

JOURNAL

VOLUME II

THE JOURNAL OF  
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

VOLUME II

I

1850 (ÆT. 32-33)<sup>1</sup>

THE Hindoos are more serenely and thoughtfully religious than the Hebrews. They have perhaps a purer, more independent and impersonal knowledge of God. Their religious books describe the first inquisitive and contemplative access to God; the Hebrew bible a conscientious return, a grosser and more personal repentance. Repentance is not a free and fair highway to God. A wise man will dispense with repentance. It is shocking and passionate. God prefers that you approach him thoughtful, not penitent, though you are the chief of sinners. It is only by forgetting yourself that you draw near to him.

The calmness and gentleness with which the Hindoo philosophers approach and discourse on forbidden themes is admirable.

<sup>1</sup> [A new book is begun here, but the first date is that of May 12, 1850, on p. 7 (p. 8 of the original). The first entries may or may not belong to this year.]

What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like the light of a higher and purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through a purer stratum,—free from particulars, simple, universal. It rises on me like the full moon after the stars have come out, wading through some far summer stratum of the sky.

The Vedant teaches how, “by forsaking religious rites,” the votary may “obtain purification of mind.”

One wise sentence is worth the state of Massachusetts many times over.

The Vedas contain a sensible account of God.

The religion and philosophy of the Hebrews are those of a wilder and ruder tribe, wanting the civility and intellectual refinements and subtlety of the Hindoos.

Man flows at once to God as soon as the channel of purity, physical, intellectual, and moral, is open.

With the Hindoos virtue is an intellectual exercise, not a social and practical one. It is a knowing, not a doing.

I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another. I have no sympathy with the bigotry and ignorance which make transient and partial and puerile distinctions between one man's faith or form of faith and another's,—as Christian and heathen. I pray to be delivered from narrowness, partiality, exaggeration, bigotry. To the philosopher all sects, all nations, are alike. I like Brahma, Hari, Buddha, the Great Spirit, as well as God.

[Part of leaf missing here.]

A page with as true and inevitable and deep a meaning as a hillside, a book which Nature shall own as her own flower, her own leaves; with whose leaves her own shall rustle in sympathy imperishable and russet; which shall push out with the skunk-cabbage in the spring. I am not offended by the odor of the skunk in passing by sacred places.<sup>1</sup> I am invigorated rather. It is a reminiscence of immortality borne on the gale. O thou partial world, when wilt thou know God? I would as soon transplant this vegetable to Polynesia or to heaven with me as the violet.

Shoes are commonly too narrow. If you should take off a gentleman's shoes, you would find that his foot was wider than his shoe. Think of his wearing such an engine! walking in it many miles year after year! A shoe which presses against the sides of the foot is to be condemned. To compress the foot like the Chinese is as bad as to compress the head like the Flatheads, for the head and the foot are one body. The narrow feet,—they greet each other on the two sides of the Pacific. A sensible man will not follow fashion in this respect, but reason. Better moccasins, or sandals, or even bare feet, than a tight shoe. A wise man will wear a shoe wide and large enough, shaped somewhat like the foot, and tied with a leather string, and so go his way in peace, letting his foot fall at every step.

When your shoe chafes your feet, put in a mullein leaf.

When I ask for a garment of a particular form, my tailoress tells me gravely, “They do not make them so

<sup>1</sup> [See *Excursions*, p. 228; Riv. 280.]

now," and I find it difficult to get made what I want, simply because she cannot believe that I mean what I say; it surpasses her credulity. Properly speaking, my style is as fashionable as theirs. "They do not make them so now," as if she quoted the Fates! I am for a moment absorbed in thought, thinking, wondering who *they* are, where *they* live. It is some Oak Hall, O call, O. K., all correct establishment which she knows but I do not. Oliver Cromwell. I emphasize and in imagination italicize each word separately of that sentence to come at the meaning of it.<sup>1</sup>

Or you may walk into the foreign land of Bedford, where not even yet, after four or five, or even seven or eight, miles, does the sky shut down, but the airy and crystal dome of heaven arches high over all, when you did not suspect that there was so much daylight under its crystal dome, and from the hill eastward perchance see the small town of Bedford standing stately on the crest of a hill like some city of Belgrade with one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. I wonder if Mr. Fitch lives there among them.

