

but in 1871 he confessed that the experiment was "quite too tragic a one to be repeated," though for him its fragrance had never died. "Organize your townships," he held should have been the cry; yet, in spite of the disaster, Brook Farm was to him a "grand success as a college of social students."

On January 3, 1847, there was formed in Boston, under the lead of Channing, the "Religious Union of Associationists." A statement was drawn up, and ratified by the joining of hands of the persons present, among whom were seven of the most conspicuous Brook Farmers. All records of this Union cease after December, 1850; but as early as June of that year Channing, whose intensity in the cause was pathetic, took leave of his associates, thus practically ending an attempt to perpetuate one of the issues of the original movement. He then spent some months with the North American Phalanx, and as late as 1854 accepted membership with the Raritan Bay Union, the prospectus of which had been issued in 1852. Up to this time, kindly or not as the impression may be, Channing's relation to the ministry of the gospel stands forth as an avocation, and not as the absorbing labor of his soul. In August, 1854, he left a pastorate in Rochester, and in the fall went to Liverpool; henceforth he was identified with English

life and religious thought. He remained, however, an American in spirit, as he afterward showed during the Civil War. One conspicuous achievement in England was his address in 1861, at Liverpool, on "The Civil War in America," in answer to a leader in the *London Times* indicting the Northerners as "savages." It demanded courage to meet boldly the uninformed and hostile state of public opinion in England at this time; but the loyal American proved himself on this occasion more radical on the problem of slavery than any other of his old fellow Associationists. The address was not devoid of a certain adroitness in its appeal to the essential unity of Great Britain and the United States as evinced by the cordial reception of the young Prince of Wales in America the year previous.

Channing returned to America to offer such devoted service as it was in his power to render during the war, as chaplain of Congress, and as a friend to the wounded and to the helpless freedmen. He revisited England during the war, and at its close went back to ally himself again with English institutions, on the solid foundations of which his tread became firm and assured. Several visits to his own country maintained associations here which he loved and had no intention of forsaking in spirit. In December, 1884, gradually worn out by an in-

creasing feebleness, he died peacefully, parting with none of the ideals which had sustained him during a life dedicated to almost every cause but personal success.

No one was less dismayed by the Brook Farm fiasco; and this was because, as in the case of his uncle, William Ellery Channing, socialistic tendencies were fundamental, and met with no frustration from a temporary defeat. It was this basic radicalism which led Channing to walk off proudly, even defiantly, arm in arm with a negro who was about to be restrained by the officers of law in Washington just on the eve of the Proclamation of Emancipation. He was not dramatic in the doing of such acts, but would always saunter into trouble with a grace peculiar to nervous courage. Underestimation of the importance of facts led him to rush forward into easy traps. He was, for instance, too readily betrayed into anti-vivisection sympathies; he went dangerously close to an espousal of the most vulgar of all modern credulities, spiritualism, though it should be said, somewhat in apology, that he possessed to an unusual degree that force which is called by the knowing "psychic." Frothingham says that tables would run upstairs at Channing's lightest touch; this phenomenon and others as marvellous were later believed to be traceable to unconscious muscular exertion. Channing

had shrunk from Garrison's uncompromising projects, but characteristically nourished an impractical hope that the conscience of both North and South could be uniformly roused to a pitch at which the whole nation, by some splendid abnegation, might snap the bonds of slavery. In all his errors, as in his successes, his courage and persistence were faultless. Emerson once inscribed an ode to him as:—

"The evil times' sole patriot."

Less approbative, but not a whit more unfriendly, was Theodore Parker's saying that "Channing hit the same nail every time; he hit it hard; but the head was downward; he never drove the iron in." What greater testimony to a stainless life could be paid, than was paid by Emerson when he allowed Channing to baptize his children, although he had previously refused to have the rite performed by any one because the children seemed to him purer than any minister whom he knew? Although Channing dealt in large themes, he wrote for the moment, and his writings have shared the fate of most inspirational work. At first he turned with some seriousness to the quiet courses of literature and philosophy. The preface to Jouffroy's "Introduction to Ethics," which he prepared for Ripley's "Specimens of

Foreign Standard Literature," advocated the cause of French eclecticism, and encouraged the interdependence of psychology and the history of philosophy. He was favorably drawn to Cousin's method, and showed his appreciation of the ample use which Jouffroy made of Scotch and English thought. Pure philosophy was not long the business of so hurried a man, and Channing, once in the stream of life, was soon pulled away from these charms and floated easily into passing controversies. His enthusiasm for Christian Union was boundless. He formulated his principles on the question in 1843, and pleaded the "insufficiency of individual exertion"—naturally an unwelcome tenet to his friends the Transcendentalists. The matured plan was fairly tried in New York, but with small success. The people could not be brought to enjoy a Sunday service which was "wholly spontaneous," or a weekly meeting for the "frankest interchange of thought in conversation."

