WILLIAM JAMES

MEMORIES AND STUDIES

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PREFATORY NOTE

Professor William James formed the intention shortly before his death of republishing a number of popular addresses and essays under the title which this book now bears; but unfortunately he found no opportunity to attend to any detail of the book himself, or to leave definite instructions for others. I believe, however, that I have departed in no substantial degree from my father's idea, except perhaps by including two or three short pieces which were first addressed to special occasions or audiences and which now seem clearly worthy of republication in their original form, although he might not have been willing to reprint them himself without the recastings to which he was ever most attentive when preparing for new readers. Everything in this volume has already appeared in print in magazines or otherwise, and definite acknowledgements are hereinafter made in the appropriate places. Comparison with the original texts will disclose slight variations in a few passages, and it is therefore proper to explain that in these passages the present text follows emendations of the original which have survived in the author's own handwriting.

HENRY JAMES, JR.

I

LOUIS AGASSIZ[1]

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

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

The secret of such an extraordinarily effective influence lay in

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

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

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

of the quarter from whence the payment might be expected to come.

At Neuchatel (where between the ages of twenty-five and thirty he enjoyed a stipend that varied from four hundred to six hundred dollars) he organized a regular academy of natural history, with its museum, managing by one expedient or another to employ artists, secretaries, and assistants, and to keep a lithographic and printing establishment of his own employed with the work that he put forth. Fishes, fossil and living, echinoderms and glaciers, transfigured themselves under his hand, and at thirty he was already at the zenith of his reputation, recognized by all as one of those naturalists in the unlimited sense, one of those folio copies of mankind, like Linnaeus and Cuvier, who aim at nothing less than an acquaintance with the whole of animated Nature. His genius for classifying was simply marvellous; and, as his latest biographer says, nowhere had a single person ever given so decisive an impulse to natural history.

Such was the human being who on an October morning fifty years ago disembarked at our port, bringing his hungry heart along with him, his confidence in his destiny, and his imagination full of plans. The only particular resource he was assured of was one course of Lowell Lectures. But of one general resource he always was assured, having always counted on it and never found it to fail,—and that was the good will of every fellow-creature in whose presence he could find an opportunity to describe his aims. His belief in these was so intense and unqualified that he

could not conceive of others not feeling the furtherance of them to be a duty binding also upon them. *Velle non discitur*, as Seneca says:—Strength of desire must be born with a man, it can't be taught. And Agassiz came before one with such enthusiasm glowing in his countenance,—such a persuasion radiating from his person that his projects were the sole things really fit to interest man as man,—that he was absolutely irresistible. He came, in Byron's words, with victory beaming from his breast, and every one went down before him, some yielding him money, some time, some specimens, and some labor, but all contributing their applause and their godspeed. And so, living among us from month to month and from year to year, with no relation to prudence except his pertinacious violation of all her usual laws, he on the whole achieved the compass of his desires, studied the geology and fauna of a continent, trained a generation of zoologists, founded one of the chief museums of the world, gave a new impulse to scientific education in America, and died the idol of the public, as well as of his circle of immediate pupils and friends.

The secret of it all was, that while his scientific ideals were an integral part of his being, something that he never forgot or laid aside, so that wherever he went he came forward as "the Professor," and talked "shop" to every person, young or old, great or little, learned or unlearned, with whom he was thrown, he was at the same time so commanding a presence, so curious and inquiring, so responsive and expansive, and so

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

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

fact that he manifested himself here thus before us in his day.

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

Agassiz's influence on methods of teaching in our community was prompt and decisive,—all the more so that it struck people's imagination by its very excess. The good old way of committing printed abstractions to memory seems never to have received such a shock as it encountered at his hands. There is probably no public school teacher now in New England who will not tell you

how Agassiz used to lock a student up in a room full of turtle shells, or lobster shells, or oyster shells, without a book or word to help him, and not let him out till he had discovered all the truths which the objects contained. Some found the truths after weeks and months of lonely sorrow; others never found them. Those who found them were already made into naturalists thereby—the failures were blotted from the book of honor and of life. "Go to Nature; take the facts into your own hands; look, and see for yourself!"—these were the maxims which Agassiz preached wherever he went, and their effect on pedagogy was electric. The extreme rigor of his devotion to this concrete method of learning was the natural consequence of his own peculiar type of intellect, in which the capacity for abstraction and causal reasoning and tracing chains of consequences from hypotheses was so much less developed than the genius for acquaintance with vast volumes of detail, and for seizing upon analogies and relations of the more proximate and concrete kind. While on the Thayer expedition, I remember that I often put questions to him about the facts of our new tropical habitat, but I doubt if he ever answered one of these questions of mine outright. He always said: "There, you see you have a definite problem; go and look and find the answer for yourself." His severity in this line was a living rebuke to all abstractionists and would-be biological philosophers. More than once have I heard him quote with deep feeling the lines from Faust:

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

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

Agassiz's view of Nature was saturated with simple religious

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

II

ADDRESS AT THE EMERSON CENTENARY IN CONCORD[2]

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

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

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

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

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

This was the first half of Emerson, but only half; for genius, as he said, is insatiate for expression, and truth has to be clad in the right verbal garment. The form of the garment was so vital

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

This duty of spiritual seeing and reporting determined the whole tenor of his life. It was to shield this duty from invasion and distraction that he dwelt in the country, that he consistently declined to entangle himself with associations or to encumber himself with functions which, however he might believe in them, he felt were duties for other men and not for him. Even the care of his garden, "with its stoopings and fingerings in a few yards of space," he found "narrowing and poisoning," and took to long free walks and saunterings instead, without apology. "Causes" innumerable sought to enlist him as their "worker"—all got his smile and word of sympathy, but none entrapped him into service. The struggle against slavery itself, deeply as it appealed to him, found him firm: "God must govern his own world, and knows his way out of this pit without my desertion of my post, which has none to guard it but me. I have quite other slaves to face than those Negroes, to wit, imprisoned thoughts far back in the brain of man, and which have no watchman or lover or defender but me." This in reply to the possible questions of his

own conscience. To hot-blooded moralists with more objective ideas of duty, such a fidelity to the limits of his genius must often have made him seem provokingly remote and unavailable; but we, who can see things in more liberal perspective, must unqualifiably approve the results. The faultless tact with which he kept his safe limits while he so dauntlessly asserted himself within them, is an example fitted to give heart to other theorists and artists the world over.

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

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

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

If the individual open thus directly into the Absolute, it follows that there is something in each and all of us, even the lowliest, that ought not to consent to borrowing traditions and living at

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

The matchless eloquence with which Emerson proclaimed the sovereignty of the living individual electrified and emancipated his generation, and this bugle-blast will doubtless be regarded by future critics as the soul of his message. The present man is the aboriginal reality, the Institution is derivative, and the past man is irrelevant and obliterate for present issues. "If anyone would lay an axe to your tree with a text from 1 John, v, 7, or a sentence from Saint Paul, say to him," Emerson wrote, "'My

tree is Yggdrasil, the tree of life.' Let him know by your security that your conviction is clear and sufficient, and, if he were Paul himself, that you also are here and with your Creator." "Cleave ever to God," he insisted, "against the name of God;"—and so, in spite of the intensely religious character of his total thought, when he began his career it seemed to many of his brethren in the clerical profession that he was little more than an iconoclast and desecrator.