How many noble men and women must have their abode there! So it seems, — I trust that so it is, — but I did not go into Bedford that time. But alas! I have been into a village before now, and there was not a man of a large soul in it. In what respect was it better than a village of prairie-dogs.<sup>2</sup> I mean to hint no reproach even by implica- [part of leaf torn off].

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 27; Riv. 41, 42.]

<sup>2</sup> [See Walden, p. 185; Riv. 262.]

Sunday, May 12, 1850, visited the site of the Dustin house in the northwest part of Haverhill, now but a slight indentation in a corn-field, three or four feet deep, with an occasional brick and cellar-stone turned up in plowing. The owner, Dick Kimball, made much of the corn grown in this hole, some ears of which were sent to Philadelphia. The apple tree which is said to have stood north from the house at a considerable distance is gone. A brick house occupied by a descendant is visible from the spot, and there are old cellar-holes in the neighborhood, probably the sites of some of the other eight houses which were burned on that day. It is a question with some which is the site of the true Dustin house.

Also visited the same day an ancient garrison-house now occupied by Fred. Ayer, who said it was built one hundred and fifty or one hundred and sixty years ago by one Emerson, and that several oxen were killed by lightning while it was building. There was also a pear tree nearly as old as the house. It was built of larger and thicker and harder brick than are used nowadays, and on the whole looked more durable and still likely to stand a hundred years. The hard burnt blue-black ends of some of the bricks were so arranged as to checker the outside. He said it was considered the handsomest house in Haverhill when it was built, and people used to come up from town some two miles to see it. He thought that they were the original doors which we saw. There were but few windows, and most of them were about two feet and a half long and a foot or more wide, only to fire out of. The oven originally projected outside. There were two large fireplaces. I walked into

one, by stooping slightly, and looked up at the sky. Ayer said jokingly that some said they were so made to shoot wild geese as they flew over. The chains and hooks were suspended from a wooden bar high in the chimney. The timbers were of immense size.

Fourteen vessels in or to be in the port of Haverhill, laden with coal, lumber, lime, wood, and so forth. Boys go [to] the wharf with their fourpences to buy a bundle of laths to make a hen-house; none elsewhere to be had.

Saw two or three other garrison-houses. Mrs. Dustin was an Emerson, one of the family for whom I surveyed.

Measured a buttonwood tree in Haverhill, one of twenty and more set out about 1739 on the banks of the Merrimack. It was thirteen and eight twelfths feet in circumference at three and a half feet from the ground.

Jewett's steam mill is profitable, because the planing machine alone, while that is running, makes shavings and waste enough to feed the engine, to say nothing of the sawdust from the sawmill; and the engine had not required the least repair for several years. Perhaps, as there is not so much sawing and planing to be done in England, they therefore may not find steam so cheap as water.

A single gentle rain in the spring makes the grass look many shades greener.

It is wisest to live without any definite and recognized object from day to day, — any particular object, — for the world is round, and we are not to live on a tangent or

a radius to the sphere. As an old poet says, "though man proposeth, God disposeth all."

Our thoughts are wont to run in muddy or dusty ruts.

I too revive as does the grass after rain. We are never so flourishing, our day is never so fair, but that the sun may come out a little brighter through mists and we yearn to live a better life. What have we to boast of? We are made the very sewers, the cloacæ, of nature.

If the hunter has a taste for mud turtles and muskrats and skunks and other such savage titbits, the fine lady indulges a taste for some form of potted cheese, or jelly made of a calf's foot, or anchovies from over the water, and they are even. He goes to the mill-pond, she to her preserve pot. I wonder how he, I wonder how I, can live this slimy, beastly kind of life, eating and drinking.<sup>1</sup>

The fresh foliage of the woods in May, when the leaves are about as big as a mouse's ear, putting out like taller grasses and herbs.

