

**RALPH WALDO EMERSON,
PHILOSOPHER AND SEER: AN
ESTIMATE OF HIS CHARACTER
AND GENIUS IN PROSE AND
VERSE**

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Ralph Waldo Emerson, Philosopher and Seer: An Estimate of His Character and Genius in
Prose and Verse by A. Bronson Alcott

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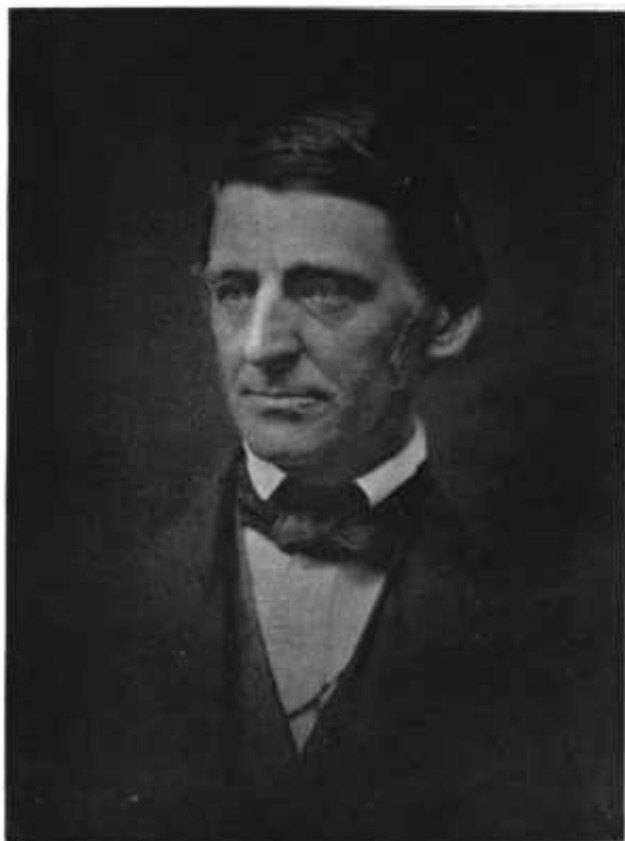
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A. BRONSON ALCOTT

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Philosopher and Seer

AN ESTIMATE OF

HIS CHARACTER AND GENIUS

In Prose and Verse

BY

A. BRONSON ALCOTT

ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON

CUPPLES & HURD, PUBLISHERS

PS
1631
A6.
1888

"Ἵσπερ γάρ οἱ τὰ πεινῶντι θρέμματα θαλλόν ἢ τινα
καρπὸν προσισοῦτες ἄγουσι, οὐ ἔμοι λόγους οὕτω προ-
τείνων ἐν βιβλίοις τῆν τε Ἀττικὴν φαίνεσσι περιάξειν
ἔπλασαν καὶ ὅποι ἂν ἄλλοσε βοήθη.

PLATO, *Phædr.* p. 230 D.

"For as men lead hungry creatures by holding out
a green bough or an apple, so you, it would seem,
might lead me about all Attica and wherever else
you please, by holding toward me discourses out of
your books."

PLATO.

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON

TO

MARY E. STEARNS.

CONCORD, July 5, 1865.

MY DEAR MRS. STEARNS.

The gift of the birthday was truly a "surprise." There lay a more beautiful book than Aldus or Elzevir ever made, slipped into the house as carelessly as a roseleaf or a dandelion-down blown in at the window. Mr. Alcott's note indicated a "friend," without naming him or her. And when I came to read the text, that, too, was such a Persian superlative on the poor merits of the subject, that I had to shade my eyes as if to accept only a part of the meaning. I may shake your belief in my good sense, if I say I don't know but I suffered more than I enjoyed; but I soon came to admire the lyrical tone of all this remarkable writing, inspired by the most generous sentiment, fortified, too, by the wish to convey the good-will of other friends who made him their spokesman. So I made a covenant with myself to join these friends in ignoring the infirm actuality, stoutly holding up the ideal outline of

the poor man we were talking of. And now I have learned to look at the book with courage, and at least to thank the friends who jointly completed it, very heartily, for this rare and exquisite work of kindness. I have been twice tempted to send you some verses on this occasion, as they would be really more fit carriers of what I have to say ; and perhaps I yet shall, though the rhyming fit seldom comes to me.

Ever gratefully,

Your deeply obliged,

R. W. EMERSON.

MRS. MARY E. STEARNS.

PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

The publishers have here presented a book about Emerson, written by the one man who stood nearest to him of all men; one from whom he drew inspiration in generous measure, and to whom, in return, he discovered without reserve his inmost self. Such a book cannot fail to be an original and vital contribution to EMERSONIANA. Not to read it, is to miss a clear and searching exegesis of one whose name has been called the greatest in American literature. It is like a portrait of one of the old masters, painted by his own brush.

The introductory sonnet to Emerson is pitched in a lofty key, and condenses into fourteen pithy lines a statement of the author's life-long debt of friendship—material and spiritual. The essay itself was written twenty-odd years ago, while Mr. Alcott was still in the full vigor of his intellect. It was privately printed, and presented to Emerson on his birthday. A limited edition was published for the first time in 1882, and readily sold. The revision and reading of the proof-sheets of this edition was the last literary