

Bocheness which got Germany into the war and lost it for her. It is Bocheness which made it doubly difficult to promote an equable peace. It is Bocheness which has, again and again, revealed Germany's

purpose to the world and prevented her ambitions from fulfillment. The world ought to be grateful for the futility of Bocheness, but its existence does not make the world a more pleasant place to live in.

A Transcendental Humorist

By LAWRENCE F. ABBOTT

Contributing Editor of The Outlook

IN my younger days a friend of mine, a delightful man of letters, when I went to him in a burst of enthusiasm over Brahms or Debussy or François Millet or Monet or Keats or Browning or Emily Dickinson, apropos of something new to me in their work which I had seen or heard or read, used to say occasionally, with amusement, "Well, whom have you discovered this week?"

As a matter of fact, the open-minded man is always making discoveries of things which to others better informed are as old as the hills. Columbus discovered America. But every American who is interested in the greatest democratic experiment that the human race has ever made is constantly rediscovering it for himself. Such new discoveries of familiar things furnish much of the zest of life.

In this spirit I have just discovered Emerson. For forty years I have known something about him, of course—that he was a mystical philosopher; the apostle of transcendentalism in America; a somewhat obscure stylist; a poet of the loftiest ideas whose forms of expression are so compact and elliptical that he often out-Brownings Browning; and, above all, of such serenity of mind and soul that he sometimes seems like an embodied spirit from another world. I have owned a definitive edition of Emerson's works for twenty years, the collection edited and published by his son, but I confess that I do not often take a volume down from its shelf for entertaining reading. Two or three weeks ago, however, I was confined to my room for a few days by a sharp attack of lumbago. Now, if there is ever a time when a man wants serenity it is in the midst of one of these annoying visitations of the imps of pain. In desperation I turned to Emerson, and discovered to my joy that he was one of the most delightful of humorists.

Where he got his sense of humor it is hard to tell. Perhaps it was not born in him but was acquired by experience, for his face in early portraits is aloof-looking,

while the most famous of his photographs, taken when he was seventy years of age, is the best portrayal of a gentle, kindly, and intelligent sense of humor that I have ever seen. His son tells us that as a boy and young man he was intensely shy. This shyness, combined with a New England conscience, led him to give up the Unitarian ministry when he was about thirty years of age, and for the remaining fifty years of his life he devoted himself to writing and lecturing. That he had a New England conscience is indicated by the remark he once made about conversation with bores. "I had," he said, "as lief talk with my own conscience." He has left his own estimate of the value of a sense of humor. "What an ornament and safeguard is humor! Far better than wit for the poet and writer. It is genius itself, and so defends from the insanities."

In this estimate is a lesson for the Fundamentalists who are just now insisting upon the acceptance of certain metaphysical doctrines which have been artificially wrought into the Church by nineteen centuries of argumentative theologians who, whatever may have been their other virtues, certainly lacked the virtue of a sense of humor. What an uncompromising insistence on a literal creed leads to is amusingly pointed out by Emerson in his "English Traits." The religion of the Church of England, he says, fosters among the English a belief "which does not treat with levity a pound sterling; they are neither transcendentalists nor Christians; they put up no Socratic prayer, much less any saintly prayer for the Queen's mind; ask neither for light nor right; but say bluntly, 'Grant her in health and wealth long to live.'"

But after this delicate and smiling thrust Emerson goes on to say: "Yet, if religion be the doing of all good, and for its sake the suffering of all evil, *souffrir de tout le monde, et ne faire souffrir personne*, that divine secret has existed in

England from the days of Alfred to those of Romilly, of Clarkson and of Florence Nightingale, and in thousands who have no fame."

Only one who possesses a sense of humor can define its functions and effects. I do not know of a better definition than that which Emerson gave in his eulogy of Abraham Lincoln:

Then his broad good humor, running easily into jocular talk, in which he delighted and in which he excelled, was a rich gift to this wise man. It enabled him to keep his secret; to meet every kind of man and every rank in society; to take off the edge of the severest decisions; to mask his own purpose and sound his companion; and to catch with true instinct the temper of every company he addressed. And, more than all, it is to a man of severe labor, in anxious and exhausting crises, the natural restorative, good as sleep, and is the protection of the overdriven brain against rancor and insanity.

Emerson's writings are full of allusions, analogies, and bits of kindly satire that could come only from a man who saw the little incongruities as well as the nobilities and tragedies of life. But I think the outstanding example of his combination of humor with deep spiritual appreciation is the portrait of Socrates in his essay on "Plato the Philosopher"—an essay of which Carlyle said that it had little of value in it for him "save Socrates with his clogs and big ears." To save the reader the trouble of seeking it out on his own shelves or the shelves of a public library I quote it here in full:

Socrates, a man of humble stem, but honest enough; of the commonest history; of a personal homeliness so remarkable as to be a cause of wit in others:—the rather that his broad good nature and exquisite taste for a joke invited the sally, which was sure to be paid. The players personated him on the stage; the potters copied his ugly face on their stone jugs. He was a cool fellow, adding to his humor a perfect temper and a knowledge of his man, be he who he might whom he talked with, which laid the companion open to certain defeat in any debate,—and in debate he immoderately delighted. The young men are prodigiously fond of him and invite him to their feasts, whither he goes for conversation. He can drink, too; has the strongest head in Athens; and after leaving the whole party under the table, goes away as if nothing had happened, to begin new dialogues with somebody that is sober. In short, he was what our country-people call *an old one*.