In all my rambles I have seen no landscape which can make me forget Fair Haven. I still sit on its Cliff in a new spring day, and look over the awakening woods and the river, and hear the new birds sing, with the same delight as ever. It is as sweet a mystery to me as ever, what this world is. Fair Haven Lake in the south, with its pine-covered island and its meadows, the hickories putting out fresh young yellowish leaves, and the oaks light-grayish ones, while the oven-bird thrums his sawyer-like strain, and the chewink rustles through the

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 241; Riv. 340.]

dry leaves or repeats his jingle on a tree-top, and the wood thrush, the genius of the wood, whistles for the first time his clear and thrilling strain, — it sounds as it did the first time I heard it. The sight of these budding woods intoxicates me, — this diet drink.

The strong-colored pine, the grass of trees, in the midst of which other trees are but as weeds or flowers, — a little exotic.

In the row of buttonwood trees on the banks of the Merrimack in Haverhill, I saw that several had been cut down, probably because of their unsightly appearance, they all suffering from the prevalent disease which has attacked the buttonwood of late years, and one large one still resting on its stump where it had fallen. It seemed like a waste of timber or of fuel, but when I inquired about it, they answered that the millers did not like to saw it. Like other ornamental trees which have stood by the roadside for a hundred years, the inhabitants have been accustomed to fasten their horses to them, and have driven many spikes into them for this purpose. One man, having carried some buttonwood logs to mill, the miller agreed to saw them if he would make good the injury which might be done to his saw. The other agreed to it, but almost at the first clip they ran on to a spike and broke the saw, and the owner of the logs cried, "Stop!" he would have no more sawed. They are difficult to split, beside, and make poor timber at best, being very liable to warp.

The "itinerary distance" between two points, a convenient expression.

Humboldt says, "It is still undetermined where life is most abundant: whether on the earth or in the fathomless depths of the ocean."

It was a *mirage*, what in Sanscrit, according to Humboldt, is called "the thirst of the gazelle."

Nothing memorable was ever accomplished in a prosaic mood of mind. The heroes and discoverers have found true more than was previously believed, only when they were expecting and dreaming of something more than their contemporaries dreamed of, — when they were in a frame of mind prepared in some measure for the truth.

Referred to the world's standard, the hero, the discoverer, is insane, its greatest men are all insane. At first the world does not respect its great men. Some rude and simple nations go to the other extreme and reverence all kinds of insanity. Humboldt says, speaking of Columbus approaching the New World: "The grateful coolness of the evening air, the ethereal purity of the starry firmament, the balmy fragrance of flowers, wafted to him by the land breeze, all led him to suppose (as we are told by Herrera, in the *Decades* (5)), that he was approaching the garden of Eden, the sacred abode of our first parents. The Orinoco seemed to him one of the four rivers which, according to the venerable tradition of the ancient world, flowed from Paradise, to water and divide the surface of the earth, newly adorned with plants."

Expeditions for the discovery of El Dorado, and also

of the Fountain of Youth, led to real, though perhaps not compensatory, discoveries.<sup>1</sup>

I have heard my brother playing on his flute at evening half a mile off through the houses of the village, every note with perfect distinctness. It seemed a more beautiful communication with me than the sending up of a rocket would have been. So, if I mistake not, the sound of blasting rocks has been heard from down the river as far as Lowell, — some twenty miles by its course, — where they were making a deep cut for the railroad.

The sand cherry (*Prunus depressa* Pursh., *Cerasus pumila* Mx.) grew about my door, and near the end of May enlivened my yard with its umbels arranged cylindrically about its short branches. In the fall, weighed down with the weight of its large and handsome cherries, it fell over in wreath-like rays on every side. I tasted them out of compliment to nature, but I never learned to love them.<sup>2</sup>

If the long-continued rains cause the seeds to rot in the ground and destroy the potatoes in the low lands, they are good for the grass on the uplands, though the farmers say it is not so sweet.<sup>3</sup>

As I walked, I was intoxicated with the slight spicy odor of the hickory buds and the bruised bark of the black birch, and, in the fall, the pennyroyal.

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 121; Riv. 143, 144.] <sup>2</sup> [*Walden*, p. 126; Riv. 178.]

<sup>3</sup> [*Walden*, p. 145; Riv. 206.]

Many a time I have expected to find a woodchuck, or rabbit, or a gray squirrel, when it was the ground-robin rustling the leaves.

