

# SELECTED POEMS

By

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Early Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. New York, Boston, Thomas Y. Crowell & Company: 1899. Introduction by Nathan Haskell Dole. *Ralph Waldo Emerson Texts*. Jone Johnson Lewis. 2009. Web. 7 Sept. 2013.

## *Give All To Love*

Give all to love;  
Obey thy heart;  
Friends, kindred, days,  
Estate, good fame,  
Plans, credit, and the muse;  
Nothing refuse.

'Tis a brave master,  
Let it have scope,  
Follow it utterly,  
Hope beyond hope;  
High and more high,  
It dives into noon,  
With wing unspent,  
Untold intent;  
But 'tis a god,  
Knows its own path,  
And the outlets of the sky.  
'Tis not for the mean,  
It requireth courage stout,  
Souls above doubt,  
Valor unbending;  
Such 'twill reward,  
They shall return  
More than they were,  
And ever ascending.

Leave all for love;—  
Yet, hear me, yet,  
One word more thy heart behoved,

One pulse more of firm endeavor,  
 Keep thee to-day,  
 To-morrow, for ever,  
 Free as an Arab  
 Of thy beloved.  
 Cling with life to the maid;  
 But when the surprise,  
 Vague shadow of surmise,  
 Flits across her bosom young  
 Of a joy apart from thee,  
 Free be she, fancy-free,  
 Do not thou detain a hem,  
 Nor the palest rose she flung  
 From her summer diadem.

Though thou loved her as thyself,  
 As a self of purer clay,  
 Tho' her parting dims the day,  
 Stealing grace from all alive,  
 Heartily know,  
 When half-gods go,  
 The gods arrive.

*Concord Hymn*

Hymn Sung at the Completion of Concord Monument, April 19, 1836

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
 Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
 Here once the embattled farmers stood,  
 And fired the shot heard round the world,

The foe long since in silence slept,  
 Alike the Conqueror silent sleeps,  
 And Time the ruined bridge has swept  
 Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,  
 We set to-day a votive stone,  
 That memory may their deed redeem,

When like our sires our sons are gone.

Spirit! who made those freemen dare  
To die, or leave their children free,  
Bid time and nature gently spare  
The shaft we raise to them and Thee.

*Fable*

The mountain and the squirrel  
Had a quarrel,  
And the former called the latter, "little prig":  
Bun replied,  
You are doubtless very big,  
But all sorts of things and weather  
Must be taken in together  
To make up a year,  
And a sphere.  
And I think it no disgrace  
To occupy my place.  
If I'm not so large as you,  
You are not so small as I,  
And not half so sly:  
I'll not deny you make  
A very pretty squirrel track;  
Talents differ; all is well and wisely put;  
If I cannot carry forests on my back,  
Neither can you crack a nut.

## Introduction to *Nature*

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far, as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy. Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. In like manner, nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design. Let us interrogate the great apparition, that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature?

All science has one aim, namely, to find a theory of nature. We have theories of races and of functions, but scarcely yet a remote approach to an idea of creation. We are now so far from the road to truth, that religious teachers dispute and hate each other, and speculative men are esteemed unsound and frivolous. But to a sound judgment, the most abstract truth is the most practical. Whenever a true theory appears, it will be its own evidence. Its test is, that it will explain all phenomena. Now many are thought not only unexplained but inexplicable; as language, sleep, madness, dreams, beasts, sex.

Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE. In enumerating the values of nature and casting up their sum, I shall use the word in both senses; — in its common and in its philosophical import. In inquiries so general as our present one, the inaccuracy is not material; no confusion of thought will occur. Nature, in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf. Art is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture. But his operations taken together are so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result.