Emerson's belief that the individual must in reason be adequate to the vocation for which the Spirit of the world has called him into being, is the source of those sublime pages, hearteners and sustainers of our youth, in which he urges his hearers to be incorruptibly true to their own private conscience. Nothing can harm the man who rests in his appointed place and character. Such a man is invulnerable; he balances the universe, balances it as much by keeping small when he is small, as by being great and spreading when he is great. "I love and honor Epaminondas," said Emerson, "but I do not wish to be Epaminondas. I hold it more just to love the world of this hour than the world of his hour. Nor can you, if I am true, excite me to the least uneasiness by saying, 'He acted and thou sittest still.' I see action to be good when the need is, and sitting still to be also good. Epaminondas, if he was the man I take him for, would have sat still with joy and peace, if his lot had been mine. Heaven is large, and affords space for all modes of love and fortitude." "The fact that I am here certainly shows me that the Soul has

need of an organ here, and shall I not assume the post?"

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

On the other hand, never was a sincere word or a sincere thought utterly lost. "Never a magnanimity fell to the ground but there is some heart to greet and accept it unexpectedly. . . . The hero fears not that if he withstood the avowal of a just and brave act, it will go unwitnessed and unloved. One knows it,—himself,

—and is pledged by it to sweetness of peace and to nobleness of aim, which will prove in the end a better proclamation than the relating of the incident."

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

"In solitude, in a remote village, the ardent youth loiters and mourns. With inflamed eye, in this sleeping wilderness, he has read the story of the Emperor, Charles the Fifth, until his fancy has brought home to the surrounding woods the faint roar of cannonades in the Milanese, and marches in Germany. He is curious concerning that man's day. What filled it? The crowded orders, the stern decisions, the foreign despatches, the Castilian etiquette? The soul answers—Behold his day here! In the sighing of these woods, in the quiet of these gray fields, in the cool breeze that sings out of these northern mountains; in the workmen, the boys, the maidens you meet,—in the hopes of the morning, the ennui of noon, and sauntering of the afternoon; in the disquieting comparisons; in the regrets at want of vigor; in the great idea and the puny execution,—behold Charles the Fifth's day; another, yet the same; behold Chatham's, Hampden's, Bayard's, Alfred's, Scipio's, Pericles's day,—day of all that are born of women. The difference of circumstance is merely costume. I am tasting the self-same life,—its sweetness, its greatness, its pain, which I so

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

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

Such a conviction that Divinity is everywhere may easily make of one an optimist of the sentimental type that refuses to speak ill of anything. Emerson's drastic perception of differences kept him at the opposite pole from this weakness. After you have seen men a few times, he could say, you find most of them as alike as their barns and pantries, and soon as musty and as dreary. Never was such a fastidious lover of significance and distinction, and never an eye so keen for their discovery. His optimism had nothing in common with that indiscriminate hurrahing for the Universe with which Walt Whitman has made us familiar. For Emerson, the individual fact and moment were indeed suffused with absolute radiance, but it was upon a condition that saved the situation—they must be worthy specimens,—sincere, authentic, archetypal; they must have made connection with what he calls the Moral Sentiment, they must in some way act as symbolic mouthpieces of the Universe's meaning. To know just which

thing does act in this way, and which thing fails to make the true connection, is the secret (somewhat incommunicable, it must be confessed) of seership, and doubtless we must not expect of the seer too rigorous a consistency. Emerson himself was a real seer. He could perceive the full squalor of the individual fact, but he could also see the transfiguration. He might easily have found himself saying of some present-day agitator against our Philippine conquest what he said of this or that reformer of his own time. He might have called him, as a private person, a tedious bore and canter. But he would infallibly have added what he then added: "It is strange and horrible to say this, for I feel that under him and his partiality and exclusiveness is the earth and the sea, and all that in them is, and the axis round which the Universe revolves passes through his body where he stands."

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

I spoke of how shrunken the wraith, how thin the echo, of

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

III

ROBERT GOULD SHAW[3]

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

The men who do brave deeds are usually unconscious of their picturesqueness. For two nights previous to the assault upon Fort Wagner, the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment had been afoot, making forced marches in the rain; and on the day of the battle the men had had no food since early morning. As they lay there in the evening twilight, hungry and wet, against the cold sands of Morris Island, with the sea-fog drifting over them, their eyes fixed on the huge bulk of the fortress looming darkly three-quarters of a mile ahead against the sky, and their hearts beating in expectation of the word that was to bring them to their feet and launch them on their desperate charge, neither officers nor

[3] Oration at the Exercises in the Boston Music Hall, May 31, 1897, upon the Unveiling of the Shaw Monument.

men could have been in any holiday mood of contemplation. Many and different must have been the thoughts that came and went in them during that hour of bodeful reverie; but however free the flights of fancy of some of them may have been, it is improbable that any one who lay there had so wild and whirling an imagination as to foresee in prophetic vision this morning of a future May, when we, the people of a richer and more splendid Boston, with mayor and governor, and troops from other States, and every circumstance of ceremony, should meet together to celebrate their conduct on that evening, and do their memory this conspicuous honor.

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

The historic significance of an event is measured neither by its material magnitude, nor by its immediate success. Thermopylae was a defeat; but to the Greek imagination, Leonidas and his few Spartans stood for the whole worth of Grecian life. Bunker Hill was a defeat; but for our people, the fight over that breastwork has always seemed to show as well as any victory that our forefathers were men of a temper not to be finally overcome. And so here. The war for our Union, with all the constitutional questions which it settled, and all the military lessons which it

gathered in, has throughout its dilatory length but one meaning in the eye of history. And nowhere was that meaning better symbolized and embodied than in the constitution of this first Northern negro regiment.

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

Since the 'thirties the slavery question been the only question, and by the end of 'fifties our land lay sick and shaking with it like a traveller who has thrown himself down at night beside a pestilential swamp, and in the morning finds the fever through the marrow of his bones. "Only muzzle the Abolition fanatics," said the South, "and all will be well again!" But the Abolitionists would not be muzzled,—they were the voice of the world's

conscience, they were a part of destiny. Weak as they were, they drove the South to madness. "Every step she takes in her blindness," said Wendell Phillips, "is one more step towards ruin." And when South Carolina took the final step in battering down Fort Sumter, it was the fanatics of slavery themselves who called upon their idolized institution ruin swift and complete. What law and reason were unable to accomplish, had now to be done by that uncertain and dreadful dispenser of God's judgments, War—War, with its abominably casual, inaccurate methods, destroying good and bad together, but at last able to hew a way out of intolerable situations, when through man's delusion of perversity every better way is blocked.

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

And this, fellow-citizens, is why, after the great generals have had their monuments, and long after the abstract soldier's-monuments have been reared on every village green, we have chosen to take Robert Shaw and his regiment as the subjects of

the first soldier's-monument to be raised to a particular set of comparatively undistinguished men. The very lack of external complication in the history of these soldiers is what makes them represent with such typical purity the profounder meaning of the Union cause.

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

We of this Commonwealth believe in that religion; and it is not at all because Robert Shaw was an exceptional genius, but simply because he was faithful to it as we all may hope to be faithful in our measure when the times demand, that we wish his beautiful image to stand here for all time, an inciter to similarly unselfish public deeds.