I have been surprised to discover the amount and the various kinds of life which a single shallow swamp will sustain. On the south side of the pond, not more than a quarter of a mile from it, is a small meadow of ten or a dozen acres in the woods, considerably lower than Walden, and which by some is thought to be fed by the former by a subterranean outlet, — which is very likely, for its shores are quite springy and its supply of water is abundant and unfailing, — indeed tradition says that a sawmill once stood over its outlet, though its whole extent, including its sources, is not more than I have mentioned, — a meadow through which the Fitchburg Railroad passes by a very high causeway, which required many a carload of sand, where the laborers for a long time seemed to make no progress, for the sand settled so much in the night that by morning they were where they were the day before, and finally the weight of the sand forced upward the adjacent crust of the meadow with the trees on it many feet, and cracked it for some rods around. It is a wet and springy place throughout the summer, with a ditch-like channel, and in one part water stands the year round, with cat-o'-nine-tails and tussocks and muskrats' cabins rising above it, where good cranberries may be raked if you are careful to anticipate the frost which visits this cool hollow unexpectedly early. Well, as I was saying, I heard a splashing in the shallow and muddy water and stood awhile to observe

the cause of it. Again and again I heard and saw the commotion, but could not guess the cause of it, — what kind of life had its residence in that insignificant pool. We sat down on the hillside. Ere long a muskrat came swimming by as if attracted by the same disturbance, and then another and another, till three had passed, and I began to suspect that they were at the bottom of it. Still ever and anon I observed the same commotion in the waters over the same spot, and at length I observed the snout of some creature slyly raised above the surface after each commotion, as if to see if it were observed by foes, and then but a few rods distant I saw another snout above the water and began to divine the cause of the disturbance. Putting off my shoes and stockings, I crept stealthily down the hill and waded out slowly and noiselessly about a rod from the firm land, keeping behind the tussocks, till I stood behind the tussock near which I had observed the splashing. Then, suddenly stooping over it, I saw through the shallow but muddy water that there was a mud turtle there, and thrusting in my hand at once caught him by the claw, and, quicker than I can tell it, heaved him high and dry ashore; and there came out with him a large pout just dead and partly devoured, which he held in his jaws. It was the pout in his flurry and the turtle in his struggles to hold him fast which had created the commotion. There he had lain, probably buried in the mud at the bottom up to his eyes, till the pout came sailing over, and then this musky lagune had put forth in the direction of his ventral fins, expanding suddenly under the influence of a more than vernal heat, — there

are sermons in stones, eye and mud turtles at the bottoms of the pools, — in the direction of his ventral fins, his tender white belly, where he kept no eye; and the minister squeaked his last.<sup>1</sup> Oh, what an eye was there, my countrymen! buried in mud up to the lids, meditating on what? sleepless at the bottom of the pool, at the top of the bottom, directed heavenward, in no danger from moles. Pouts expect their foes not from below. Suddenly a mud volcano swallowed him up, seized his midriff; he fell into those relentless jaws from which there is no escape, which relax not their hold even in death.<sup>2</sup> There the pout might calculate on remaining until nine days after the head was cut off. Sculled through Heywood's shallow meadow, not thinking of foes, looking through the water up into the sky. I saw his [the turtle's] brother sunning and airing his broad back like a ship bottom up which had been scuttled, — foundered at sea. I had no idea that there was so much going on in Heywood's meadow.

The pickerel commonly lie perfectly still at night, like sticks, in very shallow water near the shore near a brook's mouth. I have seen a large one with a deep white wound from a spear, cutting him half in two, unhealed and unhealable, fast asleep, and forked him into my boat. I have struck a pickerel sound asleep and knew that I cut him almost in two, and the next moment heard him go ashore several rods off; for being thus awakened in their dreams they shoot off with one impulse, intending only to abandon those parts, without considering exactly to what places they

<sup>1</sup> [See *Journal*, vol. i, p. 475.]

<sup>2</sup> [Channing, p. 298.]



shall go. One night a small pickerel, which the boat had probably struck in his sleep, leaped into the boat and so was secured without a wound.

The chub is a soft fish and tastes like boiled brown paper salted.

