

It was Emerson's prime function to be a teacher of teachers and a poet for poets. His messages were never meant for those who run to read; to the small circle that first received them was left the task, as expounders, interpreters, apostles, of making them known to the outer world. An attempt, and on the

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whole a very worthy one, to carry on this good work, is made by Mr. Joel Benton, in his study of "Emerson as a Poet" (M. L. Holbrook & Co., New York). Mr. Benton's brief essay is sincere, thoughtful, and discriminating. He points out clearly why Emerson's poetry can never become popular, yet shows convincingly its elements of high and lasting value. Less comprehensive and less analytical than Mr. Stedman's fine essay in the April "Century," this work is, in a different way, perhaps as helpful and suggestive. Mr. Benton's style is usually terse and impressive, as befits his subject. Some of his sentences are well worth quoting. Of Emerson's remarkable condensation, he says: "He would miss nothing that is significant; he will crowd the universe into a nutshell, and make every line bear the burden that weaker writers bestow on a whole page. * * * His life has gone into the making of a few volumes—not much more than half a dozen in all; but what wit, and strength, and beauty, and eloquence they uphold! What a supreme, audacious splendor!" Emerson himself says: "In reading prose, I am sensitive as soon as a sentence drags, but in poetry as soon as one word drags." Mr. Benton finds in his poetry "a constant relation to the breadth of some endless horizon. Each line is an arrow swept across or into the centre of the universe; and it is not a common divinity that has drawn the bow." Another quotation has a curious interest. Emerson's fine saying of poetry, that "it teaches the enormous force of a few words, and, in proportion to the inspiration, checks loquacity," is said to be from "one of his earliest essays;" we think it is from the introduction to "Parnassus"—one of his latest essays. Still more curious is Mr. Benton's observation that Emerson's genius "shows a touch of *sturdy Berserker wrath*," which can scarcely fail to recall Carlyle's phrase, "*silent Berserker rage*," which he applied to Webster. Mr. Benton's little volume has several special features of interest—a thirty-line poem on "Fame," written by Emerson at the age of twenty-six, and not included in any edition of his works; a new portrait—one of the most pleasing and satisfying we have seen—made from a photograph owned by Theodore Parker, representing Emerson in his prime; and an appendix containing an "Emerson Concordance" reprinted from the "Literary World," and a list of periodical essays upon Emerson reprinted from THE DIAL. Of the exquisite printing of this book we must say that if it and the new Browning book of Dodd, Mead & Co. fairly represent the work of Mr. De Vinne, he stands in a class by himself, so far as we can see, among the printers of America.