of interest and sympathy; but in leaving this country, he faded gradually from public memory.

After George Curtis's return from Europe he entered definitely into literature; his first important venture being the "Nile Notes of a Howadji" (1851). The book was clever and successful, but it called down on its author some censure, as did also the "Howadji in Syria," published a year later. After half a century the effect of these books is still fresh and strong. They are glowing with an Occidental's feelings toward the East, and have caught the true spirit of *impressions de voyage*, early instances in American literature of this delicate mode of expression in which the French have been so long masters. It is clear that George William Curtis came out of the East a pretty well sophisticated young man, and not unduly coy or incommunicative.

The two books show a man naturally sensitive and delicate, but impressionable to a vague and sensuous atmosphere. Mr. Chadwick says that the "Howadji" marked an "exquisite satirical recoil from the pretence of holiness in things and places which could claim no genuine associations with the Christian origins." It is, however, true that Curtis, even as early as the Brook Farm days, allowed himself certain expressions which show that in his early manhood there was an alloy. In his next book, "Potiphar Papers," Curtis undertook to scourge the evils of a society

of which he was an ingratiating and willing member, and the *sæva indignatio* of the true satirist is therefore wanting. He who said that he could see no satire in "Vanity Fair" never went farther himself than to assail palpable vulgarity and the superficial aspects of fashionable life. In the "Potiphar Papers," he was clearly following Thackeray, but he missed the ethical soundness which lay beneath Thackeray's literary effects. Yet this book has its severities and its sincerities, and contains some excellent and memorable passages. It was Mrs. Potiphar who said: "In a country where there's no aristocracy one can't be too exclusive." If there was a touch of cynicism it came from a youth. As Curtis grew older, his thrusts were more graceful — not less vigorous. His "Belinda and the Vulgar," in the Easy Chair, proclaims his social creed, wherein appears a geniality which was earlier wanting in the cosmopolitan Kurz Pacha of the "Potiphar Papers," — a very terrible and cutting fellow until he is discovered to be only Curtis disguised in a costumer's garb as a far-travelled Oriental.

"Prue and I," which followed, was of so different a quality from the "Potiphar Papers" that it may have taken off the edge of relish for the not especially dangerous cynicism of the latter. Its idealism was unrestrained, placing as it did the solution of human happiness frankly

in the hands of the poor man, and almost denying to the rich his allotted cup of cold water. It won a place in the hearts of men rather than in their heads, for such a view of life is comforting. The steady-headed Prue is Curtis's concession to established facts, and in her character he anticipates a later theory that men are the born idealists, and women the practical element of life, though at no period was he a partisan of the merits of either sex.

At this time, and on occasions during the rest of his life, Curtis gave lectures of the older type as best represented by Emerson and Phillips. He had a good share in maintaining the repute of that civilizing institution, the lyceum, a valued adjunct to American educative methods. In 1856 he made himself responsible for the payment of a large sum through the failure of *Putnam's Monthly*, and it was nearly twenty years before this debt was discharged. Such a simple act of duty strengthened the tissues of character and transformed the glowing youth which conceived the Howadji books into a robust manhood which never failed him. Life moved henceforth for Curtis with the swiftness of the events in which he was to take an active part until his death. He was already editor of *Harper's Weekly*, then more powerful than any similar publication can hope to be again. Impersonal and moderate in his editorial work, he

was nevertheless a favorable, not extravagant, instance of the "one-man power" in journalism, now so much and so regrettably lessened.

Not until the last third of his career did he evince his admirable powers of oratory, for which he had a special qualification — a voice so musical and gracious that the compass was not at first perceptible. Curtis's voice was memorable in the old Brook Farm days. Not of the most commanding order, which sways vast bodies of men and for the while convinces them, his eloquence may be compared not unfavorably with that of the late Robert C. Winthrop. Though lacking somewhat the ripest cultivation, it did not fall short of what constitutes a high degree of forceful and scholarly utterance.

