not sick nor very well." He closed the last school he ever taught, and on November twenty-fifth he traveled to the warmer sunshine of Charleston.

ST. AUGUSTINE AND EDWARD

The years 1827 and 1828 were to be of great significance for Ralph for three reasons. First of all, the fear of tuberculosis heightened his fear of an early death and aroused new doubts in his mind about his choice of the ministry as a profession. Second, his brilliant brother Edward broke under the physical strain and nervous tension connected with his law studies and became completely deranged. Ralph feared that Edward's fate might be his own. He wondered if there might not be some constitutional weakness in the family that doomed all of its members to failure. Third, he met Ellen Tucker, the girl he was to marry. Ellen was already suffering from tuberculosis and her early death seemed inevitable, but Ralph so adored his "Queen of Sheba" that he was willing and anxious to marry her under any circumstances. Ellen's influence on Ralph is important enough to warrant discussion in an individual chapter. In the face of all these difficulties, Ralph explored the chambers of his mind anew, strengthening his faith in compensation, self reliance, and immortality.

On November 25, 1826, Ralph left for Charleston, but arriving there, he found that the climate was still too severe for his affected lungs, so he prepared to travel further south. In January of 1827 he finally arrived in St. Augustine, Florida, and prepared to spend the winter months being as idle as possible. In letters to his brother William he complained that he was not sick, but "luke sick" having "but a single complaint, a certain stricture on the right side of the chest, which always makes it-

self felt when the air is too cold or damp." "The attempt to preach," he commented, was "followed by an aching." He admitted that the worst part of his condition was his despondency, the "deferring" of his "hopes". Since he could not be sure when he would ever be able to repay him he also worried about accepting so much money from his Uncle Samuel Ripley.

St. Augustine presented to Ralph all of the luxuries of old world romance. He wrote to his family of the people who were still "very much afraid of Indians" and of the strong old houses, the iron city gates, the habits of the citizens. He described for his family the passage of a typical day:

I stroll on the sea-beach and drive a green orange over the sand with a stick. Sometimes I sail in a boat, sometimes I sit in a chair. I read and write a little, moulding sermons for an hour which may never arrive.¹

The phrase, "an hour which may never arrive," suggests Ralph's despair at the slow start in the minister's office. The days of sitting and strolling, of worrying and despairing, were not soothing to the ambitious Ralph. He stated that the greatest evil in idleness was unhappiness. He began to doubt seriously if he would ever be strong enough to be a minister. The constant planning and delivering of sermons, the business sessions, the necessary visitations seemed too great a task for one who had not even the strength to spend an evening of continuous reading. In a letter dated April 7, 1827, he admitted to William that he was preoccupied with and sensitive about the subject of his health.

¹Rusk, Letters of Emerson, Vol. I, 1939, p. 189.

He stated that his success, more than many other people's, was dependent on the improvement of his health. In his journal he examined his talents, considering which of the arts he might follow, if regular work as a minister proved impossible. He recognized the fascination of the plays of Shakespeare, which even on a sick bed could arouse in a person a feeling of vigor and of longevity, independent of the decay of the body. All of the arts, he wrote, played coquette with his imagination, "and it may be I shall die at the last a forlorn bachelor, jilted of them all." In relation to his doubts about the ministry, he wrote of his indecision and financial worries to William:

I am all clay, no iron. Meditate now and then the total abdication of the profession on the score of ill health. Very sorry--for how to get my bread? Shall I commence author? of prose or verse. Alack of both the unwilling muse!²

In May, still despondent about his poor health and unfulfilled ambitions, he prepared to leave Florida and start for home. He wrote to Aunt Mary that he was not "a jot better or worse than when I left home in November," but that he had managed to preach one Sunday without "any pain or inconvenience." He feared that "the villain stricture" might ride him until death.

Arriving home in June, he joined his mother at the Concord Manse, where she was staying with the Ripley family, but soon afterward took a room at Divinity Hall and prepared to continue his studies for the ministry. During this period, he preached in

²Letters, Vol. I, p. 201.

several different churches but refused all offers of a permanent position, realizing that he was not yet strong enough to bear the responsibility. In connection with his own weakening ambition to be a minister, Ralph questioned what life was for but could find no fully satisfactory answer; he despaired that his eyes were not strong enough to let him be a learned person. In his journal he compared himself to a child in a vessel who thought the shores were removed when the ship left the shore. Thus, when the affections departed from God, God appeared to depart from the soul. When God ceased to be seen, he was thought to cease to be; Ralph shamed himself for his lack of understanding the purpose of his ill health. Turning again to the doctrine of compensation, he stated that he agreed with Burke's statement that "there is no knowledge that is not valuable." In a letter to his Aunt Mary he considered his situation philosophically. "He has seen but half of the Universe who never has been shown the house of Pain. Pleasure and Peace are but indifferent teachers of what it is life to know."

Despite his attempts to believe in the values of suffering, Ralph still feared death. Two little poems, written when he was twenty-four years old, express this fear and reveal his anxiety that his dreams were gone, his hope was dead, before any type of fame was his.

THE STORM

Fast, fast across the savage sea
 My little bark is blown;
 Down in the ocean mournfully
 The stars sank one by one.

