

EDWARD WALDO EMERSON

EMERSON IN CONCORD

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A Memoir

WRITTEN FOR THE "SOCIAL CIRCLE"
IN CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

BY

EDWARD WALDO EMERSON

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Not his the aster's wine,
Nor gold, nor land, nor power;
By want and pain
God screeneth him
Till his appointed hour.
Go, speed the stars of thought
On to their shining goals;
The sower scatters broad his seed,
The wheat thou strew'st be souls.

I want to tell you something, Gentlemen. Eternity is very long. Opportunity is a very little portion of it, but worth the whole of it. If God gave me my choice of the whole planet or my little farm, I should certainly take my farm.

Mr. EMERSON'S JOURNAL FOR 1852.

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"God, when He made the prophet, did not unmake the man." — LOCKE.

It has been the good and time-honored practice of the SOCIAL CIRCLE to preserve in its book as true a picture as may be of the life of each departed member. Thus the task fell to me of writing for the chronicles of his village club the story of my father.

His friend Mr. Cabot has written this story for the world. Everything was put into his hands, and he made good and true and loyal use of the trust.

I write for my father's neighbors and near friends, though I include many who perhaps never saw him. His public life and works have been so well told and critically estimated by several good and friendly hands that I pass lightly over them, to show to those who care to see, more fully than could be done in Mr. Cabot's book consistently with its symmetry, the citizen and villager and householder, the friend and neighbor. And if I magnify, perhaps unduly, this aspect of my father, it is to show those whom his writings have helped or moved that his daily life was in accord with his teachings.

I ask attention to the spirit even more than the matter of the extracts from his journals here given. These were chosen, but a hundred others would serve as well. It is now imputed as a shortcoming that he did not do justice to the prevailing power of evil in the world. Fortunately he did not. It was not the message given to him. He could not. For that which made him live and serve and love and be loved was — a good Hope.

In the ancient graveyard at Ipswich, in this State, lies buried Thomas Emerson, the first of the name in this country, who came among the very early settlers to Massachusetts Bay, probably from the neighborhood of Durham, in northeastern England. He is styled Thomas Emerson, Baker. His son, Joseph, took a step onward, and dispensed the bread of life to the settlers of Mendon, and took a Concord woman to wife, namely, Elizabeth Bulkeley, daughter of the second and granddaughter of the first minister of this town.

But their son, Edward, in spite of — perhaps because of — this priestly ancestry, relapsed to things of this world, and was for a time a "Merchant in Charlestown," though on his gravestone it was thought fitter to call him "sometime Deacon of the church in Newbury."

His son, Joseph, was the minister of Maiden; strengthened the religious tendency of the family by marrying the daughter of the famous and eccentric Father Moody, of York (Agamenticus), Maine, and this couple, out of their numerous family, gave three young ministers to the Colony, of whom one of the youngest, William, came, as his diary records, often on horseback to Concord to preach for Dr. Bliss, and when that zealous preacher died was chosen his successor. The young minister, only twenty-two years old, boarded with Madam Bliss, and soon won the affection of her daughter Phebe, bought the fields, pasture and hill at the bend of the Musketaquid, soon to become famous, and built the Manse, where his children were born in the next ten years, during which this earnest and patriotic man strove to do his duty to his parish and his country, and to strengthen the hearts and hands of his flock in days the gloom of which only the bright light of patriotism and trust in God could dispel. The first great crisis of the struggle came, and in his own town. At the alarm before daylight of the April morning, the young minister answered the call, and on the village common did his best to uphold the courage of his townsfolk and parishioners and their trust in their good cause. The first volleys of the war were exchanged by the royal troops and provincials across the little bridge close by his house. Next year he joined the army at Ticonderoga as chaplain, and sickened and died at Rutland of camp-fever.