It is indeed strange how thoroughly Channing failed to lay hold on the organic sentiments of mankind. He was ill-adapted to conformity or to ritual, and was always peering out for further truth, as he had earlier shown that he would do in the last lines of "Ernest the Seeker," published anonymously in the first volume of the *Dial*. This religious novel-

ette left the hero saying: "So, father, we must give up our free thought. You may be right. But I am not yet ready. I must examine fresh suggestions that come to my tent-door. They may be lepers to blast me with disease, but they may be also angels in disguise."

The month of April, 1844, which saw the last number of the *Dial*, saw also the close of the *Present*, which Channing began to edit in September, 1843. The reason assigned for the brief life of this magazine was that time and opportunity were needed for the preparation of the memoir of William Ellery Channing, his most signal contribution to American letters.

The *Harbinger* ceased in February, 1849, and in July of that year Channing began to issue the *Spirit of the Age*, which kept alive until April 27, 1850. With his irresistible openness the editor writes in the last number: "The paper is discontinued because, in brief, I am brain-sick—and it does not pay." It was fair to all manner of reforms, with none of which was Channing ever in complete accord. The title was a misnomer, else perhaps the paper might have lived. In taking farewell he admits that his burden "has been, is, and will be: to discharge, as best I can, the ungracious and ungratifying, the slightly appreciated, and rarely successful duties of a Reconciler."

His faith in a unity of religions was fast

when he delivered, in 1869, after intervening years of practical life following his fruitless editorships, a course of Lowell lectures on the "Progress of Civilization," in which he pressed the teleological argument to the full. These lectures he afterward used as material in discussions before the Summer School of Philosophy at Concord — that strange, flickering revival of the dialectic method on a Yankee soil. His astounding optimism never forsook him, and he never renounced hope in some form of socialism, though he came to distrust nationalism as the particular direction which reform might wisely take. He held, in earlier days, that socialism was realizable by virtue of the unitary tendencies of the race, and that the steps to attainment were Coöperation, Reconciliation, Equitable Distribution, Universal Culture, Association, and Harmony — large, bland words, powerless now to inspire, but once of a tranquillizing and assuring strength, when uttered by the musical voice of Channing, the hopefullest, but in memory the most shadowy, personality among the sanguine Brook Farmers.

The mental portrait is so interesting that over against it may properly be set Dr. Codman's description, and in his own words, of the outward Channing: "His figure was tall and stately, though rather slender. He carried himself finely, and walked with head erect.

His features were sharp cut, clean, and regular. His hair was dark and curling, and worn a trifle long for these days. His forehead was high and slightly retreating. His eyes were sharp and piercing, deeply set, with delicate dark eyebrows. His complexion was warm and brilliant, his beard closely shaven. He had a pleasant smile which, when it deepened, showed a fine set of white teeth. All of these physical signs were in his favor, but there was about his face, so handsome at times, an earnestness that seemed almost painful, when, devoted to the cause, he spoke with the burning, eloquent words he so often uttered."

It is arbitrary, no doubt, to consider Ralph Waldo Emerson with some fulness Margaret Fuller's relations to Brook Farm, and to pass Emerson briefly by. But Emerson always belonged to Concord; his identification with the place is so complete that the attempt would be forced to place him or his activities far outside the limits of that gracious town. From Concord he radiated his influences, and even when lecturing in the West he almost seems to have taken his peaceful surroundings with him; its calmness and virtue were reflected in his own attributes. Emerson went to Brook Farm, but seemingly in no other mood than when he went elsewhere. In return for this unbiased frame of mind, it is clear that the Associates heard

him gladly, but met him only as he came,— the welcome guest or lecturer, as the case might be. There was no sitting at his feet; at a time when the little place overflowed with high spirits, and W. H. Channing held the emotions of all rapt as in a dream of heaven suddenly come to earth, Emerson's cool disrelish for discipleship was respected.