The latter part of Curtis's life was best spent in promulgating the duty of parting company with whatsoever political party shall fail to satisfy the conscience of the voter, regardless of close affiliations. He also gave severe labor to the work of reforming the national civil service, and for this unselfish toil there is already assured to his name the gratitude of honest men. In both these efforts he was as successful as one may fairly be in a political system still flowing abundantly with milk, honey, and compromise. As he lacked the robustness needful for partisanship, so proportionally he lacked greatness, according to the measure of American

political life, and therefore what he really did accomplish was the more remarkable. To the Easy Chair of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, he contributed about fifteen hundred essays, the charm of which is likely to be a treasured memory in our letters. They served many good causes, and among them the spread of a true cosmopolitanism. Did any good man or woman of more than local value die, he embalmed the fragrance of such a life in one of these delightful essays.

If it be true that he who is not with a movement is against it, then surely Curtis is not entitled to be thought a true product of Brook Farm. He had not the essential qualities of a reformer; there is no evidence that he was ever so wedded to a cause that he was ready to suffer for it. His blow was steady, his purpose honest, but there was lacking the terrible, implacable strength, which persists past any hazard, until the gates of sin are forced. He wanted the world to be better; but he would accomplish the result in a gracious — shall we say in a comfortable? — manner.

Isaac Thomas Hecker

Before Father Hecker died, he had travelled widely in spirit and in practice from Brook Farm. He never, however, showed ingratitude toward his immediate associates for whom he had baked, and with whom he had broken, bread. His progress of life,

from the early wrestlings against the dangers of commerciality, throughout his brief sojourning in Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and Concord, and during his steady advance toward the Catholic Church, was continuous and consistent. He was born on December 18, 1819, of German immigrant parentage; from the mother, who had an equable temperament and much good sense, he probably received the better part of his intellectual inheritance. His two older brothers and himself learned the baker's trade, and eventually built up a prosperous business. He is remembered to have said, in speaking of his earlier years: "I have had the blood spurt out of my arm carrying bread when I was a baker," and this untempered zeal for the task at hand followed him into the priesthood. Although he studied hard and constantly, Hecker could not fairly be called an educated man or a thoroughly trained priest. One must have no little sympathy with such a life as Hecker's to judge it with fairness or toleration. Wholesome and open-hearted from his youthful days, when he felt a strong aversion to being touched by any one, he had an element of unusualness, which soon developed mystical tendencies, and finally a complete reliance on the workings of supernatural forces within him.

Long before his twentieth year Hecker had plunged violently into active political life under

the influence of Brownson, who, in the early thirties, was devoting his tremendous energies to bringing the Workingmen's Party to recognition in New York. When Hecker was less than fifteen years of age he carried through some important resolutions at the ward meetings of his party. He and his brothers once invited the menace of law by printing across the back of bills received from customers a quotation, attributed to Daniel Webster, proclaiming the virtues of a paper currency. This political fervor came to nothing definite beyond teaching the lad self-reliance and knowledge of men, but it was the means of confirming a friendship with Brownson, "the strongest, most purely human influence, if we except his mother's, which Isaac Hecker ever knew," to use the words of his competent biographer, Father Elliott. The critical period of youth he passed with singular purity and simplicity of conduct, and a display of stoical tendencies which developed into asceticism. His falling in with Brownson marked also the beginning of a distinctly religious phase, and henceforth each of these two men, in his own way, travelled the same road toward the same goal, Hecker arriving there a little before his older friend.

Eight years after meeting so fateful an acquaintance he found himself at Brook Farm, but the intervening years brought him many

peculiar spiritual experiences, or "visitations," as it seems proper to call them. He kept inwardly debating the necessity of parting with his brothers so far as regarded his business career, but at no time does he appear to have refused their generous aid. His own solitary path was certainly made easier by their willingness to maintain him in it. Brownson, sympathizing with his spiritual distress, advised a residence at Brook Farm, and wrote to Ripley with this plan in view. Hecker went there in January, 1843, and on March 6 wrote to his brother George: "What was the reason of my going, or what made me go? The reason I am not able to tell. But what I felt was a dark, irresistible influence upon me that led me away from home. . . . What keeps me here I cannot tell." A little later he urged his brother not to "get too engrossed with outward business." What would have been the solution of Isaac Hecker's difficulties had his brothers forsaken an honorable calling at the bidding of an inward voice? He entered Brook Farm as a "partial" boarder at four dollars a week, and gave his services as a baker in exchange for instruction, at first in German philosophy, French, and music. Curtis, whose kindly but reserved memories of him are almost the only recollections of this period, speaks of him as not "especially studious"; but he found him a young man of "gentle and