Shaw thought but little of himself, yet he had a personal charm which, as we look back on him, makes us repeat: "None knew thee but to love thee, none named thee but to praise." This grace of nature was united in him in the happiest way with a filial

heart, a cheerful will, and a judgment that was true and fair. And when the war came, and great things were doing of the kind that he could help in, he went as a matter of course to the front. What country under heaven has not thousands of such youths to rejoice in, youths on whom the safety of the human race depends? Whether or not they leave memorials behind them, whether their names are writ in water or in marble, depends mostly on the opportunities which the accidents of history throw into their path. Shaw recognized the vital opportunity: he saw that the time had come when the colored people must put the country in their debt.

Colonel Lee has just told us something about the obstacles with which this idea had to contend. For a large party of us this was still exclusively a white man's war; and should colored troops be tried and not succeed, confusion would grow worse confounded. Shaw was a captain in the Massachusetts Second, when Governor Andrew invited him to take the lead in the experiment. He was very modest, and doubted, for a moment, his own capacity for so responsible a post. We may also imagine human motives whispering other doubts. Shaw loved the Second Regiment, illustrious already, and was sure of promotion where he stood. In this new negro-soldier venture, loneliness was certain, ridicule inevitable, failure possible; and Shaw was only twenty-five; and, although he had stood among the bullets at Cedar Mountain and Antietam, he had till then been walking socially on the sunny side of life. But whatever doubts may have

beset him, they were over in a day, for he inclined naturally toward difficult resolves. He accepted the proffered command, and from that moment lived but for one object, to establish the honor of the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth.

I have had the privilege of reading his letters to his family from the day of April when, as a private in the New York Seventh, he obeyed the President's first call. Some day they must be published, for they form a veritable poem for serenity and simplicity of tone. He took to camp life as if it were his native element, and (like so many of our young soldiers) he was at first all eagerness to make arms his permanent profession. Drilling and disciplining; interminable marching and countermarching, and picket-duty on the Upper Potomac as lieutenant in our Second Regiment, to which post he had soon been promoted; pride at the discipline attained by the Second, and horror at the bad discipline of other regiments; these are the staple matter of earlier letters, and last for many months. These, and occasional more recreative incidents, visits to Virginian houses, the reading of books like Napier's "Peninsular War," or the "Idylls of the King," Thanksgiving feats, and races among officers, that helped the weary weeks to glide away. Then the bloodier business opens, and the plot thickens till the end is reached. From first to last there is not a rancorous word against the enemy,—often quite the reverse,—and amid all the scenes of hardship, death, and devastation that his pen soon has to write of, there is unfailing cheerfulness and even a sort of innermost peace.

After he left it, Robert Shaw's heart still clung to the fortunes of the Second. Months later when, in South Carolina with the Fifty-fourth, he writes to his young wife: "I should have been major of the Second now if I had remained there and lived through the battles. As regards my own pleasure, I had rather have that place than any other in the army. It would have been fine to go home a field officer in that regiment! Poor fellows, how they have been slaughtered!"

Meanwhile he had well taught his new command how to do their duty; for only three days after he wrote this he led them up the parapet of Fort Wagner, where he and nearly half of them were left upon the ground.

Robert Shaw quickly inspired others with his own love of discipline. There was something almost pathetic in the earnestness with which both the officers and men of the Fifty-fourth embraced their mission of showing that a black regiment could excel in every virtue known to man. They had good success, and the Fifty-fourth became a model in all possible respects. Almost the only trace of bitterness in Shaw's whole correspondence is over an incident in which he thought his men had been morally disgraced. It had become their duty, immediately after their arrival at the seat of war, to participate, in obedience to fanatical orders from the head of the department, in the sack and burning of the inoffensive little town of Darien on the Georgia coast. "I fear," he writes to his wife, "that such actions will hurt the reputation of black troops and of those

connected with them. For myself I have gone through the war so far without dishonor, and I do not like to degenerate into a plunderer and a robber,—and the same applies to every officer in my regiment. After going through the hard campaigning and the hard fighting in Virginia, this makes me very much ashamed. There are two courses only for me to pursue: to obey orders and say nothing; or to refuse to go upon any more such expeditions, and be put under arrest and probably court-martialled, which is a very serious thing." Fortunately for Shaw, the general in command of that department was almost immediately relieved.

Four weeks of camp life and discipline on the Sea Islands, and the regiment had its baptism of fire. A small affair, but it proved the men to be staunch. Shaw again writes to his wife: "You don't know what a fortunate day this has been for me and for us all, excepting some poor fellows who were killed and wounded. We have fought at last alongside of white troops. Two hundred of my men on picket this morning were attacked by five regiments of infantry, some cavalry, and a battery of artillery. The Tenth Connecticut were on their left, and say they would have had a bad time if the Fifty-fourth men had not stood so well. The whole division was under arms in fifteen minutes, and after coming up close in front of us, the enemy, finding us so strong, fell back. . . . General Terry sent me word he was highly gratified with the behavior of our men, and the officers and privates of other regiments praise us very much. All this is very gratifying to us personally, and a fine thing for the colored troops. I know

this will give you pleasure for it wipes out the remembrance of the Darien affair, which you could not but grieve over, though we were innocent participators."

The adjutant of the Fifty-fourth, who made report of this skirmish to General Terry, well expresses the feelings of loneliness that still prevailed in that command:—

"The general's favorite regiment," writes the adjutant,[4] "the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry, one of the best that had so far faced the rebel foe, largely officered by Boston men, was surrounding his headquarters. It had been a living breathing suspicion with us—perhaps not altogether justly—that all white troops abhorred our presence in the army, and that the Twenty-fourth would rather hear of us in some remote corner of the Confederacy than tolerate us in advance of any battle in which they themselves were to act as reserves or lookers-on. Can you not then readily imagine the pleasure which I felt as I alighted from my horse before General Terry and his staff—I was going to say his unfriendly staff, but of this I am not sure—to report to him, with Colonel Shaw's compliments, that we had repulsed the enemy without the loss of a single inch of ground. General Terry bade me mount again and tell Colonel Shaw that he was proud of the conduct of his men, and that he must still hold the ground against any future sortie of the enemy. You can even now share

[4] G. W. James: "The Assault upon Fort Wagner," in *War Papers read before the Commandery of the State of Wisconsin, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*. Milwaukee, 1891.

with me the sensation of that moment of soldierly satisfaction."

The next night but one after this episode was spent by the Fifty-fourth in disembarking on Morris Island in the rain, and at noon Colonel Shaw was able to report their arrival to General Strong, to whose brigade he was assigned. A terrific bombardment was playing on Fort Wagner, then the most formidable earthwork ever built, and the general, knowing Shaw's desire to place his men beside white troops, said to him: "Colonel, Fort Wagner is to be stormed this evening, and you may lead the column, if you say Yes. Your men, I know, are worn out, but do as you choose." Shaw's face brightened. "Before answering the general, he instantly turned to me," writes the adjutant, who reports the interview, "and said, Tell Colonel Hallowell to bring up the Fifty-fourth immediately.'"