I was as interested in the discovery of limestone as if it had been gold, and wondered that I had never thought of it before. Now all things seemed to radiate round limestone, and I saw how the farmers lived near to, or far from, a locality of limestone. I detected it sometimes in walls, and surmised from what parts it was probably carted; or when I looked down into an old deserted well, I detected it in the wall, and found where the first settlers had quarried it extensively. I read a new page in the history of these parts in the old limestone quarries and kilns where the old settlers found the materials of their houses; and I considered that, since it was found so profitable even at Thomaston to burn lime with coal dust, perchance these quarries might be worked again.<sup>1</sup>

When the rocks were covered with snow, I even uncovered them with my hands, that I might observe their composition and strata, and thought myself lucky when the sun had laid one bare for me; but [now] that they are all uncovered I pass by without noticing them. There is a time for everything.

We are never prepared to believe that our ancestors lifted large stones or built thick walls. I find that I must have supposed that they built their bank walls of such as a single man could handle. For since we have put

<sup>1</sup> [See *Journal*, vol. v, June 10, 1853.]

their lives behind us we can think of no sufficient motive for such exertion. How can their works be so visible and permanent and themselves so transient? When I see a stone which it must have taken many yoke of oxen to move, lying in a bank wall which was built two hundred years ago, I am curiously surprised, because it suggests an energy and force of which we have no memorials. Where are the traces of the corresponding moral and intellectual energy? I am not prepared to believe that a man lived here so long ago who could elevate into a wall and properly aline a rock of great size and fix it securely,—such an Archimedes. I walk over the old corn-fields, it is true, where the grassy corn-hills still appear in the woods, but there are no such traces of them there. Again, we are wont to think that our ancestors were all stalwart men, because only their most enduring works have come down to us. I think that the man who lifted so large a rock in the course of his ordinary work should have had a still larger for his monument.

I noticed a singular instance of ventriloquism to-day in a male chewink singing on the top of a young oak. It was difficult to believe that the last part of his strain, the concluding jingle, did not proceed from a different quarter, a woodside many rods off. *Hip-you, he-he-he-he*. It was long before I was satisfied that the last part was not the answer of his mate given in exact time. I endeavored to get between the two; indeed, I seemed to be almost between them already.

I have not seen Walden so high for many years; it is within four feet of the pond-hole in Hubbard's woods.

The river is higher than it has been at this season for many years.

When the far mountains are invisible, the near ones look the higher.

The oldest nature is elastic. I just felt myself raised upon the swell of the eternal ocean, which came rolling this way to land.

When my eye ranges over some thirty miles of this globe's surface, — an eminence green and waving, with sky and mountains to bound it, — I am richer than Cræsus.

The variously colored blossoms of the shrub oaks now, in May, hanging gracefully like ear-drops, or the similar blossoms of the large oaks.

I have noticed the effect of a flag set up on a hill in the country. It tames the landscape, subdues it to itself. The hill looks as if it were a military post. Our green, wild country landscape is gathered under the folds of a flag.

A lively appearance is imparted to the landscape as seen from Nawshawtuct, by the flood on the meadows, — by the alternation of land and water, of green and of light colors. The frequent causeways, and the hedge-rows (?) jutting into the meadows, and the islands, have an appearance full of light and life.

To-day, May 31st, a red and white cow, being uneasy, broke out of the steam-mill pasture and crossed the bridge and broke into Elijah Wood's grounds. When he endeavored to drive her out by the bars, she boldly took to the water, wading first through the meadows

full of ditches, and swam across the river, about forty rods wide at this time, and landed in her own pasture again. She was a buffalo crossing her Mississippi. This exploit conferred some dignity on the herd in my eyes, already dignified, and reflectedly on the river, which I looked on as a kind of Bosphorus.

I love to see the domestic animals reassert their native rights, — any evidence that they have not lost their original wild habits and vigor.<sup>1</sup>

There is a sweet wild world which lies along the strain of the wood thrush — the rich intervalles which border the stream of its song — more thoroughly genial to my nature than any other.<sup>2</sup>

The blossoms of the tough and vivacious shrub oak are very handsome.

