

# Colby



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## Epilogue

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**Who's Who:** An alumna of Colby College, Dr. Hilda M. Fife received her A.M. and Ph.D. at Cornell University, and is currently a professor of English at the University of Maine. She has translated Bembo's *Gli Asolani* and published articles on Edith Wharton and Mrs. Humphry Ward. This year she was elected a trustee of the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums.

Ernest C. Marriner, another product of Colby, has been librarian and professor of English at his alma mater; now holds the position of historian of the college. He is the author of a monumental *History of Colby College* (1963), notable for its breadth and anecdotal flavor.

Carl H. Ketcham is an associate professor of English at the University of Arizona.

**Emerson at Colby:** Dr. Marriner's interest in speakers to the Colby audience goes considerably beyond the span of 1928-1942 which he treats in this issue. On previous occasions he has exhumed the facts surrounding Ralph Waldo Emerson's two visits to Waterville.

In the *History* (457-458) he reveals that Emerson was invited by Erosophian Adelphi, a literary fraternity, to speak at its anniversary on August 11, 1841. After the bone-wearying journey by stage from Boston and an inauspicious arrival by night, Emerson reports that his address, "The Method of Nature," was "heard with cold, silent, unresponsive attention." Later, Carlyle complained of its "abstracts" and Oliver Wendell Holmes opined that it *must* have sounded strange and vague.

In the *Colby Library Quarterly*, IV (February 1958), 246-247, Marriner colorfully recreates the famed Transcendentalist's appearance on the same platform with Samuel Francis Smith, author of "America" and member of the Colby faculty. The result on this evening of August 11, 1863, was at least different if not much better than the earlier one. The *Eastern Mail* described Emerson as "a forcible speaker" but "far from smooth or graceful." His discourse this time—"The Office of the Scholar"—was composed of "solid shot." However, concluded the *Mail* correspondent in impressive italics: "*Dr. Smith did what Emerson failed to do; he stilled the audience.*"