This was done, and just before nightfall the attack was made. Shaw was serious, for he knew the assault was desperate, and had a premonition of his end. Walking up and down in front of the regiment, he briefly exhorted them to prove that they were men. Then he gave the order: "Move in quick time till within a hundred yards, then double quick and charge. Forward!" and the Fifty-fourth advanced to the storming, its colonel and colors at its head.

On over the sand, through a narrow defile which broke up the formation, double quick over the chevaux de frise, into the ditch and over it, as best they could, and up the rampart with Fort Sumter, which had seen them, playing on them,

and Fort Wagner, now one mighty mound of fire, tearing out their lives. Shaw led from first to last. Gaining successfully the parapet, he stood there for a moment with uplifted sword, shouting, "Forward, Fifty-fourth!" and then fell headlong, with a bullet through his heart. The battle raged for nigh two hours. Regiment after regiment, following upon the Fifty-fourth, hurled themselves upon its ramparts, but Fort Wagner was nobly defended, and for that night stood safe. The Fifty-fourth withdrew after two-thirds of its officers and five-twelfths or nearly half its men had been shot down or bayoneted within the fortress or before its walls. It was good behavior for a regiment, no one of whose soldiers had had a musket in his hands more than eighteen weeks, and which had seen the enemy for the first time only two days before.

"The negroes fought gallantly," wrote a Confederate officer, "and were headed by as brave a colonel as ever lived."

As for the colonel, not a drum was heard nor a funeral note, not a soldier discharged his farewell shot, when the Confederates buried him, the morning after the engagement. His body, half stripped of its clothing, and the corpses of his dauntless negroes were flung into one common trench together, and the sand was shovelled over them, without a stake or stone to signalize the spot. In death as in life, then, the Fifty-fourth bore witness to the brotherhood of man. The lover of heroic history could wish for no more fitting sepulchre for Shaw's magnanimous young heart. There let his body rest, united with the forms of his brave

nameless comrades. There let the breezes of the Atlantic sigh, and its gales roar their requiem, while this bronze effigy and these inscriptions keep their fame alive long after you and I and all who meet here are forgotten.

How soon, indeed, are human things forgotten! As we meet here this morning, the Southern sun is shining on their place of burial, and the waves sparkling and the sea-gulls circling around Fort Wagner's ancient site. But the great earthworks and their thundering cannon, the commanders and their followers, the wild assault and repulse that for a brief space made night hideous on that far-off evening, have all sunk into the blue gulf of the past, and for the majority of this generation are hardly more than an abstract name, a picture, a tale that is told. Only when some yellow-bleached photograph of a soldier of the 'sixties comes into our hands, with that odd and vivid look of individuality due to the moment when it was taken, do we realize the concreteness of that by-gone history, and feel how interminable to the actors in them were those leaden-footed hours and years. The photographs themselves erelong will fade utterly, and books of history and monuments like this alone will tell the tale. The great war for the Union will be like the siege of Troy; it will have taken its place amongst all other "old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago."

In all such events two things must be distinguished—the moral service of them from the fortitude which they display. War has been much praised and celebrated among us of late as a

school of manly virtue; but it is easy to exaggerate upon this point. Ages ago, war was the gory cradle of mankind, the grim-featured nurse that alone could train our savage progenitors into some semblance of social virtue, teach them to be faithful one to another, and force them to sink their selfishness in wider tribal ends. War still excels in this prerogative; and whether it be paid in years of service, in treasure, or in life-blood, the war tax is still the only tax that men ungrudgingly will pay. How could it be otherwise, when the survivors of one successful massacre after another are the beings from whose loins we and all our contemporary races spring? Man is once for all a fighting animal; centuries of peaceful history could not breed the battle-instinct out of us; and our pugnacity is the virtue least in need of reinforcement by reflection, least in need of orator's or poet's help.

What we really need the poet's and orator's help to keep alive in us is not, then, the common and gregarious courage which Robert Shaw showed when he marched with you, men of the Seventh Regiment. It is that more lonely courage which he showed when he dropped his warm commission in the glorious Second to head your dubious fortunes, negroes of the Fifty-fourth. That lonely kind of courage (civic courage as we call it in times of peace) is the kind of valor to which the monuments of nations should most of all be reared, for the survival of the fittest has not bred it into the bone of human beings as it has bred military valor; and of five hundred of us who could storm

a battery side by side with others, perhaps not one would be found ready to risk his worldly fortunes all alone in resisting an enthroned abuse. The deadliest enemies of nations are not their foreign foes; they always dwell within their borders. And from these internal enemies civilization is always in need of being saved. The nation blest above all nations is she in whom the civic genius of the people does the saving day by day, by acts without external picturesqueness; by speaking, writing, voting reasonably; by smiting corruption swiftly; by good temper between parties; by the people knowing true men when they see them, and preferring them as leaders to rabid partisans or empty quacks. Such nations have no need of wars to save them. Their accounts with righteousness are always even; and God's judgments do not have to overtake them fitfully in bloody spasms and convulsions of the race.

The lesson that our war ought most of all to teach us is the lesson that evils must be checked in time, before they grow so great. The Almighty cannot love such long-postponed accounts, or such tremendous settlements. And surely He hates all settlements that do such quantities of incidental devils' work. Our present situation, with its rancors and delusions, what is it but the direct outcome of the added powers of government, the corruptions and inflations of the war? Every war leaves such miserable legacies, fatal seeds of future war and revolution, unless the civic virtues of the people save the State in time.

Robert Shaw had both kinds of virtue. As he then led his

regiment against Fort Wagner, so surely would he now be leading us against all lesser powers of darkness, had his sweet young life been spared. You think of many as I speak of one. For, North and South, how many lives as sweet, unmonumented for the most part, commemorated solely in the hearts of mourning mothers, widowed brides, or friends did the inexorable war mow down! Instead of the full years of natural service from so many of her children, our country counts but their poor memories, "the tender grace of a day that is dead," lingering like echoes of past music on the vacant air.

But so and so only was it written that she should grow sound again. From that fatal earlier unsoundness those lives have brought for North and South together permanent release. The warfare is accomplished; the iniquity is pardoned. No future problem can be like that problem. No task laid on our children can compare in difficulty with the task with which their fathers had to deal. Yet as we face the future, tasks enough await us. The republic to which Robert Shaw and a quarter of a million like him were faithful unto death is no republic that can live at ease hereafter on the interest of what they have won. Democracy is still upon its trial. The civic genius of our people is its only bulwark, and neither laws nor monuments, neither battleships nor public libraries, nor great newspapers nor booming stocks; neither mechanical invention nor political adroitness, nor churches nor universities nor civil service examinations can save us from degeneration if the inner

mystery be lost. That mystery, as once the secret and the glory of our English-speaking race, consists in nothing but two common habits, two inveterate habits carried into public life,—habits so homely that they lend themselves to no rhetorical expression, yet habits more precious, perhaps, than any that the human race has gained. They can never be too often pointed out or praised. One of them is the habit of trained and disciplined good temper towards the opposite party when it fairly wins its innings. It was by breaking away from this habit that the Slave States nearly wrecked our Nation. The other is that of fierce and merciless resentment toward every man or set of men who break the public peace. By holding to this habit the free States saved her life.

