William S. Robinson (1818-1876) was a descendant of Thomas Emerson and John Cogswell, both ancestors of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Robinson was a native of Concord, a schoolmate of Henry David Thoreau, and an admirer of several other Transcendentalists. He apparently listened to several of Emerson's sermons, read the Dial avidly, and as early as 1841, as editor of the Concord Republican, published a favorable notice of Emerson's essays (“Ralph Waldo Emerson,” Concord Republican 3 December 1841: 1). In the 1850s, when his involvement in politics increased, his interest in the essays was sustained, and he lent copies of Emerson's works to friends and associates. In the course of a distinguished career, he attracted the attention of several Massachusetts radicals for his activities as a Free Soil advocate. He eventually achieved his greatest notoriety for a series of letters on Massachusetts politics in the Springfield Republican, an extensive series begun in the mid-1850s and written under the pseudonym “Warrington.” In their secondary bibliography on Emerson, Joel Myerson and Robert Burkholder include several items by Robinson. Given his extensive editorial experience for a range of Massachusetts newspapers, it is not surprising that several other reviews and scattered comments on Emerson are found in periodicals to which Robinson contributed or which he edited.

From 1842 to 1849, Robinson was a contributing editor to the Lowell Morning Courier. It may be impossible to determine whether the following review of Emerson's Essays [First Series] was written by Robinson or the paper's general editor, William Schouler, but its positive tone would be echoed in Robinson's comments on Emerson later in his career. The review appeared in the Lowell Morning Courier 20 April 1844: 1.

Mr. Emerson says, that blame is safer than praise, that he hates to be defended in a newspaper, and that as long as all that is said, is said against him, he feels a certain assurance of success. Well, everyone to his own taste: and we commend Mr. Emerson for his philosophy.

Let politicians take wisdom from his example, and courage from his stoicism. Nevertheless, and sorry as we are, to do anything to disoblige Mr. Emerson, or to lessen within him, his assurance of success, we feel ourselves laid under the necessity, if we say aught about him or his new book, not to defend him, exactly, but what he will esteem as a worse evil, probably, to praise him in a newspaper.—Never mind; let him not be alarmed. Our bad example is not likely to prove very contagious; and we see little reason for him to be concerned lest the somewhat novel ground of his assurance of success should be taken from him. We dare say, that so far as the newspapers are concerned, there will be an ample and abiding foundation for such confidence still left him.

This is a neat little book of about three hundred pages, with neither preface, nor dedication, consisting of twelve essays. Those who have had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Emerson, in his lectures during the past few years, will recognize many familiar friends in the thoughts and language of these essays. It would be but stale and commonplace criticism to say, that these essays are marked by the strong peculiarities, both of sentiment and diction, so characteristic of all this gentleman's writings, and that they abound with what are commonly regarded as his beauties and blemishes, his excellencies and defects. And yet this is as much as can be well said in a notice like the present. We do not regard this as the time or place, even if we had the inclination or the ability to do so, to enter into any elaborate analysis or estimate of Emerson's genius. We are happy and proud to rank ourselves among those who think they find an infinite deal in them to love, to reverence and admire. His sense of the perfect and the beautiful is more exquisite and universal, than that of any other living writer in the language. As to his idiosyncrasies of thought and utterance, it is easy for us to be tolerant, at least; it is easy for us to be more. We like him all the better for these peculiarities.—They make him what he is. By them and through them he is himself and not another.—If he is honest, both in this thought and utterance of it, and that

(Continued on page 2)
EMERSON SOCIETY PAPERS

The newsletter of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society Published at Wrenn Polytechnic Institute

Editor: Douglas Emory Wilson
Design and Production: Peggy Issacson

ADVISORY BOARD
Jayne K. Gordon (1994)
Albert J. von Frank (1994)
Thomas Wortham (1995)

Volume 12, Number 3
Fall 1994

[Cover page]

Notes

2 Robinson (1814-1872), editor of Whip and Republican paper, bought the Lowell Courier and Journal in 1842, and employed Robinson as an assistant editor. His ideas were that of a New England correspondent. He served as Massachusetts adjutant general, 1860-66.

3 An excerpt from the column “Moments” appeared in the Evening Telegraph 2 September 1856: 1.

4 In his column from Boston for 21 August 1858: 2, “Boythom” praised the September Atlantic Monthly, which contained Emerson’s essay on “Ilo- quence.” Perhaps reflecting his bias as a newspaper reporter, however, he added: “eloquence, however, is not everything—now-a-days. There are twenty-five to thirty million people who must get some kind of information on political affairs, and a very small proportion of them can get it from public speakers. We who are to put his thoughts intelligently before the people in print where he cannot help much.”

5 Robinson quoted from Emerson’s letter “Montague” in his “Letter from Boston,” in the New Englander 27 May 1858: 2, 19 June 1858: 2, 1858: 3, and 1859: 3. Emerson’s correspondence with the Atlantic Monthly is preserved for us in the Gavins’ Correspondence and in the names of their publishers. Robinson was an avid reader of Victorian novels as well as of American Transcendentalists; Robinson borrowed his pseudonym from Thackeray’s Pendennis and the name “Boythom” from Dickens’ Bleak House.

LETTER

To the Editor, ESP:

"Familiarity breeds contempt" is a maxim that many of us spend years learning to live with. We have a duty to make sure we understand the prespec- tive and intent of those ideas. Even when we have ideas that disagree with those of our peers, we have a duty to make sure we understand the perspec- tive and intent of those ideas. Even the art of reviving them, especially essential that we not misrepresent or distract. Surely, as the historian's task is to be as accurate as possible, without being too rigid about the evolution of Christianity in the modern era. For the most part, the Arab was struck by the absence of that pervasive civility in the conduct of our scholar who, in the last of the Emerson Society.