Jesu Maria! pray for me,
 My hope is well nigh gone.
 And now the heaven, which gleamed before,
 Were sealed with windy clouds,
 And I beheld the stars no more,
 No more in shining crowds,
 But loud above, the tempest tore
 The canvas and the shrouds.

FAME

Go then, sad youth! and shine;
 Go sacrifice to Fame.
 Put Love, Joy, Health upon the shrine,
 And Life to fan the flame.
 Thyself, poor dupe! for praises barter
 And die to Fame an honoured martyr.³

Ralph obviously felt that the only chance for his escaping death was in taking the best possible care of himself, in working and in studying in moderation. Of his enforced moderation he wrote to William, who was serving as a sort of father confessor:

I am living cautiously; yea, treading on eggs, to strengthen my constitution. It is a long battle, this of mine betwixt life and death, and it is wholly uncertain to whom the game belongs.⁴

He declared that, although rheumatism spoiled much of his pleasure, when he could walk, he never wrote, and that, although his companions were few, laughter with the college jesters seemed to chase away the "mouse" in his chest, enabling him to study in ease.

In the same letter to William, Ralph spoke of some of the ailments of which Edward was complaining. Rusk and Cabot agree that Edward was Ralph's favorite brother. Cabot interprets the

³Journals, Vol. II, p. 209.

⁴Letters, Vol. I, p. 227.

closeness of their relationship as a fitting together of "likenesses and unlikenesses"; "each was the other's sharpest critic and warmest admirer." When Edward returned from Europe, Ralph had looked forward to spending a year or so in close company with his brother; this pleasure was denied him because of his own trip to Florida. Upon returning home, he found that Edward was complaining of "unutterable diseases" but thought that Edward's physical health was quite as good as his own, his chances of success probably better.

Even though Ralph was as ill as Edward at this time, Edward met his illness with a different attitude. He was accustomed to success; in college he had been recognized as the most brilliant, the most promising member of his class. While studying law, he had been honored by the interest and advice of the great Daniel Webster. When a serious illness had forced him to travel in Europe, he returned home determined to work harder to make up for lost time. He "studied law, was private tutor, reader, confidential agent," until his mind broke from the nervous strain, resulting in a period of complete insanity. Rusk gives a vivid picture of the event. For weeks Edward had been frantically religious, declaring that he saw God. Such piety was foreign to his nature. Going down to breakfast one morning, instead of showing Doctor Ripley the usual respect, he taunted him, began to make fun of him. Then he went upstairs and prayed eloquently, declaring that his mother and grandfather had lost their reason and asking for their restoration. Fainting fits and delirium

followed; Ralph was called home immediately but found Edward partially restored "to his former habits of thinking which.... were always perverse enough." The doctor advised that Edward should have complete rest, that he should not touch a book for a year, but naturally the advice was not heeded. A few weeks later Ralph was called home again by the disturbing news that Edward was completely deranged. On July the third Ralph described Edward's condition to William:

There he lay,--Edward, the admired, learned, eloquent, striving boy,--a maniac.... Dr. Wyman objected very strongly to taking him, saying it was a very peculiar case, and ought to be dealt with alone and under private care.... I have very little doubt that he will be restored to reason, but I fear he will now always hold it on precarious tenure of the state of stomach.⁵

Ralph's prediction of Edward's condition proved correct; he visited Edward often and noted his changing moods; sometimes Edward was all argument; another time he would humbly agree to every suggestion, every statement. By December 4, 1828, Ralph was able to write that Edward seemed quite well; his mind had completely recovered but his body was racked by tuberculosis; he had to give up all hope of a profession and travel to the West Indies. Finally settling in Puerto Rico, he worked as a clerk and waited for his death. Ralph wrote to him often and shared his personal philosophy. Ralph spoke hopefully of the reunion of the family circle. Perhaps, he suggested, religion could be a consolation for Edward:

⁵Cabot, op. cit., p. 141.

Perhaps sickness and homesickness may lead your thots more directly to the Source of Being.... Let us rejoice in the New Testament which makes sickness and distance safe to use.... Let the constant soul linked by faith and philosophy to the First Cause, calmly pursue her own appointed and glorious path.... I hope your body grows stronger and with the strength of that servant the whole house--the house not built by hands--grows great and prosperous.⁶

Ralph finally admitted to Edward that they might never meet again on earth but urged his brother to make use of his experience in Puerto Rico, to salve his disappointments by remembering that all forms of experience were valuable.

Even though Ralph presented a brave philosophy to Edward, he was greatly troubled by Edward's fate. He could see many parallels between Edward's situation and his own. Both had been ambitious; both had been threatened by tuberculosis. Would he also be doomed to an invalid's exile? He thought that the silliness in his nature might protect him from such a fate. He compared himself with Edward:

My brother lived and acted and spoke with preternatural energy. My own manner is sluggish; my speech sometimes flippant, sometimes embarrassed and ragged; my actions are of a passive kind. Edward had always great power of face. I have none; I laugh, I blush, I look ill-tempered, against my will and against my interest. But all this imperfection, as it appears to me, is a ballast, as things go, is a defence. Woe is me, my brother, for you! Please God to rescue and restore him.⁷

Ralph's feeling was that Edward was the "brother of the brief but blazing star" and, upon his death, wrote a poem, "In memoriam,"

⁶Letters, Vol. I, pp. 315, 331.