O my countrymen, Southern and Northern, brothers hereafter, masters, slaves, and enemies no more, let us see to it that both of those heirlooms are preserved. So may our ransomed country, like the city of the promise, lie forever foursquare under Heaven, and the ways of all the nations be lit up by its light.

IV

FRANCIS BOOTT[5]

How often does it happen here in New England that we come away from a funeral with a feeling that the service has been insufficient. If it be purely ritual, the individuality of the departed friend seems to play too small a part in it. If the minister conducts it in his own fashion, it is apt to be too thin and monotonous, and if he were not an intimate friend, too remote and official. We miss direct discourse of simple human affection about the person, which we find so often in those lay speeches at the grave of which in France they set us nowadays so many good examples. In the case of the friend whose memory brings us together on the present occasion, it was easy to organize this supplementary service. Not everyone leaves musical compositions of his own to fill the hour with. And if we may believe that spirits can know aught of what transpires in the world which they have forsaken, it must please us all to think how dear old Francis Boott's shade must now be touched at seeing in the Chapel of this university to which his feelings clung so loyally, his music and his life at

[5] An address delivered at the Memorial Service to Francis Boott in the Harvard Chapel, Sunday, May 8, 1904. Printed in 38 *Harvard Monthly*, 125.

last become the subjects of cordial and admiring recognition and commemorated by so many of his neighbors. I can imagine nothing at any rate of which the foreknowledge could have given him deeper satisfaction. Shy and sensitive, craving praise as every normal human being craves it, yet getting little, he had, I think, a certain consciousness of living in the shadow. I greatly doubt whether his daydreams ever went so far as to let him imagine a service like this. Such a cordial and spontaneous outgoing towards him on our part would surprise as much as it would delight him.

His life was private in the strongest sense of the term. His contributions to literature were all anonymous, book-reviews chiefly, or letters and paragraphs in the New York Nation on musical or literary topics. Good as was their quality, and witty as was their form,—his only independent volume was an almost incredibly witty little book of charades in verse—they were too slight in bulk for commemoration; and it was only as a musical composer that he touched on any really public function. With so many of his compositions sounding in your ears, it would be out of place, even were I qualified, to attempt to characterize Mr. Boott's musical genius. Let it speak for itself. I prefer to speak of the man and friend whom we knew and whom so many of us loved so dearly.

One of the usual classifications of men is into those of expansive and those of conservative temper. The word conservative commonly suggests a dose of religious and political

prejudice, and a fondness for traditional opinions. Mr. Boott was a liberal in politics and theology; and all his opinions were self-made, and as often as not at variance with every tradition. Yet in a wider sense he was profoundly conservative.

He respected bounds of ordinance, and emphasized the fact of limits. He knew well his own limits. The knowledge of them was in fact one of the things he lived by. To judge of abstract philosophy, of sculpture and painting, of certain lines of literary art, he admitted, was not of his competency. But within the sphere where he thought he had a right to judge, he parted his likes from his dislikes and preserved his preferences with a pathetic steadfastness. He was faithful in age to the lights that lit his youth, and obeyed at eve the voice obeyed at prime, with a consistency most unusual. Elsewhere the opinions of others might perplex him, but he laughed and let them live. Within his own appropriated sphere he was too scrupulous a lover of the truth not to essay to correct them, when he thought them erroneous. A certain appearance comes in here of a self-contradictory character, for Mr. Boott was primarily modest and sensitive, and all his interests and pre-occupations were with life's refinements and delicacies. Yet one's mind always pictured him as a rugged sort of person, opposing successful resistance to all influences that might seek to change his habits either of feeling or of action. His admirable health, his sober life, his regular walk twice a day, whatever might be the weather, his invariable evenness of mood and opinion, so that, when you once knew

his range, he never disappointed you—all this was at variance with popular notions of the artistic temperament. He was indeed, a man of reason, no romancer, sentimentalist or dreamer, in spite of the fact that his main interests were with the muses. He was exact and accurate; affectionate, indeed, and sociable, but neither gregarious nor demonstrative; and such words as "honest," "sturdy," "faithful," are the adjectives first to rise when one thinks of him. A friend said to me soon after his death: "I seem still to see Mr. Boott, with his two feet planted on the ground, and his cane in front of him, making of himself a sort of tripod of honesty and veracity."

Old age changes men in different ways. Some it softens; some it hardens; some it degenerates; some it alters. Our old friend Boott was identical in spiritual essence all his life, and the effect of his growing old was not to alter, but only to make the same man mellower, more tolerant, more lovable. Sadder he was, I think, for his life had grown pretty lonely; but he was a stoic and he never complained either of losses or of years, and that contagious laugh of his at any and every pretext for laughter rang as free and true upon his deathbed as at any previous time of his existence.

Born in 1813, he had lived through three generations, and seen enormous social and public changes. When a carpenter has a surface to measure, he slides his rule along it, and over all its peculiarities. I sometimes think of Boott as such a standard rule against which the changing fashions of humanity of the last

century might come to measurement. A character as healthy and definite as his, of whatsoever type it be, need only remain entirely true to itself for a sufficient number of years, while the outer conditions change, to grow into something like a common measure. Compared with its repose and permanent fitness to continue, the changes of the generations seem ephemeral and accidental. It remains the standard, the rule, the term of comparison. Mr. Boott's younger friends must often have felt in his presence how much more vitally near they were than they had supposed to the old Boston long before the war, to the older Harvard, to the older Rome and Florence. To grow old after his manner is of itself to grow important.

I said that Mr. Boott was not demonstrative or sentimental. Tender-hearted he was and faithful as few men are, in friendship. He made new friends, and dear ones, in the very last years of his life, and it is good to think of him as having had that consolation. The will in which he surprised so many persons by remembering them—"one of the only purely beautiful wills I have ever read," said a lawyer,—showed how much he cared at heart for many of us to whom he had rarely made express professions of affection.

Good-by, then, old friend. We shall nevermore meet the upright figure, the blue eye, the hearty laugh, upon these Cambridge streets. But in that wider world of being of which this little Cambridge world of ours forms so infinitesimal a part, we may be sure that all our spirits and their missions here will continue in some way to be represented, and that ancient human

loves will never lose their own.

V

THOMAS DAVIDSON: A KNIGHT-ERRANT OF THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE.[6]

I wish to pay my tribute to the memory of a Scottish-American friend of mine who died five years ago, a man of a character extraordinarily and intensely human, in spite of the fact that he was classed by obituary articles in England among the twelve most learned men of his time.

It would do no honor to Thomas Davidson's memory not to be frank about him. He handled people without gloves, himself, and one has no right to retouch his photograph until its features are softened into insipidity. He had defects and excesses which he wore upon his sleeve, so that everyone could see them. They made him many enemies, and if one liked quarrelling he was an easy man to quarrel with. But his heart and mind held treasures of the rarest. He had a genius for friendship. Money, place, fashion, fame, and other vulgar idols of the tribe had no hold on his imagination. He led his own life absolutely, in whatever company he found himself, and the intense individualism which he taught by word and deed, is the lesson of which our generation

[6] First published in *McClure's Magazine* for May, 1905.

is perhaps most in need.