I visited a retired, now almost unused, graveyard in Lincoln to-day, where five British soldiers lie buried who fell on the 19th April, '75. Edmund Wheeler, grandfather of William, who lived in the old house now pulled down near the present, went over the next day and carted them to this ground. A few years ago one Felch, a phrenologist, by leave of the selectmen dug up and took away two skulls. The skeletons were very large, probably those of grenadiers. William Wheeler, who was present, told me this. He said that he had heard old Mr. Child, who lived opposite, say that when one soldier was shot he leaped right up his full length out of the ranks and fell dead; and he, William Wheeler, saw a bullet-hole through and through one of the skulls.

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 234; Riv. 287.] <sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 225; Riv. 276.]

Close by stood a stone with this inscription:—

In memory of  
Sippio Brister  
a man of Colour  
who died  
Nov 1. 1820  
Æt. 64.

But that is not telling us that he lived.<sup>1</sup>

There was one Newell, a tailor, his neighbor, who became a Universalist minister. Breed put on his sign:—

Tailoring and barbering done with speed  
By John C Newell & John C Breed.<sup>2</sup>

The water was over the turnpike below Master Cheney's when I returned (May 31st, 1850).

[A third of a page torn out here.]

that these fences, to a considerable extent, will be found to mark natural divisions, especially if the land is not very minutely divided, — mowing (upland and meadow) pasture, woodland, and the different kinds of tillage. There will be found in the farmer's motive for setting a fence here or there some conformity to natural limits. These artificial divisions no doubt have the effect of increasing the area and variety to the traveller. These various fields taken together appear more extensive than a single prairie of the same size would. If the divisions corresponded [A third of a page torn out here.]

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 284; Riv. 399.]

<sup>2</sup> [This in regard to Breed and Newell is written in a fine hand at the top of the page, and probably belonged with something on the part torn out.]

The year has many seasons more than are recognized in the almanac. There is that time about the first of June, the beginning of summer, when the buttercups blossom in the now luxuriant grass and I am first reminded of mowing and of the dairy. Every one will have observed different epochs. There is the time when they begin to drive cows to pasture, — about the 20th of May, — observed by the farmer, but a little arbitrary year by year. Cows spend their winters in barns and cow-yards, their summers in pastures. In summer, therefore, they may low with emphasis, "To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new." I sometimes see a neighbor or two united with their boys and hired men to drive their cattle to some far-off country pasture, fifty or sixty miles distant in New Hampshire, early in the morning, with their sticks and dogs. It is a memorable time with the farmers' boys, and frequently their first journey from home. The herdsman in some mountain pasture is expecting them. And then in the fall, when they go up to drive them back, they speculate as to whether Janet or Brindle will know them. I heard such a boy exclaim on such an occasion, when the calf of the spring returned a heifer, as he stroked her side, "She knows me, father; she knows me." Driven up to be the cattle on a thousand hills.

I once set fire to the woods. Having set out, one April day, to go to the sources of Concord River in a boat with a single companion, meaning to camp on the bank at night or seek a lodging in some neighboring country inn or farmhouse, we took fishing tackle with us that we might fitly procure our food from the stream. Indian-

like. At the shoemaker's near the river, we obtained a match, which we had forgotten. Though it was thus early in the spring, the river was low, for there had not been much rain, and we succeeded in catching a mess of fish sufficient for our dinner before we had left the town, and by the shores of Fair Haven Pond we proceeded to cook them. The earth was uncommonly dry, and our fire, kindled far from the woods in a sunny recess in the hillside on the east of the pond, suddenly caught the dry grass of the previous year which grew about the stump on which it was kindled. We sprang to extinguish it at first with our hands and feet, and then we fought it with a board obtained from the boat, but in a few minutes it was beyond our reach; being on the side of a hill, it spread rapidly upward, through the long, dry, wiry grass interspersed with bushes.

"Well, where will this end?" asked my companion. I saw that it might be bounded by Well Meadow Brook on one side, but would, perchance, go to the village side of the brook. "It will go to town," I answered. While my companion took the boat back down the river, I set out through the woods to inform the owners and to raise the town. The fire had already spread a dozen rods on every side and went leaping and crackling wildly and irreclaimably toward the wood. That way went the flames with wild delight, and we felt that we had no control over the demonic creature to which we had given birth. We had kindled many fires in the woods before, burning a clear space in the grass, without ever kindling such a fire as this.