affectionate manner," with "an air of singular refinement and self-reliance, combined with a half-eager inquisitiveness"; and it was Curtis who disclosed to Hecker that the latter was undoubtedly the original of Ernest the Seeker in W. H. Channing's story of that name which appeared in the *Dial*. Hecker did not long continue to bake for the common good, for while the honest bread rose, his spiritual thermometer was falling. He soon became a "full" boarder, paying for the greater freedom five dollars and a half a week, furnished, we may suppose, by his hard-working brothers. Details of Hecker's life at the Farm are wanting, but that he was looked upon as eccentric and shy is evident from the rather faint impression left. The start was inauspicious, according to Mrs. Kirby, who says: "I learned the next day that the new comer, who was a baker by profession and a mystic by inclination, had been nearly crazed by the direct rays of the moon, which made the circuit of the three exposed windows of his room."

Father Elliott sees in the associative experiment a working toward a high ideal, realizable only in the supernatural order of his church. So far as association was a revolt, in the natural or unconverted life, against selfishness and unrestrained individualism, it was commendable. "These West Roxbury adventurers were worthy of their task, though not equal to it." He does

not find among them "the slightest evidence of sensuality, the least trace of the selfishness of the world, or even any sign of the extravagances of spiritual pride," but contrasts Frédéric Ozanam's success with the failures of George Ripley and of Saint Simon, whom he pronounced to be a "far less worthy man." Both Hecker and Brownson found the generally tolerant spirit of the place refreshing. Their association with men and women of noble aspirations was helpful, and neither of them failed in a reasonable gratitude toward this early experience. Both of them, in later years, bore frank testimony to the more trying features of the Church which they followed; and the entire want of vulgarity and low ambitions at Brook Farm may often have been silently, perhaps regretfully, remembered. Strongly under the spell of Brownson's forcible manner, Hecker did not wholly confine himself to discipleship, but went over to West Roxbury to hear Parker, to Concord to see Emerson, and no doubt to Boston, where everything strange and improbable was then herded together as in an ark.

Outwardly he appears to have made a favorable impression by reason of his candor and amiability; but there is evidence that inwardly all was not well with him. His journals show that he alternately drew toward the Church, and then in cold doubt fell shrinkingly back. It

was strange as it was tragic that toward the close of his life, after long years in the priesthood, he again fell into dark moods. Up to the time of his leaving Brook Farm he had settled the one point that he would never "join a Protestant church."

Supernatural experiences were not the only ones which troubled Hecker's serenity at Brook Farm. There is reason to think that he felt the influence of what, in the commonplaces of religion, is called an "earthly love," and that he might even have wooed and married like other men; but in season to prevent this conclusion there came strongly upon him the vision of a mystical espousal and union which rendered him "no longer free to invite any woman to marriage." Notwithstanding his convictions in this matter, Hecker was advised frankly not to trust to supernaturalism in the matter of the affections.

On July 5, 1843, he writes: "To leave this place is to me a great sacrifice. I have been much refined by being here." On the eleventh of the same month he went to Fruitlands in search of "a deeper life"; and if getting one's eyes opened to harsh realities in less than two weeks is deepness of any kind, he certainly found what he sought. On July 12 he raked hay, and joined in a conversation on "Clothing"; the next day a conversation was held on "The

Highest Aim." But on July 21 Mr. Alcott asked him for his "first impressions as regards the hindrances . . . noted since coming here." Hecker thereupon gave him his objections in five heads, the chief of which were Alcott's want of frankness, and the fact that the place had very little fruit on it. A deficit of frankness and of fruit was not in the alluring programme offered to Hecker by Alcott earlier in the year; but to attempt to square Mr. Alcott's programmes with his achievements is like wrestling with a ghost. On July 25 Hecker left Fruitlands for Brook Farm on his way to New York. Hecker's biographer not unjustly says that "Fruitlands was the caricature of Brook Farm"; Hecker himself more mildly asserts that "Fruitlands was very different from Brook Farm, — far more ascetic," — as places are apt to be in which there is naught to digest but platitudinous conversations. He was not, however, so sparing of Alcott, who, he said, "was his own God." Alcott on his part went to Charles Lane and said: "Well, Hecker has flunked out. He hadn't the courage to persevere. He's a coward." Mr. Alcott was not always Orphic in his sayings.

For a while Hecker tested according to his ability various forms of philosophy and of religious beliefs, becoming once much interested, though hardly more than that, in Anglicanism.