All sorts of contrary adjectives come up as I think of him. To begin with, there was something physically rustic which suggested to the end his farm-boy origin. His voice was sweet and its Scottish cadences most musical, and the extraordinary sociability of his nature made friends for him as much among women as among men; he had, moreover, a sort of physical dignity; but neither in dress nor in manner did he ever grow quite "gentlemanly" or *Salonfähig* in the conventional and obliterated sense of the terms. He was too cordial and emphatic for that. His broad brow, his big chest, his bright blue eyes, his volubility in talk and laughter told a tale of vitality far beyond the common; but his fine and nervous hands, and the vivacity of all his reactions suggested a degree of sensibility that one rarely finds conjoined with so robustly animal a frame. The great peculiarity of Davidson did indeed consist in this combination of the acutest sensibilities with massive faculties of thought and action, a combination which, when the thought and actions are important, gives to the world its greatest men.

Davidson's native mood was happy. He took optimistic views of life and of his own share in it. A sort of permanent satisfaction radiated from his face; and this expression of inward glory (which in reality was to a large extent structural and not "expressive" at all) was displeasing to many new acquaintances on whom it made an impression of too much conceit. The impression of conceit was not diminished in their eyes by the freedom

with which Davidson contradicted, corrected and reprehended other people. A longer acquaintance invariably diminished the impression. But it must be confessed that T. D. never was exactly humble-minded, and that the solidity of his self-consciousness withstood strains under which that of weaker men would have crumbled. The malady which finally killed him was one of the most exhausting to the nervous tone to which our flesh is subject, and it wore him out before it ended him. He told me of the paroxysms of motiveless nervous dread which used to beset him in the night-watches. Yet these never subdued his stalwartness, nor made him a "sick-soul" in the theological sense of that appelation. "God is afraid of me," was the phrase by which he described his well-being to me one morning when his night had been a good one, and he was feeling so cannibalistic that he thought he might get well.

There are men whose attitude is always that of seeking for truth, and men who on the contrary always believe that they have the root of it already in them. Davidson was of the latter class. Like his countrymen, Carlyle and Ruskin, he felt himself to be in the possession of something, whether articulate or as yet articulated by himself, that authorized him (and authorized him with uncommon openness and frequency) to condemn the errors of others. I think that to the last he never fully extricated this philosophy. It was a tendency, a faith in a direction, which gave him an active persuasion that other directions were false, but of which the central insight never got fully formulated, but

remained in a state which Frederic Myers would have called subliminal. He varied to a certain extent his watchwords and his heroes. When I first knew him all was Aristotle. Later all was Rosmini. Later still Rosmini seemed forgotten. He knew so many writers that he grew fond of very various ones and had a strange tolerance for systematizers and dogmatizers whom, as the consistent individualist that he was, he should have disliked. Hegel, it is true, he detested; but he always spoke with reverence of Kant. Of Mill and Spencer he had a low opinion; and when I lent him Paulsen's Introduction to Philosophy (then just out), as an example of a kind of eclectic thought that seemed to be growing, and with which I largely sympathized, he returned it with richer expressions of disdain than often fell even from his lips: "It's the shabbiest, seediest pretence at a philosophy I ever dreamed of as possible. It's like a man dressed in a black coat so threadbare as to be all shiny. The most poverty-stricken, out-at-elbows thing I ever read. A perfect monument of seediness and shabbiness," etc.

The truth is that Davidson, brought up on the older classical traditions, never outgrew those habits of judging the world by purely aesthetic criteria which men fed on the sciences of nature are so willing to abandon. Even if a philosophy were true, he could easily fail to relish it unless it showed a certain formal nobility and dogmatic pretension to finality. But I must not describe him so much from my own professional point of view —it is as a vessel of life at large that one ought to keep him in

remembrance.

He came to Boston from St. Louis, where he had been teaching, about the year 1873. He was ruddy and radiant, and I soon saw much of him, though at first it was without the thoroughness of sympathy which we afterwards acquired and which made us overflow, on meeting after long absences, into such laughing greetings as: "Ha! you old thief! Ha! you old blackguard!"—pure "contrast-effects" of affection and familiarity passing beyond their bounds. At that time I saw most of him at a little philosophical club which used to meet every fortnight at his rooms in Temple Street in Boston. Of the other members, J. Elliot Cabot and C. C. Everett, are now dead—I will not name the survivors. We never worked out harmonious conclusions. Davidson used to crack the whip of Aristotle over us; and I remember that, whatever topic was formally appointed for the day, we invariably wound up with a quarrel about Space and Space-perception. The Club had existed before Davidson's advent. The previous year we had gone over a good part of Hegel's larger Logic, under the self-constituted leadership of two young business men from Illinois, who had become enthusiastic Hegelians and, knowing almost no German, had actually possessed themselves of a manuscript translation of the entire three volumes of Logic, made by an extraordinary Pomeranian immigrant, named Brockmeyer. These disciples were leaving business for the law and studying at the Harvard law-school; but they saw the whole universe through Hegelian

spectacles, and a more admirable *homo unius libri* than one of them, with his three big folios of Hegelian manuscript, I have never had the good fortune to know.

I forget how Davidson was earning his subsistence at this time. He did some lecturing and private teaching, but I do not think they were great in amount. In the springs and summers he frequented the coast, and indulged in long swimming bouts and salt-water immersions, which seemed to agree with him greatly. His sociability was boundless, and his time seemed to belong to anyone who asked for it.

I soon conceived that such a man would be invaluable in Harvard University—a kind of Socrates, a devotee of truth and lover of youth, ready to sit up to any hour, and drink beer and talk with anyone, lavish of learning and counsel, a contagious example of how lightly and humanly a burden of erudition might be borne upon a pair of shoulders. In faculty-business he might not run well in harness, but as an inspiration and ferment of character, as an example of the ranges of combination of scholarship with manhood that are possible, his influence on the students would be priceless.

I do not know whether this scheme of mine could under any circumstances have been carried out. In point of fact it was nipped in the bud by T. D. himself. A natural chair for him would have been Greek philosophy. Unfortunately, just at the decisive hour, he offended our Greek department by a savage onslaught on its methods, which, without taking anyone's counsel, he sent to

the *Atlantic Monthly*, whose editor printed it. This, with his other unconventionalisms, made advocating his cause more difficult, and the university authorities, never, I believe, seriously thought of an appointment for him.

I believe that in this case, as in one or two others like it, which I might mention, Harvard University lost a great opportunity. Organization and method mean much, but contagious human characters mean more in a university, where a few undisciplinables like T. D. may be infinitely more precious than a faculty-full of orderly routinists. As to what Davidson might have become under the conventionalizing influences of an official position, it would be idle to speculate.

As things fell out, he became more and more unconventional and even developed a sort of antipathy to all regular academic life. It subdued individuality, he thought, and made for Philistinism. He earnestly dissuaded his young friend Bakewell from accepting a professorship; and I well remember one dark night in the Adirondacks, after a good dinner at a neighbor's, the eloquence with which, as we trudged down-hill to his own quarters with a lantern, he denounced me for the musty and mouldy and generally ignoble academicism of my character. Never before or since, I fancy, has the air of the Adirondack wilderness vibrated more repugnantly to a vocable than it did that night to the word "academicism."

