

**REPRESENTATIVE
MEN.
SEVEN LECTURES**

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Representative men. Seven lectures by Ralph Waldo Emerson

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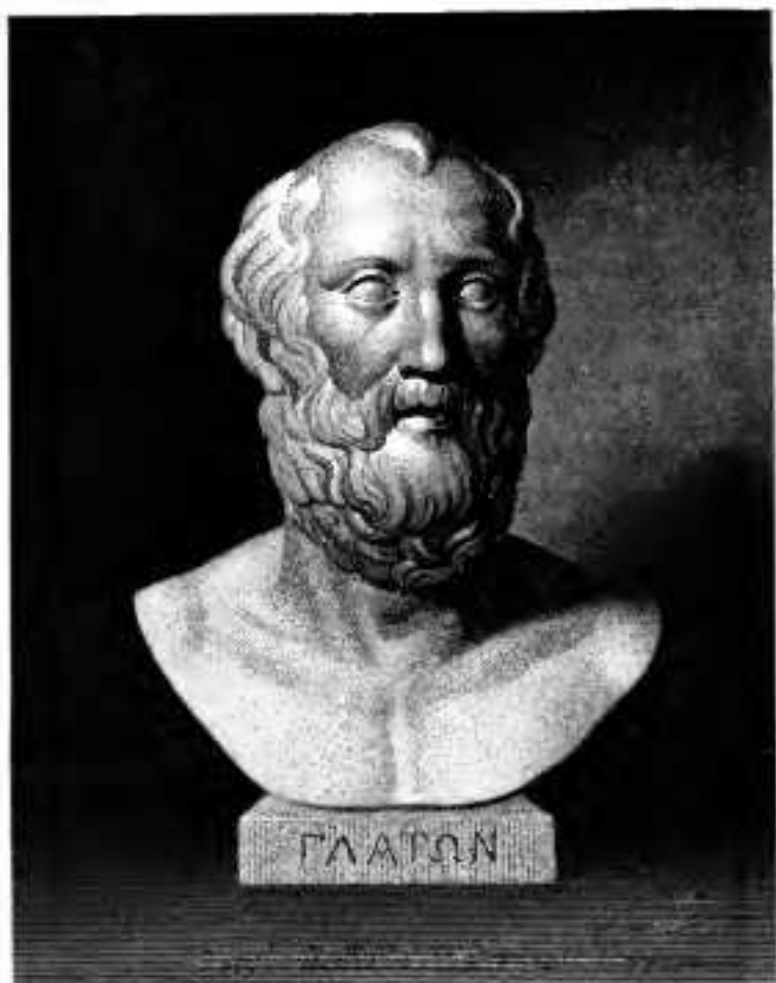
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RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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by
Ralph Waldo Emerson



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REPRESENTATIVE MEN

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BY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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USES OF GREAT MEN

I.

USES OF GREAT MEN.

It is natural to believe in great men. If the companions of our childhood should turn out to be heroes, and their condition regal, it would not surprise us. All mythology opens with demigods, and the circumstance is high and poetic; that is, their genius is paramount. In the legends of the Gautama, the first men ate the earth, and found it deliciously sweet.

Nature seems to exist for the excellent. The world is upheld by the veracity of good men: they make the earth wholesome. They who lived with them found life glad and nutritious. Life is sweet and tolerable only in our belief in such society; and actually or ideally we manage to live with superiors. We call our children and our lands by their names. Their names are wrought into the verbs of language, their works and effigies are in our houses, and every circumstance of the day recalls an anecdote of them.

The search after the great is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood. We travel into foreign parts to find his works — if possible, to get a glimpse of him. But we are put off with fortune instead. You say the English are prac-