⁷Cabot, op. cit., p. 142.

in which he lamented that the only record of his brother's greatness was in the hearts of those who knew him. "On his young promise Beauty smiled" and "prosperous Age" planned a "large future"; "all, all was given, and only health denied." Years later, in a letter to Carlyle, Ralph interpreted the close relationship he had shared with Edward and the great grief and loneliness he felt at his passing away as a great person unfulfilled.⁸

The family's reaction to Edward's insanity and tubercular condition was summarized by Aunt Mary, who declared, that, although there were a few imbeciles in the family, the insanity was not of a hereditary nature. She attributed the cause to be "disease and over exertion." She felt that the event should bring "no foreboding of insanity to others." Ralph's final reaction to Edward's crisis was a restrengthening of his belief in the dual nature of life and of the necessity of believing in immortality. He was determined that Edward's situation should not be his own; he would not let tuberculosis defeat him; he would continue "to tread on eggs" until he could be assured of his strength. A fruitless year spent in St. Augustine combined with his brother's living example of the tragedy of ill health had taught him to fear death and to lean on philosophy for consolation, but out of this fear had come the common sense reliance on moderation in working, in studying, and in all phases of living.

⁸Ralph Waldo Emerson, Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, Vol. I, 1899, p. 27.

ELLEN TUCKER

Emerson's marriage to Ellen Tucker, her early death, and his subsequent resignation from the Second Church of Boston marked the end of a definite period in his life. Before his resignation from the Second Church, he had formed the basic concepts of his philosophy in reaction to his ill health and his unfulfilled and misplaced ambitions. After this time, he broke all ties with his previous mode of living, traveled to Europe, and began a new life as a writer and lecturer, employing and enlarging upon ideas already formed. In addition to its marking the end of a difficult, formative period, his marriage to Ellen was significant for two reasons. With her the barriers of reserve and timidity were completely broken, but after her death were rebuilt again; his second wife, Lidian, longed for the love letters which were never written. Carlyle, his closest friend, called him "the lonely, wayfaring man." Margaret Fuller, another of his intimates, complained of his "coldness," and Emerson himself lamented the impossibility of his establishing a real intimacy with anyone. The second result of Ellen's death was the crystallization of two ideas, immortality and the Over-Soul. Hitherto, these ideas had merely been conjectures, but after Ellen's death they became unquestioned realities in his thinking.

While Ralph was at Divinity Hall, he preached, from time to time, at various churches. One of these churches was in Concord, New Hampshire, where, in December of 1827, he first met Ellen Tucker. Ellen was the youngest daughter of the late Beza Tucker,

a prominent merchant of Boston. She was only seventeen but was already regarded as a great beauty. Her photographs reveal "a fine forehead and eyes that gave her firmly molded oval face the appearance of intelligence as well as eagerness." Her figure was exquisitely feminine, but, according to Ralph and his family, there was no trace of vanity in her nature. After his meeting her on Christmas Day, Ralph found many excuses to return to Concord. They went to a sleighing party that winter; he visited her often in the spring, and a long period of correspondence ensued. By December of the next year Ralph realized that Concord was a "dangerous neighborhood" for him, where he could find "nothing but light and oxygen." His most reasonable attempts to be philosophical about Ellen were failures. "In her magic presence," he admitted, "reason becomes ashamed of himself and wears the aspect of Pedantry or Calculation." Confessing that for him at least beauty was ample proof of goodness, he proposed to Ellen and was delighted when she "shamed my ambition and prudence by her generous love in our first interview." Ellen knew her own mind and was not interested in financial problems. "I described my prospects," Ralph related. "She said, I do not wish to hear of your prospects." Assured of success, Ralph released to his journal a torrent of love poetry for Ellen. "I am enamored of thy loveliness," he wrote, "Lovesick with thy sweet beauty." While preaching at Concord, he disclosed his state of mind to the entire congregation in a sermon about love. Love was a necessity; we did not love physical traits but the spiritual qualities of a person. Rusk interprets this sermon as Ralph's "restoration of

the dignity of his philosophy, which had proved unreliable in her (Ellen's) presence."

Immediately after Ellen gave her consent to marry him, Ralph announced his engagement to his family. He wrote to his brother William:

Having been for one week engaged to Ellen Louisa Tucker.... he is now as happy as it is safe in life to be in the affection of the lady and the approbation of the friends. She is seventeen years old, and very beautiful by universal consent. Her feelings are exceedingly delicate and noble--and I only want you to see her.¹

With the exception of Aunt Mary, all of the Emersons welcomed Ellen. His mother called her "a blessing sent from heaven for Waldo," and she seems to have pleased Grandfather Ripley. Aunt Mary thought fate was being too kind to Ralph; she wrote Ellen the proper books to read to be an aid to her husband-to-be and said she hoped Ellen wasn't a frivolous girl who painted pictures and spoke French.

Ellen and Ralph continued to write faithfully. All of his letters have been destroyed or lost, but, according to Rusk, "the correspondence eventually ran to at least forty letters on her side." Ellen hoped that "the metaphorical droppings of a girl in her teens" would not annoy Ralph and begged him to overlook her "half grown" ideas. She humorously called him "Grandpa," and thanked him for his messages that "were not unmeaning love letters--written only for courtship." When Ralph was offered a position at the Second Church of Boston and was ordained as minis-

¹Letters, Vol. I, p. 256.

ter, Ellen, her mother, Edward, Charles, and Ruth Emerson were all present. That a young person should be pastor of Second Church was an honor, but Ralph's pride in his position was lessened by his increasing awareness of Ellen's ill health.

