



The Complete
Poetical Works of

Ralph
Waldo
Emerson





Emerson

Complete
Poetical
Works

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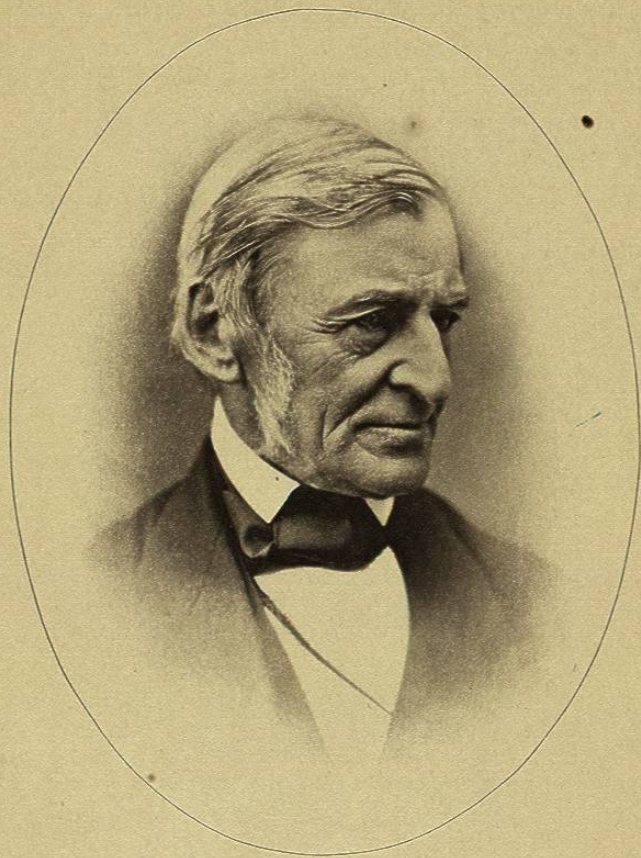
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THE POEMS OF
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Popular Edition



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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The Riverside Press, Cambridge

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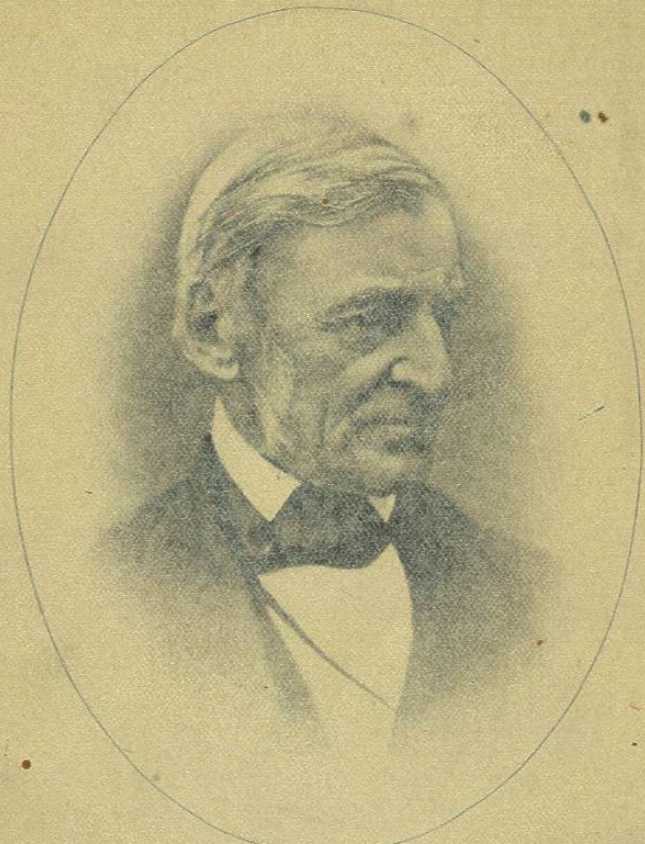
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PREFACE

IN Mr. Cabot's prefatory note to the Riverside Edition of the Poems, published the year after Mr. Emerson's death, he said:—

"This volume contains nearly all the pieces included in the POEMS and MAY-DAY of former editions. In 1876, Mr. Emerson published a selection from his Poems, adding six new ones and omitting many.¹ Of those omitted, several are now restored, in accordance with the expressed wishes of many readers and lovers of them. Also some pieces never before published are here given in an Appendix; on various grounds. Some of them appear to have had Mr. Emerson's approval, but to have been withheld because they were unfinished. These it seemed best not to suppress, now that they can never receive their completion. Others, mostly of an early date, remained unpublished, doubtless because of their personal and private nature. Some of these seem to have an autobiographic interest sufficient to justify their publication. Others again, often mere fragments, have been

¹ *Selected Poems*: Little Classic Edition.

admitted as characteristic, or as expressing in poetic form thoughts found in the Essays.