As I ran toward the town through the woods, I could

see the smoke over the woods behind me marking the spot and the progress of the flames. The first farmer whom I met driving a team, after leaving the woods, inquired the cause of the smoke. I told him. "Well," said he, "it is none of my stuff," and drove along. The next I met was the owner in his field, with whom I returned at once to the woods, running all the way. I had already run two miles. When at length we got into the neighborhood of the flames, we met a carpenter who had been hewing timber, an infirm man who had been driven off by the fire, fleeing with his axe. The farmer returned to hasten more assistance. I, who was spent with running, remained. What could I do alone against a front of flame half a mile wide?

I walked slowly through the wood to Fair Haven Cliff, climbed to the highest rock, and sat down upon it to observe the progress of the flames, which were rapidly approaching me, now about a mile distant from the spot where the fire was kindled. Presently I heard the sound of the distant bell giving the alarm, and I knew that the town was on its way to the scene. Hitherto I had felt like a guilty person, — nothing but shame and regret. But now I settled the matter with myself shortly. I said to myself: "Who are these men who are said to be the owners of these woods, and how am I related to them? I have set fire to the forest, but I have done no wrong therein, and now it is as if the lightning had done it. These flames are but consuming their natural food." (It has never troubled me from that day to this more than if the lightning had done it. The trivial fishing was all that disturbed me and disturbs me still.) So shortly I

settled it with myself and stood to watch the approaching flames.<sup>1</sup> It was a glorious spectacle, and I was the only one there to enjoy it. The fire now reached the base of the cliff and then rushed up its sides. The squirrels ran before it in blind haste, and three pigeons dashed into the midst of the smoke. The flames flashed up the pines to their tops, as if they were powder.

When I found I was about to be surrounded by the fire, I retreated and joined the forces now arriving from the town. It took us several hours to surround the flames with our hoes and shovels and by back fires subdue them. In the midst of all I saw the farmer whom I first met, who had turned indifferently away saying it was none of his stuff, striving earnestly to save his corded wood, his stuff, which the fire had already seized and which it after all consumed.

It burned over a hundred acres or more and destroyed much young wood. When I returned home late in the day, with others of my townsmen, I could not help noticing that the crowd who were so ready to condemn the individual who had kindled the fire did not sympathize with the owners of the wood, but were in fact highly elate and as it were thankful for the opportunity which had afforded them so much sport; and it was only half a dozen owners, so called, though not all of them, who looked sour or grieved, and I felt that I had a deeper interest in the woods, knew them better and should feel their loss more, than any or all of them. The farmer whom I had first conducted to the woods was obliged to ask me the shortest way back, through his own lot.

<sup>1</sup> [See p. 40.]

Why, then, should the half-dozen owners [and] the individuals who set the fire alone feel sorrow for the loss of the wood, while the rest of the town have their spirits raised? Some of the owners, however, bore their loss like men, but other some declared behind my back that I was a "damned rascal;" and a fibbertigibbet or two, who crowed like the old cock, shouted some reminiscences of "burnt woods" from safe recesses for some years after. I have had nothing to say to any of them. The locomotive engine has since burned over nearly all the same ground and more, and in some measure blotted out the memory of the previous fire. For a long time after I had learned this lesson I marvelled that while matches and tinder were contemporaries the world was not consumed; why the houses that have hearths were not burned before another day; if the flames were not as hungry now as when I waked them. I at once ceased to regard the owners and my own fault, — if fault there was any in the matter, — and attended to the phenomenon before me, determined to make the most of it. To be sure, I felt a little ashamed when I reflected on what a trivial occasion this had happened, that at the time I was no better employed than my townsmen.

That night I watched the fire, where some stumps still flamed at midnight in the midst of the blackened waste, wandering through the woods by myself; and far in the night I threaded my way to the spot where the fire had taken, and discovered the now broiled fish, — which had been dressed, — scattered over the burnt grass.

This has been a cool day, though the first of summer.