On the very moment of crossing the threshold of Catholicism he found himself at Concord, in April, 1844, where he lodged at the house of Henry Thoreau's mother. He had already refused to consider the offer of a room, furnished, and with "good people," for seventy-five dollars a year; and he now arranged with this excellent lady for a room, "a good straw bed, a large table, a carpet, washstand, bookcase, stove, chairs, looking-glass," and lights for seventy-five cents a week. Never, surely, was the inward light maintained at less cost to the lodger and at less profit to the landlady.

In June, 1844, he went to Boston to confer with Bishops Fenwick and Fitzpatrick; the latter questioned him regarding Brook Farm and Fruitlands, seeming desirous to learn more of his supposed socialist theories, and finally gave him a letter to Bishop McCloskey, who on August 1, 1844, gave him baptism; on the next day Hecker made confession.

Before Hecker went to Belgium in 1845, he proposed to Thoreau that they should go to Rome together, but the latter stated that he had now "retired from all external activity in disgust, and his life was more Brahminical, Artesian-well, Inner-Temple like"; this was Thoreau's way of escaping the fervor of a young convert. In September of the same year, Hecker began his life in the Redemptorist Novitiate of St. Trond in Belgium.

He found the discipline severe under the novice master, Father Othmann, but he added self-inflicted severities of his own. Acting under "impulses of grace," he tried to conquer the tendency to sleep. In October, 1846, he took the vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity. He then went at once to Wittem, where, for two years, he was to study philosophy and Latin. At the end of this time Brother Walworth, his companion, was ordained priest, but Isaac Hecker, having failed to satisfy his superior, remained simply a brother. The causes of this failure to advance are so evident, and the results from this time to the end of life were so disastrous, that it is highly important to speak without reserve. After he had left Brook Farm and had returned to New York, there is an entry in his diary for August 30, 1843, as follows: "If the past nine months or more are any evidence, I find that I can live on very simple diet,—grains, fruit, and nuts. I have just commenced to eat the latter; I drink pure water. So far I have had wheat ground and made into unleavened bread, but as soon as we get in a new lot, I shall try it in the grain." Two years before his death Hecker, who was not without an excellent sense of humor, speaking of these experiments, said: "Thank God! He led me into the Catholic Church. If it hadn't been for that I should have been one of the worst cranks in the world." There are several other

entries as to his dietetic abuses. In November, 1844, he despairingly cries, "I wish I could dispense with the whole digestive apparatus!" At Concord he makes mention of *ein herrliches Essen* of "bread, maple sugar, and apples." He proposed for the Lenten season of 1845 to confine himself to one meal a day. It is not surprising then, after this outrageous treatment of his physical nature, and after the moral and mental severities of his novitiate, that he should have been unequal to meet the requirements at Wittem. He became so stultified that he could not fix attention on his books, and lapsed into a condition of animal stupidity. Father Othmann advised him at St. Trond to become "*un saint fou*." Unable to study, he did humble services — carried fuel and baked bread — as at Brook Farm. There being no manner of doubt as to his holiness, whatever the opinion as to his sanity, he was allowed to go with Father Walworth to the Redemptorists at Clapham, England, and at last was ordained by Bishop Wiseman, in October, 1849. Shortly after, Hecker, with other priests, began their Redemptorist mission in America, having for their chief object the conversion of non-Catholics, — the one great purpose of Father Hecker till his death. Notwithstanding his temporary obfuscation of mind, in a few years Hecker was able to put forth his ablest and probably best-known book, "Questions of the Soul," and this was soon followed by "Aspirations of Nature," which, as his biographer says, was "not so hot and eager in spirit." His only remaining work of importance was that which appeared as occasional contributions to the *Catholic World*, some years later; these were in part gathered in book form, as "The Church and the Age."

In 1857 a misunderstanding arose between the American Redemptorists and their Head; and on August 29 of that year Hecker was expelled, on the ground that his going to Rome in the cause of the American fathers was in violation of his vows. After a long and painful experience in Rome, where he strove courageously for his convictions, Hecker, who had won the mind and also the heart of his Holiness, Pius IX., gained a signal triumph, not personal, but in the interests of American Catholicism. On March 6, 1858, by a decree of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and by the sanction of the Pope, all the American fathers were dispensed from their vows. The result was the speedy formation of the Paulist Community, or, more correctly, the Missionary Priests of St. Paul, the Apostle.