When Ellen and Ralph first became engaged, probably neither of them realized the full extent of Ellen's illnesses. The family history of the Tuckers revealed long periods of illnesses and early deaths, but, according to Rusk, Ralph did not care to probe too far into the Tucker family's past. Ellen's father had died at the age of forty-eight. Her brother George, while a young medical student, had traveled to Europe for his health and had died in Paris of "a horrid cold which has turn'd my blood to lead." Her sister Mary had died quite young. One of her surviving sisters, Margaret, was a victim of tuberculosis. Shortly after the engagement, Ellen began to suffer from longer attacks of tuberculosis. She wrote Ralph that she might pass him by in the journey through life, but, on the whole, she maintained a jaunty gaiety that mocked any physical ailment. Before their marriage, Ellen traveled to the Connecticut Valley to improve her health; later, Ellen, her mother, and Ralph journeyed again to the Connecticut Valley and then to Worcester, Springfield, and Hartford, hoping that Ellen's condition might improve. By this time both Ralph and Ellen realized her early death was possible, but, despite their fears, they were married in September and took up residence in Boston. Charles was the only member of Ralph's family present at the wedding; he complained of the three days he spent in a household of women, completely ignored by Ellen and

Ralph who "were whispering honied words above stairs."

In a letter dated January 22, 1829, Charles wrote to William about the marriage. He stated that, before Ralph married Ellen, Ralph knew that Ellen was doomed, that she was "too lovely to live long," but believed that, even if she died "tomorrow" it would be a blessing to have loved her. In January of the same year Ralph wrote to his Aunt Mary in a mood of gloom and pessimism, foreign to the nature of a person happily in love. He spoke of the troubles and the poverty that had haunted his family since his father's death and admitted his fear of the new-found "flatteries of fortune."

I lean always to that ancient superstition which taught men to beware of unmixd prosperity, for Nemesis keeps watch to overthrow the high. Well, now look at the altered aspect. William has begun to live by the law. Edward has recovered his reason and his health. Charles is prospering in all ways. Waldo is comparatively well and comparatively successful--far more so than his friends, out of the family, anticipated. Now I add to this felicity that which makes my own glass very much larger and fuller. And I straightway say, Can this hold? Will God make me a Brilliant exception to the common order of his dealings which equalizes destinies? There's an apprehension of reverse always arising from success.²

That the law of compensation, the leveling force that matched good with bad and bad with good, should have become so firmly implanted in his mind that he feared happiness as much as failure seems ironic, but he knew that his fears were justified. During Ellen's more serious attacks he had acted as her nursemaid. He wrote to William, describing the nature of the illness. "She has

²Letters, Vol. I, p. 258.

raised blood since a week ago and I have been one of her nurses most unskillful but most interested." Dismissing his fears, he said that, since Beauty was better, he was better, and then broke into characteristic praise of his "Queen of Sheba."

She is perfectly simple though very elegant in her manners; then she has common sense; then she has imagination and knows the difference between good poetry and bad; then she makes fine verses herself, then she is good,--and has character enough to be religious. Then she is beautiful, and finally I love her.

Ralph and Ellen both thought she might someday be a great poet; one of their greatest regrets at her illnesses was that her talents might never be fulfilled. God, she said, had given her a harp, and she thought the strings were sound, though the bridge and frets were weak and wasting. Her poetry revealed moods that soared or dropped in an instant. She expressed her resignation in one fragile verse:

I chided the moon,--she was icy cold--
The stars were coquettes too splendidly drest.

Another poem expressed her dependence on Ralph's strength:

I shield my bosoms inmate this sweet love
As I would mine own babe or a wee flower...
I will not stay on earth Waldo
Unless thy love is mine
When all that gave it birth my love
And beauty must decline...
Sweeter the green sod for my bones
The black earth for my head
The wind than thy cold altered tones
Whence all of love had fled.

Occasionally her poetry was humorous, but the majority of her poems were written about love or religion. During the final stages of her illness she was unable to write at all.

To list each successive step in Ellen's losing battle with tuberculosis would be fruitless. Ralph had considered taking her to Florida or Cuba for the winter months, but her doctor advised her not to migrate to Cuba or elsewhere unless she was prepared to stay for ten years. She rode out day after day, hoping that the open air would help her. Even in January, Ralph was still clinging to the hope of her living. As soon as the snows melted, he wrote, they would travel to Philadelphia or Baltimore. Confined to her bed, Ellen lived through weeks of dying. Her deep religious faith strengthened her; she seemed serene. Charles wrote that "her spirit seems winged for its flight.... Waldo is bowed down under the affliction, yet he says t'is like seeing an angel go to heaven." Ralph's mother said that Ellen was "calm and undismayed at the approach of death--and in a prayerful and resigned state of mind committed herself and all her dear friends unto God." Ellen died February 8, 1831, a Tuesday morning at nine o'clock. A few hours after her death Ralph wrote to his Aunt Mary, "My angel is gone to heaven this morning and I am alone in the world and strangely happy.... I have never known a person in the world in whose separate existence as a soul I could so readily and fully believe." For months after her death Ralph walked every morning to her tomb. A journal passage, written five days after her death, spoke of his loneliness and his emotional withdrawal into himself. "There is one birth, and one baptism, and one first love, and the affections cannot keep youth any more than men." He returned to his pulpit, but his thoughts

were all with Ellen.