Richard Lee Francis
Western Washington University

[End of letter]
Emerson's individualism is that of a man who was profoundly aware that his life was a social and political act. In his early lecture series "The Philosophy of History" published in 1841, Emerson spoke of the individual as always having a social context. He said of himself that the genius of his life was social, and his early lecture series "The Philosophy of History" contains a repeated and sustained attack on romantic individualism.

"Every being in nature has its existence so connected with other beings that if set apart it would instantly perish." This note, and not the more exaggerated point of view of "Self-Reliance," is Emerson's considered position, first and last, a view definitively demonstrated in David Robinson's recent Emerson and the Conduct of Life.

Emerson's discourse on publishing provides much evidence of the difficulties encountered by the modern author working for himself and his friends. This discourse shows how enmeshed he was in the post-revolutionary transportation, and communications network of 1844. Somewhat differently, his discourse on the railroad (which began operating in Concord in June 1844) shows how closely tied he was to the "world" of thought. It also expresses a changed—and dual—notion of time that develops in this period. While geology has opened up huge vistas of time, the railroad has speeded up and accelerated time. This took us back to his New Year's Eve epiphany: "how much the years teach which the days never knew!...but the individual is always mistaken." Though individual humans may not think they are making progress, ultimately all are advanced; what we self-reflectively individual have lost, the race has gained—an idea reiterated in several essays published from 1844. The cultural work of the post. Emerson believed, is to domesticate the modern system in a way that would energize ("cheer, raise, and guide") people. Similarly, Fosboux suggests that the individual statements in a discourse may teach what the grand historical unity cannot know.

Emerson's Anti-Slave

ALBERT J. VON FRANK
Washington State University

Emerson's thought. Two "discourses" seemed especially interest

...and they stand there looking out of the window, sound and well, in some new and strange disguise" (143). The strange, sad condition of the "Illustration" section of "Experience," the poetic motto to that essay, "Days," and the mutated and assuaged ending of "Nominalist and Realist" set the tone for the Essay, Second Series, which Emerson planned to end with that essay. That dramatic realization, like other variations on theme played out most openly in "Realist and Naturalist" defines the stage of the thought which led Emerson to his explorations of biography and history in Representative Men and English Traits and set the stage for a more affirmatively re-constructing of "Experience" in "Faith" and its dramaticallization in "Illusions."
New Books

Robert E. Burkholder and Joel Myerson have compiled Ralph Waldo Emerson: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1980-1991, published by Greenwood Press. (See flyer in this issue of ESP for 20% discount for Emerson Society members.) The volume supplements Burkholder and Myerson's Emerson: An Annotated Secondary Bibliography (1985), which for a limited time is offered to members for $35, postage included—an extraordinary discount of about 75%. (The same discounted price applies to Myerson's Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Descriptive Bibliography [1982].)

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In Memoriam

Eleanor M. Tilton
1913-1994

Professor Eleanor M. Tilton, who died on 8 May in Monroe, Ohio, is best known to Emersonians as the editor of the three additional volumes of Emerson letters, published from 1990 to 1994 by Columbia University Press. In 1993 she received one of the Emerson Society’s first Awards for Distinguished Achievement in Emerson Studies. A dedicated teacher and scholar of nineteenth-century American literature, Eleanor Tilton was born and raised in Boston. She graduated from Mt. Holyoke College in 1934 and the next year received the M.A. degree from Boston University. After working briefly for a bookseller, she began her doctoral work at Columbia University. In 1939 she accepted a position as instructor of English at Vassar College, where she remained until 1942. The next year she moved to Jacksonville, Illinois, where she was instructor of English at MacMurray College for three years.

In 1947 she completed her work at Columbia with a dissertation on Oliver Wendell Holmes, written under the direction of Professor Ralph L. Rusk; it was published in the same year as Amiable Autocrat: A Biography of Oliver Wendell Holmes. The preceding year Tilton had moved to Philadelphia, as an instructor at Temple University, where she was soon promoted to assistant professor. In 1950 she returned to New York as assistant professor of English at Barnard College of Columbia University. Promoted to professor in 1959, she remained in this department until her retirement, serving as chair from 1961 to 1963; she was named Professor Emeritus upon her retirement.

One of the fellow researchers Tilton thanked in Amiable Autocrat was Thomas Franklin Currier, who had shared with her his knowledge and his notes toward a Holmes bibliography, left unfinished at the time of his death in 1946. In 1953 A Bibliography of Oliver Wendell Holmes was published with Tilton as co-author. Before his death in 1962, Ralph L. Rusk had turned over to Professor Tilton his thirty-eight file boxes of additional Emerson letter materials. In her Preface to volume 7 of the Letters, she acknowledges the continued help of her mentor, her “silent collaborator.”

After her retirement, Professor Tilton continued to live in her Morningside Heights apartment adjacent to the Columbia campus, working on the letters project she had inherited from Rusk, caring for her aging mother until her death, entertaining the visits and questions of scholars, young and old, and enjoying the opportunity to travel widely to the many repositories that housed the manuscripts she was editing. In Amiable Autocrat she notes that at the end of a particularly laborious research project, young Holmes wrote “the appropriate motto ‘Perseverando.’” It is one that fits her own tireless work on Emerson’s letters.

—Nancy Craig Simmons