There was, indeed, some reason to think, before the experiment was begun, from his direct utterances, that Emerson might see it to be his duty and desire to join with Ripley; but his letter, probably written in the fall of 1840, firmly declined to take the step. Ripley's tone in his letter of invitation was so hopeful that it is hard not to suppose that Emerson had previously held forth some encouragement. After his answer there could no longer be any doubt, however, concerning his attitude. It is not discoverable if this declination was made public to the other members by Ripley; but, even had it been, their own decisions would hardly have been altered. Emerson was held by them, as by all intelligent men and women then and since, in due respect. His genius was recognized. By some, especially by the avowed Transcendentalists, he was regarded with veneration; but he was not really of them, as they hoed the field, washed the dishes, taught the children, and discoursed hopefully of the fast-

coming regeneration of man. His was the sweet influence of the Pleiades which they would not attempt to bind; and he came and went, assenting to but never lauding their purposes, and caring little for their methods. Any spot less roomy than the universe or more contracted than Concord, could hardly have pleased him. Emerson's decision was partly based on the opinion asked of and given by Mr. Edmund Hosmer of Concord, an open-minded, wholesome character, answerable, one might fancy, to that description given of the "Farmer" by Emerson in his review of a Report of the Agricultural Survey of Massachusetts, and printed in the *Dial* for July, 1842. Hosmer distrusted on principle the "gentleman farmer," not because he was a gentleman, but because he was not a farmer; and he saw no practical results in a scheme which theoretically could not benefit the individual toiler.

It was consonant with Emerson's dignity to speak or write pleasantly or even gleefully of whatever was fairly open to tempered mirth. Ridicule or abuse was not in his nature. Some of the phases of Brook Farm life quietly amused him, and he did not hesitate to communicate his feeling to others. Just as he said of a certain meeting of the Transcendental Club that it was like "going to Heaven in a swing," so he playfully compared Brook Farm to a

"French Revolution in small." People would in turn enjoy themselves at his expense, but not in a loud-mouthed way. Ripley alone, of all men and women of that day, seems wholly to have escaped mild ribaldry. It was with Emerson a fair give and take. Once in a while he came in for abuse, as in the case of an unknown Mrs. Enge, of whom Mrs. Kirby speaks, who considered the philosopher a lunatic and in "a most deplorable state of mind and intellectual obliquity."

Anecdotes of his visits to the Farm are not numerous. Miss Russell, in one of her papers, recalls the pleasure which they always gave, and Mrs. Kirby, who says that he seemed "an integral part of the movement itself," tells of two women who had it in mind to walk to Concord on the chance of having a talk with him, arguing that "Emerson's impressions would be worth more to us than the clenched reasoning of others." A discerning woman is recorded as having said that it would not be difficult to confess to Mr. Emerson, "but he would be shocked at the proposition to take charge of even one soul." It was ever true of him that he felt the responsibility of his own selfhood too solemnly to be willing to intrude on another's personality. Having the extreme isolation of great courage, he disliked organization in itself. The impulse to arrange, classify, and coordinate has, in truth,

more than a touch of the mediocre. The capacity to make things orderly is not the highest capacity because it is not creative but only adaptive. With the blithe hopefulness of Brook Farm for a new order which should subvert slow processes, a mind like Emerson's had little or nothing in common. He was as native as maize, and could not assimilate with much that was extravagant and foreign in the West Roxbury plan. Popular judgment, however, will hold him to have been a sort of godfather to the experiment, stooping now and then to smile benignly at the unsullied youth that dared what maturity and experience would have shunned. Into the fading memories of Brook Farm his name comes at times as a faint, pervasive aroma, outlasting any slight attachment which he may really have felt.

Alcott seems to have had a fostering care over these young people at Brook Farm, many of whom had heard, and possibly understood him. He, like Emerson, was approached with an invitation to be one of the pioneers, but no answer came from him so clear as that which reached Ripley from the honester and greater Emerson. In October, 1840, Alcott talked the project over at Emerson's house with Ripley and Margaret Fuller, and in his Diary spoke of "our community" without, however, assenting further to the scheme.