Before Ellen's death, Ralph had thought and written a great deal about the fear of death. In November of 1830 he questioned in his journal if religious principles could overcome this fear. Bacon had listed passions and humours which could triumph over that fear. Instances of defiance of death were familiar to everyone, but were these instances of conquest of fear or merely of success in setting it aside, the mere want of thought? Ralph reflected that even spiritual men like Dr. Johnson frequently showed great apprehension and gloom at the thought of dissolution. Ralph believed that a fuller effect of Christian principles upon men's hearts would bring about a disappearance of the fear of death. Men doubted their immortality because they doubted the real independent being of their moral nature. They fancied that the thoughts of God, of goodness, of love, of ethics generally, might be visions of the mind, and it and they might perish together. Later in his journals, he stated that God and men were one, but the whole was greater than its parts; therefore the laws of God remained indestructible. This is basically the same idea fully explained in the essay, "The Over-Soul." He felt that the wisest men, like Landor, hoped nothing and feared nothing from another; they obeyed the laws peaceably. In this same year, 1830, he wrote a poem for Ellen, assuring her that, whatever happened, love would outlive all else. "When the greybeard years" came, "When Hope, the soothsayer, reads our lot, thyself shall own the page was bright--well that we loved, we had we

not."

Rusk is the only biographer who connects Ellen's death with Ralph's belief in immortality; Cabot dispenses with the marriage in a few pages, but these include journal passages and comments about the family's grief and Ralph's despondency after Ellen's death. Holmes merely states that Ralph was married and a year later his wife died. Brooks disposes of the marriage in two well chosen sentences, including it with other unfortunate mistakes such as school teaching and preaching. Rusk's belief is that Emerson's faith in immortality was never stronger than in the period immediately following Ellen's death. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Junior, states that Emerson's opinion about immortality remained almost unchanged throughout the years of his ministry and for some time thereafter, and to that same opinion he returned after a middle period of exploring alternative possibilities.³ According to McGiffert, "Consolation for the Mourner," the first sermon preached after Ellen's death, sought to make Ralph's personal experience a bridge on which to cross to the thoughts and emotions of his listeners. Practicing his natural reserve in the pulpit, he did not directly refer to Ellen's death but told his congregation that it was only reasonable to look forward to a life compounded of good and evil fortune. "Indeed it seems to me," he said, "that in reading the lives of illustrious men, the mind feels a sort of incongruity when, as sometimes rarely hap-

³Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Junior, Young Emerson Speaks, 1938, p. 215.

pens, they chance to live in uninterrupted prosperity." The sermon's reference to the idea of compensation was repeated in Emerson's journal. "Is not the law of compensation perfect? It holds as far as we can see. Different gifts to different individuals, but with a mortgage of responsibility on every one. 'The gods sell all things'." He recognized that everyone had periods of doubt. In the sermon, "A Future Life," he stated, "There are times when every man takes the gloomy view, feels the sentiment of Saint James, What is our life but a vapor that appeareth for a little time?" "Though the beam of the balance trembles," he wrote to Aunt Mary, "it settles always on the right side, for otherwise all things look so silly." In his journal he wrote passage after passage about immortality. He spoke of the blind men in Rome who complained that the streets were dark. "To the dull mind all nature is leaden. To the illuminated mind the whole world burns and sparkles with light." In a letter to Edward he confessed that Ellen's faith in immortality had greatly strengthened his own belief.

Her loss is a universal loss to me. It makes all life little worth and I go backward to her beautiful character for a charm that I might seek in vain thru the world. But faith is strong--her faith stronger than death--and the hope of heaven is more distinct to me by the aid of affection such as hers.... The whole happiness and sorrow is told in the text--I shall go to her but she shall not return to me.⁴

Ralph's thoughts went to Ellen often; he chided her, in a little poem, for not answering when he talked to her.

⁴Letters, Vol. I, p. 321.

Does thy heart beat with mine? does thy
 blue eyes
 Ever look northward with desire?⁵

At times he could hardly conceive of any type of death, either physical or spiritual.

Ralph had difficulty in transferring his faith in immortality to his congregation. He noted in his journal that when he talked with the sick they sometimes thought he treated the question of death with unbecoming indifference and did not make the case his own, or, if he did, erred in his judgment. He answered, "I do not fear death.... Following my own thoughts, I should lie down in the lap of earth as trustingly as ever on my bed." Death, he thought, was unimportant within itself, since this life is the everlasting life. With love, with work, death becomes indifferent. "It is in being good to wife and children and servants that the kingdom of heaven begins." Death seemed almost desirable to him; he wrote a poem, romanticizing death, calling for death to take him, that he might meet Ellen that much sooner. One of the chief arguments for immortality, he thought, was the impossibility of knowing anyone very closely on earth. Ellen, he remembered, had wondered why husbands and wives avoided discussing religion or any of those subjects nearest to their spiritual selves. He was willing to die if he might be close to the one person he had loved completely.