“In coming to a decision in these cases it seemed, on the whole, preferable to take the risk of including too much rather than the opposite, and to leave the task of further winnowing to the hands of Time.

“As was stated in the preface to the first volume of this edition of Mr. Emerson’s writings, the readings adopted by him in the Selected Poems have not always been followed here, but in some cases preference has been given to corrections made by him when he was in fuller strength than at the time of the last revision.

“A change in the arrangement of the stanzas of ‘May-Day,’ in the part representative of the march of Spring, received his sanction as bringing them more nearly in accordance with the events in Nature.”

In the preparation of the Riverside Edition of the *Poems*, Mr. Cabot very considerably took the present editor into counsel (as representing Mr. Emerson’s family), who at that time in turn took counsel with several persons of taste and mature judgment with regard es-

pecially to the admission of poems hitherto unpublished and of fragments that seemed interesting and pleasing. Mr. Cabot and he were entirely in accord with regard to the Riverside Edition. In the present edition, the substance of the Riverside Edition has been preserved, with hardly an exception, although some poems and fragments have been added. None of the poems therein printed have been omitted. “The House,” which appeared in the first volume of *Poems*, and “Nemesis,” “Una,” “Love and Thought” and “Merlin’s Songs,” from the *May-Day* volume, have been restored. To the few mottoes of the Essays, which Mr. Emerson printed as “Elements” in *May-Day*, most of the others have been added. Following Mr. Emerson’s precedent of giving his brother Edward’s “Last Farewell” a place beside the poem in his memory, two pleasing poems by Ellen Tucker, his first wife, which he published in the *Dial*, have been placed with his own poems relating to her.

The publication in the last edition of some poems that Mr. Emerson had long kept by him, but had never quite been ready to print, and of various fragments on Poetry, Nature and Life, was not done without advice and care-

ful consideration, and then was felt to be perhaps a rash experiment. The continued interest which has been shown in the author's thought and methods and life — for these unfinished pieces contain much autobiography — has made the present editor feel it justifiable to keep almost all of these and to add a few. Their order has been slightly altered.

A few poems from the verse-books sufficiently complete to have a title are printed in the Appendix for the first time: "Insight," "September," "October," "Hymn" and "Riches."

After much hesitation the editor has gathered in their order of time, and printed at the end of the book, some twenty early pieces, a few of them taken from the Appendix of the last edition and others never printed before. They are for the most part journals in verse covering the period of his school-teaching, study for the ministry and exercise of that office, his sickness, bereavement, travel abroad and return to the new life. This sad period of probation is illuminated by the episode of his first love. Not for their poetical merit, except in flashes, but for the light they throw on the growth of his thought and character are they included.

In this volume the course of the Muse, as Emerson tells it, is pursued with regard to his own poems.

I hang my verses in the wind,
Time and tide their faults will find.

EDWARD W. EMERSON.

March 12, 1904.

CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	xv
POEMS	
GOOD-BYE	3
EACH AND ALL	4
THE PROBLEM	6
TO RHEA	9
THE VISIT	12
URIEL	13
THE WORLD-SOUL	15
THE SPHINX	20
ALPHONSO OF CASTILE	25
MITHRIDATES	28
TO J. W.	29
DESTINY	31
GUY	33
HAMATREYA	35
THE RHODORA	37
THE HUMBLE-BEE	38
BERRYING	41
THE SNOW-STORM	41
WOODNOTES I	43
WOODNOTES II	48
MONADNOC	60
FABLE	75
ODE	76
ASTRÆA	80
ÉTIENNE DE LA BOÉCE	82
COMPENSATION	83
FORBEARANCE	83
THE PARK	84
FORERUNNERS	85
SURSUM CORDA	86
ODE TO BEAUTY	87
GIVE ALL TO LOVE	90
TO ELLEN AT THE SOUTH	93