Amos Bronson
Alcott and
Charles Lane

In theory Alcott could certainly have made no such objections against Brook Farm as were offered by Emerson. Of reformers he announced in the "Orphic Sayings" that they "uproot institutions, erase traditions, revise usages, and renovate all things. They are the noblest of facts." He had not the genuine seer's distrust of compacted effort, else he would hardly have made the sorry venture at Fruitlands. As for the prime requisite of all accomplishment, did not this oracle proclaim that "labor is sweet . . . it exalts and humanizes the soul"? Emerson, says Colonel Higginson, was "so far influenced by the prevailing tendency as to offer to share his house with Mr. Alcott and his family, while suggesting that other like-minded persons should settle near them." But this gregarious plan was to have been carried out at Concord, not at Brook Farm.

Alcott sincerely believed, no doubt, that Brook Farm, like Fruitlands, awaited "the sober culture of devout men." He sang the praises of toil; in dietetic reform he was the bravest of them all; and he would doubtless have welcomed the certainty of a home. Why, then, did he not go with Ripley? There is no sure answer, but we may, in fairness, suppose that he would have stayed long away from a project which involved three hundred days' labor in each year, with an average of fifty-four working

hours to each week of six days. This philosopher would gladly have conversed under a noon-day sun until the sweat poured down his face, but for physical toil he had no affinity. The nebular state of most projects was definite enough for Mr. Alcott.

He visited Brook Farm occasionally and held one or another of his talks. His gentle bearing and serenity may have quelled for the while the general effervescence; it was impossible not to love and even to respect him, so great seemed to be the distance between the vanities of actual life and the peculiar rehabilitation in his character of a calm belonging to centuries long past. One conversation at the Farm on "Insight" was thought, according to Mrs. Kirby, to have been "a trifle vague," though it persuaded young Newcomb that the sage was "steeped in Brahminism to the lips," as doubtless he was. Some of the hearers were so powerfully stirred by this address as to make the experiment of a vegetable diet.

A consideration of Mr. Alcott's merits and demerits is not here called for. By his own choice he did not belong to Brook Farm, but he was incidental to it. He contributed little to its existence, though a few such as he might have materially hastened its downfall. It is so easy a thing to gird at this man; so difficult in these days is it to see clearly his shadowy excel-

lences. Some of his earliest friends viewed him with misgivings, and he was even called by one of them "Plato Skimpole." To the day of his death he encountered ridicule by reason of what seemed his laziness, inefficacy, and nebulosity. Almost all the anecdotes concerning him tend to derogation. The only way in which to be just to him is deliberately to search for what was admirable in the man and hold fast to that. His school in Boston was a good one, and well sustained while it lasted. It was a concrete and applied Transcendentalism. Charles Lane had given him high tribute in the third volume of the *Dial*, and before the melancholy fiasco at Fruitlands there would have been little but respect, tempered by smiles, to pay the well-disciplined and nobly conceived Temple School, and the honorable record which Alcott made in his visit to England. After he had dragged poor Lane down, however, in their sorrowful little tragedy, Alcott lost something which he never wholly regained. Even at Concord distrust was felt, and Edmund Hosmer alone, for a time, took him to his bosom. Alcott went on bravely for many years, a sort of living tradition; but there was no real advance, and he was saying the same oracular things in his simple manner, hopefully open to all truth as he thought he saw it, until he came to sit, in his advanced and easily flattered age, on the

platform where thundered, a score of years ago, that *Malleus Hereticorum* of New England orthodoxy, the Rev. Joseph Cook.

Alcott was in reality an innocent and harmless man; pure in heart, of an excellent humor, a learning wide but unprofound, and yet an absurdity to many, to some even an object of contempt. It is a difficult matter to keep one's hands wholly off Alcott's foibles. Had he lived in another township from Emerson, one might not have felt so keenly that he was always, and in quite a neighborly way too, tapping the spring of his friend's genius. The late Judge Hoar spoke perhaps for inarticulate Concord, when, meeting an acquaintance one day, he shot forth this savage conundrum and answer in the same breath: "What is the difference between Emerson and Alcott? One is a seer, the other a seer-sucker!" There is said to be but one step between the sublime and the ridiculous, and sometimes Alcott seems to have been that step.