Shortly after Ellen's death Ralph began to feel that he

⁵Rusk, op. cit., p. 150.

could not administer the communion in church in the traditional sense and, when the church members could not agree with his viewpoint, he resigned from the ministry. Cabot related that many people thought him mentally deranged to leave the church over such a seemingly petty matter, but Ralph's doubts about being a minister were not new. He found that he could not comfort the sick; Cabot said he always looked ill at ease when preaching at funerals; according to Rusk, he thought the members of his congregation "fools, but potentially divine" and wondered how many came to show their new clothes and how few came to hear the sermon. During his days at the theological seminary, he had found the study of formal theology disagreeable. Many of his ideas seemed too radical to a conservative congregation. His disagreement with the church about the interpretation of the communion was merely a convenient excuse; he was unhappy in the pulpit and thoroughly delighted to move into new and less restricted areas of thinking. He wrote to William that the "severing of our strained cord that bound me to the church is a mutual relief." Though there would be "some temporary embarrassment, yet I walk firmly toward a peace and freedom which I plainly see before me, albeit afar." He was going to have a magazine of his "ownty-donty" and heap project upon project. "Wait and see what a few months shall do to hatch this fine egg."

Even though Ralph was rejoicing in his new prospects, other members of the family were not so happy about his condition. His mother and Aunt Mary thought it scandalous that he should become so unorthodox. Since he had abandoned his plans for the ministry

under similar circumstances, William was sympathetic. Charles was greatly worried about his brother's health. He wrote to Aunt Mary that "Waldo is sick. His spirits droop; he looks to the South, and thinks he should like to go away. I never saw him so disheartened." In December he commented that things seemed to be flying to pieces for Ralph, that he had hoped his brother would triumph by strength of character, but he was disappointed, hearing ordinary preachers and remembering how great an orator Ralph might have been. Ralph himself spoke of a "malady" that would make him take a sea-voyage. Much of his trouble could have been due to loneliness. He was living with his mother but found the house empty without Ellen and was anxious to break all ties and start anew. On Christmas Day of 1832 he left on a trading vessel for Europe and the wider vistas outside the pulpit. Almost immediately he wrote home that he was enjoying better health and was looking forward to meeting and talking with some of the great thinkers in Europe.

CONCLUSION

The period Emerson spent in Europe marked the beginning of a new career for him and a strengthened attitude toward himself and his life. While in Europe he made the acquaintance of Thomas Carlyle and other writers who were to influence his career as a writer and orator. In his letters to his family he spoke of himself as being a new man physically. He praised the sea voyage that was "so sanative to exhausted bodies" and declared that he was in "better health than since I was a boy." From this time on his journals recorded no serious illnesses and no prolonged periods of mental depression. The fear of ill health and death no longer tormented him. In later years he lost his memory, but he viewed his plight humorously; when he could not remember the name of an umbrella, he laughingly said he had forgotten its name but he knew its history: "Guests always take it." During his final illness, pneumonia, he realized death was near and complained that "falling down cellar" would have pleased him more, but neither illness or death had any terror for him. On the last day of his life he praised Carlyle, who had so long been his friend, and bid each member of his family farewell; expressing no word of doubt or regret. While on the European trip, his doubts about his personal philosophy began to disappear. His philosophical discussions took the form of assertions, of simple explanations to the events of his life. He no longer doubted the beliefs a decade of suffering had given him. The period of experimentation, of self-doubt was over. During this time Emer-

son's circle of acquaintances widened, but his circle of beloved intimates diminished. Throughout the rest of his years he complained of loneliness and a feeling of "coldness" toward people other than his own children. Lidian was not married in a mood of exaltation; he announced his engagement to William stating that it was "a very sober joy." This restraint is in direct contrast to his lavish praises for his beloved "Queen of Sheba" and illustrates within itself the closing of the early hopeful, confused, experimenting period of Emerson's life.

The most obvious explanation for the improvement in Emerson's mental and physical health is that his philosophy had become so permanent a part of his outlook that nothing could create permanent doubts in his mind; he had suffered too much to expect very much from life but the fact that he had endured all of his suffering gave him new confidence in his own capabilities. Ample evidence exists to prove that his reactions to later periods of crisis were mere reinstatements of attitudes already formed. When his brother Charles died from tuberculosis, he complained of the same sort of loneliness he had felt after Ellen's death. He wrote to Carlyle that he had lost his brother, "the friend and companion of many years," and that his circle of intimates was becoming very small. "We want but two or three friends, but these we cannot do without, and they serve us in every thought we think. I find now I must hold faster the remaining jewels of my social belt."¹ Charles' death did not alter

¹Charles Eliot Norton, editor, Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence, 1899, p. 96.

his belief in immortality. He stated his faith in compensation, the dual nature of life, and immortality in one sentence: "Night rests on all sides upon the facts of our being, tho, we must own, our upper nature lies always in Day."²

When faced with the death of other friends, Emerson's faith remained strong. When Margaret Tucker, Ellen Tucker's sister, died, Ralph's reaction as recorded in his journal was similar to that at the time of Charles' and Ellen's death. He complained again of loneliness, but he comforted himself with the thought of heaven. "I have a very narrow acquaintance, and of it you have been a large part.... The only sister I ever had, pass on, pure soul! to the opening heaven." Upon hearing of the death of Jane Carlyle, he wrote to Thomas Carlyle that he knew his friend must be very lonely now but that he should comfort himself with the idea of immortality. "You will have the peace of knowing her safe, and no longer a victim" of long illnesses. At the death of his own mother he wrote to his brother William of "an end so graduated and tranquil.... adorned by her happy temper.... that even in these last days almost all gloom was removed from death."