Yet Davidson himself was always essentially a teacher. He must give forth, inspire, and have the young about him. After

leaving Boston for Europe and Africa, founding the Fellowship of the New Life in London and New York (the present Fabian Society in England is its offshoot), he hit upon the plan which pleased him best of all when, in 1882 or thereabouts, he bought a couple of hundred acres on East Hill, which closes the beautiful Keene Valley in the Adirondacks, on the north, and founded there, at the foot of Hurricane Mountain, his place "Glenmore" and its "Summer School of the Culture Sciences." Although the primeval forest has departed from its immediate vicinity, the region is still sylvan, the air is sweet and strong and almost alpine in quality, and the mountain panorama spread before one is superlative. Davidson showed a business faculty which I should hardly have expected from him, in organizing his settlement. He built a number of cottages pretty in design and of the simplest construction, and disposed them well for effect. He turned a couple of farm buildings which were on the grounds into a lecturing place and a refectory; and there, arriving in early April and not leaving till late in November, he spent the happiest part of all his later years, surrounded during the summer months by colleagues, friends, and listeners to lectures, and in the spring and fall by a few independent women who were his faithful friends, and who had found East Hill a congenial residence.

Twice I went up with T. D. to open the place in April. I remember leaving his fireside one night with three ladies who were also early comers, and finding the thermometer at 8 degrees Fahrenheit and a tremendous gale blowing the snow about us.

Davidson loved these blustering vicissitudes of climate. In the early years the brook was never too cold for him to bathe in, and he spent days in rambling over the hills and up the glens and through the forest.

His own cottage was full of books whose use was free to all who visited the settlement. It stood high on a hill in a grove of silver-birches and looked upon the Western Mountains; and it always seemed to me an ideal dwelling for such a bachelor-scholar. Here in May and June he became almost one with the resurgent vegetation. Here, in October, he was a witness of the jewelled pageant of the dying foliage, and saw the hillsides reeking, as it were, and aflame with ruby and gold and emerald and topaz. One September day in 1900, at the "Kurhaus" at Nauheim, I took up a copy of the Paris *New York Herald*, and read in capitals: "Death of Professor Thomas Davidson." I had well known how ill he was, yet such was his vitality that the shock was wholly unexpected. I did not realize till that moment how much that free companionship with him every spring and autumn, surrounded by that beautiful nature, had signified to me, or how big a piece would be subtracted from my life by its cessation.

Davidson's capacity for imparting information seemed endless. There were few subjects, especially "humanistic" subjects, in which at some time or other he had not taken an interest; and as everything that had ever touched him was instantaneously in reach of his omnipotent memory, he easily

became a living dictionary of reference. As such all his friends were wont to use him. He was, for example, never at a loss to supply a quotation. He loved poetry passionately, and the sympathetic voice with which he would recall page after page of it—English, French, German, or Italian—is a thing always to be remembered. But notwithstanding the instructive part he played in every conceivable conversation, he was never prolix, and he never "lectured."

From Davidson I learned what immunities a perfect memory bestows upon one. I never could discover when he amassed his learning for he never seemed "occupied." The secret of it was that any odd time would do, for he never had to acquire a thing twice over. He avoided stated hours of work on principle. Reprehending (mildly) a certain chapter of my own on "Habit," he said that it was a fixed rule with him to form no regular habits. When he found himself in danger of settling into even a good one, he made a point of interrupting it. Habits and methods make a prisoner of a man, destroy his readiness, keep him from answering the call of the fresh moment. Individualist *à outrance*, Davidson felt that every hour was an unique entity, to whose claims one should lie open. Thus he was never abstracted or preoccupied, but always seemed, when with you, as if you were the one person whom it was then right to attend to.

It was this individualistic religion that made T. D., democrat as he nevertheless was, so hostile to all socialisms and administrative panaceas. Life must be flexible. You ask for a free

man, and these Utopias give you an "interchangeable part," with a fixed number, in a rule-bound organism. The real thing to aim at is liberation of the inner interests. Give man possession of a *soul*, and he will work out his own happiness under any set of conditions. Accordingly, when, in the penultimate year of his life, he proposed his night-school to a meeting of young East-Side workingmen in New York, he told them that he had no sympathy whatever with the griefs of "labor," that outward circumstances meant nothing in his eyes; that through their individual wills and intellects they could share, just as they were, in the highest spiritual life of humanity, and that he was there to help them severally to that privilege.

The enthusiasm with which they responded speaks volumes, both for his genius as a teacher and for the sanity of his position. A small posthumous book of articles by Davidson and of letters written from Glenmore to his class, just published, with an introduction by his disciple Professor Bakewell,[7] gives a full account of the experiment, and ought to stand as a model and inspirer to similar attempts the world over. Davidson's idea of the universe was that of a republic of immortal spirits, the chief business of whom in their several grades of existence, should be to know and love and help one another. "Creeds are nothing, life is everything. . . . You can do far more by presenting to the world the example of noble social relations than by enumerating any set of principles. Know all you can, love all you can, do all you can—

[7] "The Education of the Wage-Earners." Boston, Ginn & Company, 1904.

that is the whole duty of man. . . . Be friends, in the truest sense, each to the other. There is nothing in all the world like friendship, when it is deep and real. . . . The divine . . . is a republic of self-existent spirits, each seeking the realization of its ideas through love, through intimacy with all the rest, and finding its heaven in such intimacy."

We all say and think that we believe this sort of thing; but Davidson believed it really and actively, and that made all the difference. When the young wage-earners whom he addressed found that here was a man of measureless learning ready to give his soul to them as if he had nothing else to do with it, life's ideal possibilities widened to their view. When he was taken from them, they founded in New York the Thomas Davidson Society, for study and neighborhood work, which will probably become perpetual, and of which his epistles from Glenmore will be the rule, and keep the standards set by him from degenerating—unless, indeed, the Society should some day grow too rich, of which there is no danger at present, and from which may Heaven long preserve it. In one of his letters to the Class, Davidson sums up the results of his own experience of life in twenty maxims, as follows:

1. Rely upon your own energies, and do not wait for, or depend on other people.

2. Cling with all your might to your own highest ideals, and do not be led astray by such vulgar aims as wealth, position, popularity. Be yourself.

3. Your worth consists in what you are, and not in what you have. What you are will show in what you do.

4. Never fret, repine, or envy. Do not make yourself unhappy by comparing your circumstances with those of more fortunate people; but make the most of the opportunities you have. Employ profitably every moment.

5. Associate with the noblest people you can find; read the best books; live with the mighty. But learn to be happy alone.

6. Do not believe that all greatness and heroism are in the past. Learn to discover princes, prophets, heroes, and saints among the people about you. Be assured they are there.

7. Be on earth what good people hope to be in heaven.

8. Cultivate ideal friendships, and gather into an intimate circle all your acquaintances who are hungering for truth and right. Remember that heaven itself can be nothing but the intimacy of pure and noble souls.

9. Do not shrink from any useful or kindly act, however hard or repellent it may be. The worth of acts is measured by the spirit in which they are performed.

10. If the world despise you because you do not follow its ways, pay no heed to it. But be sure your way is right.

11. If a thousand plans fail, be not disheartened. As long as your purposes are right, you have not failed.

12. Examine yourself every night, and see whether you have progressed in knowledge, sympathy, and helpfulness during the day. Count every day a loss in which no progress has been made.