Closely associated with Alcott for a time, and once, at least, but possibly oftener, making a visit with him to Brook Farm, was Charles Lane, an eccentric Englishman of ability and no small literary force. He had been manager of the *London Mercantile Price Current* and associated as editor of the *Healthian*, with Mr. Henry G. Wright, teacher of the Ham Com-

mon School, better known as the Alcott House School, to which Mr. Alcott paid a famous visit in 1842. Lane was of that extraordinary group of English reformers so admirably described in the *Dial* for October, 1842, consisting of John A. Heraud, J. Westland Marston, Francis Barham, editor of the *Alist*, a monthly magazine of "Divinity and Universal Literature," Hugh Doherty, the ablest English representative of Fourierism and editor of the *London Phalanx*, and Goodwyn Barmby, editor of a penny monthly, the *Promethean, or Communitarian Apostle*, with "little fear of grammar and rhetoric before his eyes." Most famous of this coterie was James Pierrepont Greaves, who had died in March, 1842, after an abstinence for thirty-six years from fermented drinks and animal food, living mostly on "biscuit and water," and who was in England "a great apostle of the Newness to many." Greaves's prime dogma was the "superiority of Being to all knowing and doing"—a dogma with which Alcott would have been the last to quarrel; in fact, they both were endued, as was said of Greaves, with a "copious peacefulness." Among his varied writings and activities, as a devout Pestalozzian, he composed "Three Hundred Maxims for the Consideration of Parents." Lane was his literary executor.

Fresh from "Umbrageous Ham," which was

the first place to do Alcott substantial honor, and from these Syncretic Associationists, and all kinds of Notionists, Charles Lane came to this country as a sort of foreign importer of reforms, taking the place of Mr. Greaves, who before his death had seriously proposed a voyage to Boston. Lane himself was an original of the first water, and he naturally allied himself to whatever might be running counter to the world's practices. He wrote several articles for the *Dial*,—among them, and of particular interest here, a careful though brief study of Brook Farm, which was critical but not unsympathetic, and indicative of the interest which the writer had for the West Roxbury experiment. It is tempting to say more of the similarity, real though slight, between the movement in England, as chiefly represented by Greaves, and that on this side of the water, especially since little or no attention has ever been paid to this relation. But it must suffice to speak of Lane as introducing the knowledge of one movement to the other by means of his own strong personality.

Lane's economic ethics lay mainly in prescribing to himself what not to do—and this system of negation proved to be complicated and perplexing. He would have well-nigh solved the problem of earthly existence, had he possessed no outer skin to clothe, and no stomach to feed.

Avoidance consumed the larger part of each day, and various encumbrances to a perfect life gave him a great deal of trouble, because almost every staple of commerce, such as wool, rice, cotton, sugar, meat, both white and red, was an offence to him. He would not use a horse, but felt no scruple at riding his hobbies to the death.

Prosaic, sincere, and courageous in living up to the articles of his faith, Lane was ready to be victimized by any project which promised to realize his dream of a "True Harmonic Association." An opportunity for complete disaster soon came and was embraced. Fruitlands, a farm of about one hundred acres in Harvard, Massachusetts, and near the Shaker Community so pleasantly described in the *Dial*, was bought by Lane, who enlisted in this enterprise under the flimsy banner of his friend Alcott. Ten was the number of the Consociate Family, five of whom were children. "Ordinary secular farming" was not in the programme, which planned to supersede the "labor of the plough and cattle by the spade and the pruning knife." Reliance was placed in the "succors of an ever bounteous Providence," and in "unblemished fields and unworldly persons." A "life of gain" was to be scrupulously avoided. Father Hecker's experience at Fruitlands is elsewhere told, but the melancholy end must not be omitted here. All of Lane's money was absorbed, and

in November, 1843, he wrote to Hecker thanking him for a barrel of wheat meal and submitting to him "a peck of troubles." He told how a large portion of the money which he invested went to pay old debts, and sought employment further south where he might support himself and his young son. His little all was "buried in the same grave of flowery rhetoric in which so many other notions have been deposited." This unhappy experience gives force to the severe definition of the Transcendentalists once put forth by the brilliant daughter of Father Taylor, that they "dove into the infinite, soared into the illimitable, and never paid cash!" W. H. Channing, in the *Present*, happily calls Alcott and Lane "the Essenes of New England," and compares them to "the more cheerful class of Therapeuts."

A few personalities, whose relations to Brook Farm were only tangential, imparted and gained some lustre by reason of this slight contact. Among those who added something to their own reputation from a supposed affinity for the Association was Brownson, but the only definite faith which he ever reposed in the place was shown when he put his son in the school; he was also instrumental in directing Hecker's steps toward West Roxbury in a wise and kindly fashion. He did Brook Farm a good turn, however, when he wrote in Novem-

Orestes
Augustus
Brownson