The greatest sorrow of Emerson's later life was the death of his first son, Waldo. The "coldness" of which Ralph complained played no part in his role as a parent. According to Rusk and Cabot, he was a devoted father. In his journal he wrote that everything concerned with the nursery was of interest. "Every

²Rusk, op. cit., p. 231.

tear and every smile deserves a history, to say nothing of the stamping and screaming." He took a great interest in the activities of all of his children; he took them on berry picking hikes and picnics, but Waldo, his first son, had a special place in his heart. According to Cabot, a friend of Emerson's called Waldo "a domesticated sunbeam... he was his father's constant companion and would stay for hours in the study, never interrupting him." When Waldo was only five years old, he died of scarlet fever after four days' illness. Emerson did not question the wisdom of a God who would permit his son to die nor did he question his own faith in immortality; his grief expressed itself in the form of praise for Waldo and loneliness for himself and Lidian. Rusk stated that after Emerson's "first passionate outburst of grief, he was as if stunned, and incapable of expression until long afterwards." In a letter to a friend he described his son: "What was the moral of sun and moon, of roses and acorns, that was the moral of the sweet boy's life." He described his loneliness to Carlyle, saying that "you can never sympathize with me; you can never know how much of me such a young child can take away." Much later his love for his lost son found expression in a poem, "Threnody," but before this he expressed his faith in a life of compensation and immortality in a letter to a woman who had been Waldo's teacher.

Life wears on and ministers to you, no doubt, as to me its undelaying and grand lessons, its uncontainable endless poetry, its short dry prose of scepticism,--like veins of cold air in the evening woods, quickly swallowed by the wide warmth of June.... Although we love the first gift so well that we cling long to the

ruin, and think we will be cold to the new if new shall come. But the new steals on us like a star which rises behind our back as we walk, and we are borrowing gladly its light before we know the benefactor.³

This sentiment, that good would follow bad, that immortality could comfort the most griefstricken, was restated two years later in a letter to Margaret Fuller. Emerson spoke of his son's death and the complex mixture of joy and sorrow on earth, concluding that "yet the nature of things against all appearances and specialities whatever, assure us of eternal benefit." His faith lay not in the happiness one might win on earth but in the final joy that would come to an individual who had lived through suffering on earth and was at last, by virtue of the Over-Soul, fulfilled as a wiser person in a later life and was united in that continuing life with lost loved ones.

Several authors have agreed that Emerson's philosophy was largely formed in his earlier years as a reaction to the combined threats of ill health and death and later restated in the form of lectures and essays. Although he was interested in expressing himself creatively, Emerson's role as an essayist and an orator resulted partly from his precarious financial position. Outside of the income he received from Ellen Tucker's estate, he was practically penniless, and many journal insertions describe the constant need for money and list the exact financial returns from a season of lecturing or from the publication of a new book. In discussing Emerson's method of writing, Henry David Gray

³Cabot, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 481.

brought out the relationship between the earlier journals and the published essays. "It has always been known that it was Emerson's custom to make use in his essays and addresses of ideas which he had jotted down in his notes years before."⁴ Another author, Arthur Hobson Quinn, connected Emerson's collegiate writings with his later essays. Quinn stated that the development of Emerson's interest in Transcendentalism was demonstrated as early as 1821 in the essay, "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy," in the statement that the moral faculty "is an intuition by which we directly determine the merit or demerit of action."⁵ H. W. Garrod stated that Emerson's first sermon contains in germ the whole doctrine of the soul and of the unity of the spiritual and natural worlds. He traced the ideas expressed in the first sermon--all prayers are answered; therefore we should beware what we ask--back to Emerson's talk with a Methodist farm laborer while in college.⁶

In the biography of Emerson, Rusk did not always connect the growth of Emerson's philosophy with the events of his life, but in the introduction to Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson he traced the development of Emerson's philosophy in detail. He listed "the diseases which threatened to cripple Emerson permanently, his

⁴Henry David Gray, "Emerson," Leland Stanford Junior University Publications, Vol. 8, 1917, p. 5.

⁵Arthur Hobson Quinn, The Literature of the American People, 1951, p. 278.

