When it came to putting their literary theories into practice, the Transcendentalists naturally relied to a large extent on the models most readily available to them. The next two chapters describe two such models, conversation and preaching, which may be regarded as those forms of self-expression most familiar to such provincial and aesthetically unsophisticated men and women as the Transcendentalists were upon entering adulthood. Generally speaking, they were far more sensitive connoisseurs of conversation and preaching than of the fine arts, and they tended to adapt the two forms for their own special purposes. Although the leading literary figures in the movement did not regard either conversation or preaching as an end in itself, elements of each recur continually in their writing and help to give it its special coloring. Tracing the Transcendentalists' awareness and use of these
elements, furthermore, will give us a better idea of the complex relationship between the aesthetic and didactic impulses in their work. As we shall see, they tended to inhibit the art of conversation by making it into an instrument of education, but to liberalize the sermon by turning it into an art form.