CONTENTS

TO ELLEN	94
TO EVA	95
LINES	96
THE VIOLET	97
THE AMULET	98
THINE EYES STILL SHINED	99
EROS	100
HERMIONE	100
INITIAL, DÆMONIC AND CELESTIAL LOVE	
I. THE INITIAL LOVE	103
II. THE DÆMONIC LOVE	109
III. THE CELESTIAL LOVE	114
THE APOLOGY	119
MERLIN I	120
MERLIN II	123
BACCHUS	125
MEROPS	127
THE HOUSE	128
SAADI	129
HOLIDAYS	136
XENOPHANES	137
THE DAY'S RATION	138
BLIGHT	139
MUSKETAQUID	141
DIRGE	145
THRENODY	148
CONCORD HYMN	158
MAY-DAY AND OTHER PIECES.	
MAY-DAY	163
THE ADIRONDACS	182
BRAHMA	195
NEMESIS	196
FATE	197
FREEDOM	198
ODE	199
BOSTON HYMN	201
VOLUNTARIES	205

CONTENTS

LOVE AND THOUGHT	210
UNA	210
BOSTON	212
LETTERS	217
RUBIES	217
MERLIN'S SONG	218
THE TEST	220
SOLUTION	220
HYMN	223
NATURE I	225
NATURE II	226
THE ROMANY GIRL	227
DAYS	228
MY GARDEN	229
THE CHARTIST'S COMPLAINT	232
THE TITMOUSE	233
THE HARP	237
SEASHORE	242
SONG OF NATURE	244
TWO RIVERS	248
WALDEINSAMKEIT	249
TERMINUS	251
THE NUN'S ASPIRATION	253
APRIL	255
MAIDEN SPEECH OF THE ÆOLIAN HARP	256
CUPIDO	257
THE PAST	257
THE LAST FAREWELL	258
IN MEMORIAM E. B. E.	261
ELEMENTS AND MOTTOES	
EXPERIENCE	269
COMPENSATION	270
POLITICS	271
HEROISM	272
CHARACTER	273
CULTURE	273
FRIENDSHIP	274

CONTENTS

SPIRITUAL LAWS	275
BEAUTY	275
MANNERS	276
ART	277
UNITY	279
WORSHIP	279
PRUDENCE	280
NATURE	281
THE INFORMING SPIRIT	282
CIRCLES	282
INTELLECT	283
GIFTS	283
PROMISE	283
CARITAS	284
POWER	284
WEALTH	285
ILLUSIONS	287
QUATRAINS AND TRANSLATIONS	
QUATRAINS	291
TRANSLATIONS	298
APPENDIX	
THE POET	309
FRAGMENTS ON THE POET AND THE POETIC GIFT	320
FRAGMENTS ON NATURE AND LIFE NATURE	335
LIFE	349
THE BOHEMIAN HYMN	359
GRACE	359
INSIGHT	360
PAN	360
MONADNOC FROM AFAR	361
SEPTEMBER	361
EROS	362
OCTOBER	362
PETER'S FIELD	363
MUSIC	365

CONTENTS

THE WALK	366
COSMOS	366
THE MIRACLE	368
THE WATERFALL	369
WALDEN	370
THE ENCHANTER	372
WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF GÖTTE	373
RICHES	374
PHILOSOPHER	374
INTELLECT	375
LIMITS	375
INSCRIPTION FOR A WELL IN MEMORY OF THE MARTYRS OF THE WAR	376
THE EXILE	376
POEMS OF YOUTH AND EARLY MANHOOD	
THE BELL	379
THOUGHT	380
PRAYER	380
TO-DAY	382
FAME	383
THE SUMMONS	384
THE RIVER	385
GOOD HOPE	387
LINES TO ELLEN	387
SECURITY	388
A MOUNTAIN GRAVE	390
A LETTER	391
HYMN	393
SELF-RELIANCE	394
WRITTEN IN NAPLES	395
WRITTEN AT ROME	396
WEBSTER	398
INDEX OF FIRST LINES	401
INDEX OF TITLES	407