Under Hecker's leadership the Paulists flourished, and, aside from their zeal in bringing conversion to non-Catholics, soon made themselves a menace to various forms of public evil, par-

ticularly to intemperance. Cleanliness and good order, as well as godliness, had a part in Hecker's methods; and he showed a willingness, not only for supervision, but also for personal coöperation in the needful drudgery of the mission. The inertness, not to say the indolence, of his younger days gave place to a practical manhood. His lectures were popular in the widest sense, and he was a peer of the great lecturers of the day. It is due to say that he touched the hearts of Americans as a whole more closely than he did those of his own faith. The narrowness shown toward Catholics at that time was met with an equal narrowness, and it is no wonder that Hecker's largeness of manner was not always understood or appreciated.

Hecker's prevision and insight brought the powerful aid of ephemeral and periodical literature to the support of his Church. His Catholicism refused no agencies by which success was to be won. He started the *Catholic World* in 1865, and in 1870 the *Young Catholic*, — both today of a reputable order of religious magazines. His Apostolate of the Press was largely promoted by means of the Catholic Publication Society.

In the midst of this busy life Father Hecker was called on to pay the penalty of his early experiments in that dangerous laboratory, his physical nature. In 1871 his health began to

fail definitely; he kept for some time longer his mental strength, but his digestion and nerves were seriously impaired. He went abroad for health, but did not find it. Strange to say, he had a dread of death which followed him many years, but he made a peaceful end, which came on December 22, 1888. Three years before this he underwent strange depressions, during which he neglected the offices of his faith. This period seems to have been a revival of the unhappy experiences at St. Trond and Wittem.

It has been said, even sneeringly, that Father Hecker was a member of the "Yankee Catholic Church." If this allegation could fairly be brought against the son of German immigrants living in cosmopolitan New York, it would admirably summarize his best reputation. His love of freedom of the soul, and a large-mindedness which he had found and appreciated in others at Brook Farm, never deserted him. He was, in his day, the best interpreter of his church to the cool-minded, practical, American character. If those who heard him, and who read his books and sermons, did not fully understand or accept his religion, they did at least comprehend and accept him, and he was thus a useful intermediary between his unchanging faith and our swift, restless civilization.

Though Hecker's writings lack the extreme arrogance shown by Brownson, they have the

advantage of continuity. Hecker did not bear mental fruitage until his great, and, as it proved, final choice; from that time his spoken and written thoughts expressed the results of experience and the accretions of belief, while Brownson's spiritual vicissitudes make him one of the least convincing of theological investigators. Years back the older man had accused the younger of a "tendency to mysticism, to sentimental luxury, which is really enfeebling your soul." This condition, doubtless real, was happily overcome, but the residuum of Hecker's intellectual possessions was not large. His faith absorbed so much of himself that there was too little potency left, especially in view of the fact that he addressed himself to non-Catholics. His last book, "The Church and the Age," does not lift the proclamation of dogma an inch above the level maintained by most controversialists, and in no way does it redeem the promise of "Questions of the Soul." Indeed, he failed, on the whole, to compass in literature results vouchsafed to him in his immediate field. Remembering that Hecker was never a scholar, and that he failed even as a student, it would be fairer to his reputation, both as a zealous and faithful priest, and as a man who exerted some influence on American thought and conduct, to pass by his somewhat thin and uninspiring pages and fall back on the tribute paid him by the

Abbé Xavier Dufresne of Geneva, who said: "In my opinion Father Hecker was, after Père Lacordaire, the most remarkable sacred orator of the century."

Father Hecker's efforts to bring his church into a closer understanding of the American spirit has of late given rise to a controversy which threatens to be bitter. To those who are outside the pale of ecclesiastical matters, these feuds have no real value or interest, but the attacks on "Américanisme" betray an anxiety too real to be concealed. Conservative opposition to the policy dear to the ablest and most influential prelates of the Catholic Church in America has become acrimonious. Even the memory of Hecker himself is not spared in Maignen's "Was Father Hecker a Saint?" The good Paulist has been quiet in his grave for more than ten years, but though dead he is yet speaking for a cause which must inevitably go forward. The distance from West Roxbury to Rome is not so long as it was when the young mystic walked the groves and meadows of Brook Farm.