He affected a good many citizen-like

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tastes, was monstrously fond of Athens, hated trees, never willingly went beyond the walls, knew the old characters, valued the bores and philistines, thought everything in Athens a little better than in any other place. He was plain as a Quaker in habit and speech, affected low phrases, and illustrations from cocks and quails, soup-pans and sycamore-spoons, grooms and farriers, and unnamable offices,—especially if he talked with any superfine person. He had a Franklin-like wisdom. Thus he showed one who was afraid to go on foot to Olympia, that it was no more than his daily walk within doors, if continuously extended, would easily reach.

Plain old uncle as he was, with his great ears, an immense talker,—the rumor ran that on one or two occasions, in the war with Boeotia, he had shown a determination which had covered the retreat of a troop; and there was some story that under cover of folly, he had, in the city government, when one day he chanced to hold a seat there, evinced a courage in opposing singly the popular voice which had well-nigh ruined him. He is very poor; but then he is hardy as a soldier, and can live on a few olives; usually, in the strictest sense, on bread and water, except when entertained by his friends. His necessary expenses were exceedingly small, and no one could live as he did. He wore no under garment; his upper garment was the same for summer and winter, and he went barefooted; and it is said that to procure the pleasure, which he loves, of talking at his ease all day with the most elegant and cultivated young men, he will now and then return to his shop and carve statues, good or bad, for sale. However that be, it is

certain that he had grown to delight in nothing else than this conversation; and that, under his hypocritical pretense of knowing nothing, he attacks and brings down all the fine speakers, all of the fine philosophers of Athens, whether natives or strangers from Asia Minor or the islands. Nobody can refuse to talk with him, he is so honest and so really curious to know; a man who was willingly confuted if he did not speak the truth, and who willingly confuted others asserting what was false; and not less pleased when confuted than when confuting; for he thought not any evil happened to men of such a magnitude as false opinion regarding the just and the unjust. A pitiless disputant, who knows nothing, but the bounds of whose conquering intelligence no man had ever reached; whose temper was imperturbable; whose dreadful logic was always leisurely and sportive; so careless and ignorant as to disarm the wariest and draw them, in the pleasantest manner, into horrible doubts and confusion. But he always knew the way out; knew it, yet would not tell it. No escape; he drives them to terrible choices by his dilemmas, and tosses the Hippiases and Gorgiases with their grand reputations, as a boy tosses his balls. The tyrannous realist—Meno has discoursed a thousand times, at length, on virtue, before many companies, and very well, as it appeared to him; but at this moment he cannot even tell what is his,—this cramp-fish of a Socrates has so bewitched him.

This hard headed humorist, whose strange conceits, drollery and *bonhomie* diverted the young patricians, whilst the rumor of his sayings and quibbles gets abroad every day,—turns

out, in the sequel, to have a probity as invincible as his logic, and to be either insane, or at least, under cover of this play, enthusiastic in his religion. When accused before the judges of subverting the popular creed, he affirms the immortality of the soul, the future reward and punishment; and refusing to recant, in a caprice of the popular government was condemned to die, and sent to the prison. Socrates entered the prison and took away all ignominy from the place, which could not be a prison whilst he was there. Crito bribed the jailer; but Socrates would not go out by treachery. "Whatever inconvenience ensue, nothing is to be preferred before justice. These things I hear like pipes and drums, whose sound makes me deaf to everything you say." The fame of this prison, the fame of the discourses there and the drinking of the hemlock are one of the most precious passages in the history of the world.

The rare coincidence, in one ugly body, of the droll and the martyr, the keen street and market debater with the sweetest saint known to any history at that time, had forcibly struck the mind of Plato, so capacious of these contrasts; and the figure of Socrates by a necessity placed itself in the foreground of the scene, as the fittest dispenser of the intellectual treasures he had to communicate. It was a rare fortune that this Æsop of the mob and this robed scholar should meet, to make each other immortal in their mutual faculty.

Where in American literature can there be found on so compact a canvas a portrait lined in more beautiful English or illumined with a more delightful humor!

A German View of the Present Situation

By ELBERT FRANCIS BALDWIN

The Outlook's Editorial Correspondent in Europe

Monarchy Again?

"IN my opinion, we shall have our monarchy back again," said a Dortmunder to me to-day. (Dortmund, the most attractive of Ruhr cities, lies far up the valley—as far from Essen as Essen is from the Rhine). "Not that I want it," he quickly added. "Like many in Westphalia and the Rhineland, I am attracted politically towards a republic. In these territories, however, you will find people turning back to the monarchical idea on account of economic rather than political reasons, namely, because a monarchy would deal more de-

cisively with the workmen than has our Republic. A monarchy would say, sharply, 'Do this job,' and that would be the end of it. On the other hand, the present republican attitude seems to be: 'Please, would you mind doing what you can with this work before you begin your next strike?'

"No," he continued, "our workmen are not accustomed to that. They do not like it. They are not as independent as are your American workmen. They do like definite authority, especially when that authority begins, as did our monarchy, by favoring workmen and their families in the establishment of far more merciful

conditions of labor than existed in any other country."

"Will your monarch be again William II?" I asked.

"Hardly," he replied. "He is deeply discredited. All Germany resents his flight into Holland. But we Westphalians resent it most because the Kaiser fled from *our* soil. Why could he not have stayed and faced the music like the rest of us? No, we do not want to hear more of William II."

"Who has now the best chance to become monarch?" I queried. "The Crown Prince?"

"Yes, I suppose so," was the reply.