

## NARRATOR'S NOTES: William Ellery Channing

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING was born at Newport, Rhode Island, in the year 1780. He was an American Clergyman best known for his role in the establishment of Unitarianism in America. He is sometimes thought of as "the Father of American Transcendentalism" though he did not agree with many of the ideas maintained by followers of Ralph Emerson. At best he may have inspired Emerson in formation of some of his most salient principles.

Through his Oratory and writings he is credited with having set the Intellectual-tone for early Nineteenth Century America. Though conscientiously avoiding reputation as a "Radical", he was by all accounts a Social Reformer. His words inspired so-called "social engineers" to pursue their causes with vigor and, for the most part, abundant success.

Basic to his Philosophy was enthusiasm for the uniqueness of each and every Human Being as well as the all-pervasive influence of Nature - cardinal tenets of Emerson's Transcendentalism. Channing was vocal in his denunciation of Slavery though he did not style himself an Abolitionist in the mode of William Lloyd Garrison. His pronouncements ranged from concern for the social status of wage-laborers to necessity of educational programs for children. So pervasive in fact were the concerns he expressed from his Pulpit that he amassed over a

Lifetime spanning just sixty-two years a legion of followers unaware of their Debt to him. Perhaps the least of these "concerns" was the need for a unique American Literature - a precursor to Emerson's appeal to "the American Scholar".

### Scene 1:

SAMUEL HOPKINS was a Congregationalist Clergyman at CHANNING's Hometown of Newport, Rhode Island. CHANNING had been raised in this Church but had a difficult time reconciling himself to many of the Doctrines promulgated there.

DAVID RANDOLPH was a prominent landowner, planter and slaveholder in Virginia. Upon graduating from Harvard College, CHANNING was inclining toward the Ministry as a career but needed money and time for serious reflection. He thus accepted a position as Tutor for the RANDOLPH children. As it turned out this was a very significant interlude in his Life as it provided the framework for his later views regarding NATURE, SLAVERY and CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.

HOPKINS was the acknowledged leader of the so-called "New Light" Congregationalists of Newport. He preached a message of "Charity as an end in itself devoid of all expectation of personal gain". Such was his "Theory of DISINTERESTED BENEVOLENCE".