13. Seek enjoyment in energy, not in dalliance. Our worth is measured solely by what we do.

14. Let not your goodness be professional; let it be the simple, natural outcome of your character. Therefore cultivate character.

15. If you do wrong, say so, and make what atonement you can. That is true nobleness. Have no moral debts.

16. When in doubt how to act, ask yourself, What does nobility command? Be on good terms with yourself.

17. Look for no reward for goodness but goodness itself. Remember heaven and hell are utterly immoral institutions, if they are meant as reward and punishment.

18. Give whatever countenance and help you can to every movement and institution that is working for good. Be not sectarian.

19. Wear no placards, within or without. Be human fully.

20. Never be satisfied until you have understood the meaning of the world, and the purpose of our own life, and have reduced your world to a rational cosmos.

One of the "placards" Davidson tried hardest to keep his Society from wearing was that of "Socialism." Yet no one felt more deeply than he the evils of rapacious individual competition. Spontaneously and flexibly organized social settlements or communities, with individual leaders as their centres, seem to have been his ideal, each with its own religious or ethical elements of discipline. The present isolation of the family is too inhuman. The ideal type of future life, he

thought, will be something like the monastery, with the family instead of the individual, for its unit.

Leveller upwards of men as Davidson was, upon the intellectual and moral level, he seemed wholly without that sort of religion which makes so many of our contemporary anarchists think that they ought to dip, at least, into some manual occupation, in order to share the common burden of humanity I never saw T. D. work with his hands in any way. He accepted material services of all kinds without apology, as if he were a patrician, evidently feeling that if he played his own more intellectual part rightly, society could make no further claim upon him.

This confidence that the life of the spirit is the absolutely highest, made Davidson serene about his outward fortunes. Pecuniary worry would not tally with his program. He had a very small provision against a rainy day, but he did little to increase it. He used to write as many articles and give as many "lectures," "talks," or "readings" every winter as would suffice to pay the year's expenses, and thereafter he refused additional invitations, and repaired to Glenmore as early in the spring as possible. I could but admire the temper he showed when the principal building there was one night burned to ashes. There was no insurance on it, and it would cost a couple of thousand dollars to replace it. Excitable as Davidson was about small contrarieties, he watched this fire without a syllable of impatience. *Plaie d'argent n'est pas mortelle*, he seemed to say, and if he felt sharp

regrets, he disdained to express them.

No more did care about his literary reputation trouble him. In the ordinary greedy sense, he seemed quite free from ambition. During his last years he had prepared a large amount of material for that history of the interaction of Greek, Christian, Hebrew, and Arabic thought upon one another before the revival of learning, which was to be his *magnum opus*. It was a territory to which, in its totality, few living minds had access, and in which a certain proprietary feeling was natural. Knowing how short his life might be, I once asked him whether he felt no concern lest the work already done by him should be frustrate, from the lack of its necessary complement, in case he were suddenly cut off. His answer surprised me by its indifference. He would work as long as he lived, he said, but not allow himself to worry, and look serenely at whatever might be the outcome. This seemed to me uncommonly high-minded. I think that Davidson's conviction of immortality had much to do with such a superiority to accidents. On the surface, and towards small things, he was irritable enough, but the undertone of his character was remarkable for equanimity. He showed it in his final illness, of which the misery was really atrocious. There were no general complaints or lamentations about the personal situation or the arrest to his career. It was the human lot and he must even bear it; so he kept his mind upon objective matters.

But, as I said at the outset, the paramount thing in Davidson in my eyes was his capacity for friendship. His friends were

innumerable—boys and girls and old boys and old girls, Papists and Protestants, Jews and Gentiles, married and single; and he cared deeply for each one of them, admiring them often too extravagantly. What term can name those recurrent waves of delighted laughter that expressed his greeting, beginning from the moment he saw you and accompanying his words continuously, as if his pleasure in you were interminable? His hand too, stretched out when yards away, so that a country neighbor said it reached farther than any hand he ever met with. The odd thing was that friendship in Davidson seemed so little to interfere with criticism. Persons with whom intercourse was one long contradiction on his part, and who appeared to annoy him to extermination, he none the less loved tenderly, and enjoyed living with them. "He's the most utterly selfish, illiberal and narrow-hearted human being I ever knew," I heard him once say of someone, "and yet he's the dearest, nicest fellow living." His enthusiastic belief in any young person who gave a promise of genius was touching. Naturally a man who is willing, as he was, to be a prophet, always finds some women who are willing to be disciples. I never heard of any sentimental weakness in Davidson in this relation, save possibly in one case. They harmed themselves at the fire of his soul, and he told them truths without accommodation. "You 're farther off from God than any woman I ever heard of." "Nay, if you believe in a protective tariff, you 're in hell already, though you may not know it." "You had a fine hysterical time last night, didn't you, when Miss B was brought up

from the ravine with her dislocated shoulder." To Miss B he said: "I don't pity you. It served you right for being so ignorant as to go there at that hour." Seldom, strange to say, did the recipients of these deliverances seem to resent them.

What with Davidson's warmth of heart and sociability, I used to wonder at his never marrying. Two years before his death he told me the reason—an unhappy youthful love-affair in Scotland. Twice in later life, he said, temptation had come to him, and he had had to make his decision. When he had come to the point, he had felt each time that the tie with the dead girl was prohibitive. "When two persons have known each other as we did," he said, "neither can ever fully belong to a stranger. So it would n't do." "It would n't do, it would n't do!" he repeated, as we lay on the hillside, in a tone so musically tender that it chimes in my ear now as I write down his confession. It can surely be no breach of confidence to publish it—it is too creditable to the profundity of Davidson's affections. As I knew him, he was one of the purest of human beings.

If one asks, now, what the *value* of Thomas Davidson was, what was the general significance of his life, apart from his particular books and articles, I have to say that it lay in the example he set to us all of how, even in the midst of this intensely worldly social system of ours, in which each human interest is organized so collectively and so commercially, a single man may still be a knight-errant of the intellectual life, and preserve full freedom in the midst of sociability. Extreme as

was his need of friends, and faithful as he was to them, he yet lived mainly in reliance on his private inspiration. Asking no man's permission, bowing the knee to no tribal idol, renouncing the conventional channels of recognition, he showed us how a life devoted to purely intellectual ends could be beautifully wholesome outwardly, and overflow with inner contentment. Fortunately this type of man is recurrent, and from generation to generation, literary history preserves examples. But it is infrequent enough for few of us to have known more than one example—I count myself happy in knowing two and a half! The memory of Davidson will always strengthen my faith in personal freedom and its spontaneities, and make me less unqualifiedly respectful than ever of "Civilization," with its herding and branding, licensing and degree-giving, authorizing and appointing, and in general regulating and administering by system the lives human beings. Surely the individual, the person in the singular number, is the more fundamental phenomenon, and the social institution, of whatever grade, is but secondary and ministerial. Many as are the interests which social systems satisfy, always unsatisfied interests remain over, and among them are interests to which system, as such, does violence whenever it lays its hand upon us. The best Commonwealth will always be the one that most cherishes the men who represent the residual interests, the one that leaves the largest scope to their peculiarities.

VI

HERBERT SPENCER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY[8]

[8] Written upon the publication of Herbert Spencer's "Autobiography." Published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July, 1904.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.