

EMERSON AS A POET

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Emerson as a Poet by Joel Benton

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JOEL BENTON

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BY

JOEL BENTON

Author of "In the Poe Circle"

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Rien de ce qui ne transporte pas n'est poésie.
La lyre est un instrument ailé.—*Joubert.*



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Dedication

TO MY MOTHER

(But lately departed)

**WHOSE DEAR AND EVER-RECURRING MEMORY IS
NOW MY BEST POSSESSION**

Wenn des Dichters Räthe geht,
Sollt ihr nicht ein!
Denn wer einmal uns versteht,
Wird uns auch verstehen.

Gottſe.

The words of a good poet, even when we do not apprehend their full meaning, pour a stream of sweet nectar upon the soul.

From the Hints of the Sarvagadharo Paddhati.

There is, indeed, a certain low and moderate sort of poetry that a man may well enough judge by certain rules of art; but the true, supreme, and divine Poesy is above all the rules of reason. Whoever discovers the beauty of it, with the most assured and most steady sight, sees no more than the quick reflection of a flash of lightning. This is a sort of poetry that does not exercise, but ravishes and overwhelms our judgment.

Montaigne.

PREFATORY NOTE.

IT seems necessary to say that this essay was written over a year and a half ago, and is given here substantially in the form that it then had. No essential change has been made to accommodate it to Mr. Emerson's death, or to do justice to the multitude of sayings that this event elicited. If but little has been added, a few points have been slightly expanded while preparing it for the press. The portion read at Concord, on the day set apart to Emerson by the "School of Philosophy," was a fragment, only a brief synopsis of which was furnished for the book representing the lectures of that body.

For the privilege of copying so liberally from Mr. Emerson's poems, I am indebted to the courtesy of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.; and to Mr. C. H. Brainard, of Washington, for the right to reduce for an appropriate frontispiece the admirable lithograph of Emerson, which had its origin in a photograph owned by Theodore Parker, and which was Mr. Parker's favorite picture of this author. To many others, also, no other portrait of Emerson recalls him so perfectly in his best attitude, as he was in his prime.

I am sure, whatever judgment this essay may provoke, that the addition of Mr. Kennedy's Concordance to Mr. Emerson's poetry, which he has kindly permitted me to make, will prove a welcome feature in this offering.

J. B.

Amenia, N. Y., Oct. 5, 1882.