⁶H. W. Garrod, Poetry and the Criticism of Life, 1931, pp. 85-107.

young wife's illness and death, the crisis of his ministry at the Second Church, the deaths of his brothers Edward and Charles" as events that thrust Emerson into "emotional maturity." He stated that Emerson's ideas "grew slowly from slight beginnings.... Scarcely one of the essays that went into the volume of 1841 is without an antecedent here "in the letters." He stated that the ideas for "Nature" are "scattered through many letters over a long period of time." He traced "The American Scholar," published in August of 1837, to a letter, "The Age of the American Scholar," written in June of 1818; he asserts that the ideas of this essay can be traced even further back "through the letters as well as the journals." "The Divinity School Address" was discussed through the mail a dozen years before spoken at Cambridge." In his opinion, parts of "Friendship" echoed letters to Margaret Fuller, Caroline Sturgis, and Samuel Gray Ward. He listed the early correspondence with Aunt Mary as a very important source for many of the ideas expressed in other essays. A "long epistolary history" preceded "Representative Men." Rusk summarized his survey by commenting that as years passed, Emerson had fewer new ideas and less real creative power. Composition became a matter of collaboration. Old materials from the journals were collected and rearranged for his lectures and essays.⁷

The connection of Emerson's philosophy with the early period of his life in which he was preoccupied with the fear of ill health, death, and lost ambitions emphasizes the danger in call-

⁷Rusk, Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1939, pp. xxiii-xxvii.

ing him a complete optimist. That he was not optimistic about the events of life has been proved; the roots of his optimism are buried in the reliance on a self that is connected with the Over-Soul, and even this bit of optimism, ironically enough, arose from the pessimism he felt about his own failures as a college student and as a school teacher. To say that Emerson is "always smiling" is to sentimentalize a philosophy of strength, a belief in the power of the individual evil and to endure suffering. Emerson's philosophy was strong because he had lived it. Gray recognized the danger in calling Emerson a complete optimist and termed him instead "a practical idealist." The term practical implies a close association with life. It has already been mentioned that Dillaway chose to call Emerson a "discriminating optimist." Rusk realized the risk involved in disregarding Emerson's early life and his journals and letters and asserted that, on close examination, Emerson was "no pale, emotionless specter.... He was much more affected by his early love affair than has been supposed." A careless reading of the essays could lead to misinterpretations, but Rusk stated that the tone of optimism in Emerson was not always consistent, has been falsely supposed. "His mind is not so simple as to be finally classified and filed away."⁸ If these authors can be considered correct in their opinions, Emerson's philosophy will have a more universal, a more realistic message than that given

⁸Rusk, The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1949, p. vii.

it by the sentimentalists. If Emerson's statements are not to be misinterpreted, if his doctrines of compensation, self-reliance, immortality, and the Over-Soul are not to be labeled "simple optimism," his early preoccupation with health and death must not be ignored, for this early preoccupation helped to form the essence of his genius.

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON'S PREOCCUPATION
WITH HEALTH AND DEATH

by

MARY ATERIA MARNEY BALTZELLE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to point out the relationship between Ralph Waldo Emerson's early preoccupation with health and death and the early development of his basic philosophical ideas; by proving that such a relationship existed, it is possible to give greater importance to the theory that Emerson's philosophy was not simple, sentimental optimism. A study of Emerson's family background, the events of his life preceding his resignation from the Second Church of Boston, and his reactions to these events is necessary to prove such a theory. For this purpose information from four biographies of Emerson, his journals, his letters, his sermons, some of his essays, and numerous books and magazine articles interpreting the development of his philosophy has been considered. Since the development of his ideas was a gradual process, the major headings of the thesis are arranged in chronological order.

Emerson's early life was marked by introspection, ill health, and fear of early death and unfulfilled ambitions. His tendency toward almost morbid introspection was in part the result of a childhood in which extreme poverty, emphasis on scholarship and religion, and lack of normal boyhood activities were outstanding characteristics. Ralph Leslie Rusk and James Elliot Cabot supported this viewpoint. Rusk outlined numerous childhood illnesses. Although no record of any serious illness exists, Emerson's fear of ill health became constant during his college years. In his journals he recorded the fear of an early death

and answered this fear with an assertion of idealism; he believed he was born to be successful and that faith in God erased all fears. Rusk, Cabot, and Oliver Wendell Holmes agreed that Emerson's college years were unhappy because of his extreme timidity, mediocre scholarship, lack of close friends, lack of money, and preoccupation with poetry writing. During his school teaching years after his graduation from college, he was threatened by failing eyesight and tuberculosis. His journals and letters recorded the parallel growths of mental depression and certain concepts--compensation, self reliance, moral excellence, the powers of nature, immortality, the Over-Soul--that eased his fear of lost ambitions. The insanity and the tubercular illness of his brilliant brother Edward heightened his fear of ill health and death. Rusk, Cabot, and Van Wyck Brooks agreed that the school teaching experience was the gloomiest period of his life. As Rusk and Arthur Cushman McGiffert Junior have stated, Emerson's marriage to Ellen Tucker followed by her early death from tuberculosis marked the full development of his idea of immortality. This development was recorded in his letters and journals. After Ellen Tucker's death, Emerson resigned the ministry of the Second Church of Boston and traveled to Europe. From this time on the fear of ill health and death disappeared from his letters and journals, and he began a new life as a writer and lecturer; the ideas expressed in his published essays may be traced directly to the journals, letters, and sermons that were written in the unhappy early period of his life.

Several authors--Rusk, Cabot, Newton Dillaway--have agreed that Emerson was not a simple optimist. His idea of compensation presupposes a dual type of existence on earth. Other authors--Henry David Gray, Arthur Hobson Quinn, H. W. Garrod, Arthur Cushman McGiffert Junior, Rusk--have traced Emerson's writings back as far as his collegiate days. Emerson's early preoccupation with health and death was not the only cause for the development of his philosophy, but it was a very important cause in producing a philosophy that emphasized the potential moral powers of the individual without denying the sterner realities of life.