The prospect of the meadows from Lee's Hill was very fine. I observe that the shadows of the trees are very distinct and heavy in such a day, falling on the fresh grass. They are as obvious as the trees themselves by mid-afternoon. Commonly we do not make much account of the distinct shadows of objects in the landscape.

What is bare and unsightly is covered by the water now. The verdure seems to spring directly from its bosom; there are no stems nor roots. The meadows are so many mirrors reflecting the light, — toward sunset dazzlingly bright.

I visited this afternoon (June 3d) Goodman's Hill in Sudbury, going through Lincoln over Sherman's Bridge and Round Hill, and returning through the Corner. It probably affords the best view of Concord River meadows of any hill. The horizon is very extensive as it is, and if the top were cleared so that you could get the western view, it would be one of the most extensive seen from any hill in the county. The most imposing horizons are those which are seen from tops of hills rising out of a river valley. The prospect even from a low hill has something majestic in it in such a case. The landscape is a vast amphitheatre rising to its rim in the horizon. There is a good view of Lincoln lying high up in among the hills. You see that it is the highest town hereabouts, and hence its fruit. The river at this time looks as large as the Hudson. I think that a river-valley town is much the handsomest and largest-featured, — like Concord and Lancaster, for instance, natural centres. Upon the

hills of Bolton, again, the height of land between the Concord and Nashua, I have seen how the peach flourishes. Nobscot, too, is quite imposing as seen from the west side of Goodman's Hill. On the western side of a continuation of this hill is Wadsworth's battle-field.<sup>1</sup>

Returning, I saw in Sudbury twenty-five nests of the new (cliff?) swallow under the eaves of a barn. They seemed particularly social and loquacious neighbors, though their voices are rather squeaking. Their nests, built side by side, looked somewhat like large hornets' nests, enough so to prove a sort of connection. Their activity, sociability, and chattiness make them fit pensioners and neighbors of man — summer companions — for the barn-yard.

The last of May and the first of June the farmers are everywhere planting their corn and beans and potatoes.

To-day, June 4th, I have been tending a burning in the woods. Ray was there. It is a pleasant fact that you will know no man long, however low in the social scale, however poor, miserable, intemperate, and worthless he may appear to be, a mere burden to society, but you will find at last that there is something which he understands and can do better than any other. I was pleased to hear that one man had sent Ray as the one who had had the most experience in setting fires of any man in Lincoln. He had experience and skill as a burner of brush.

<sup>1</sup> [Where Captain Samuel Wadsworth fell in a battle with the Indians, April 18, 1676.]

You must burn against the wind always, and burn slowly. When the fire breaks over the hoed line, a little system and perseverance will accomplish more toward quelling it than any man would believe. It fortunately happens that the experience acquired is oftentimes worth more than the wages. When a fire breaks out in the woods, and a man fights it too near and on the side, in the heat of the moment, without the systematic coöperation of others, he is disposed to think it a desperate case, and that this relentless fiend will run through the forest till it is glutted with food; but let the company rest from their labors a moment, and then proceed more deliberately and systematically, giving the fire a wider berth, and the company will be astonished to find how soon and easily they will subdue it. The woods themselves furnish one of the best weapons with which to contend with the fires that destroy them, — a pitch pine bough. It is the best instrument to thrash it with. There are few men who do not love better to give advice than to give assistance.

However large the fire, let a few men go to work deliberately but perseveringly to rake away the leaves and hoe off the surface of the ground at a convenient distance from the fire, while others follow with pine boughs to thrash it with when it reaches the line, and they will finally get round it and subdue it, and will be astonished at their own success.

A man who is about to burn his field in the midst of woods should rake off the leaves and twigs for the breadth of a rod at least, making no large heaps near the outside, and then plow around it several furrows and

break them up with hoes, and set his fire early in the morning, before the wind rises.

As I was fighting the fire to-day, in the midst of the roaring and crackling, — for the fire seems to snort like a wild horse, — I heard from time to time the dying strain, the last sigh, the fine, clear, shrill scream of agony, as it were, of the trees breathing their last, probably the heated air or the steam escaping from some chink. At first I thought it was some bird, or a dying squirrel's note of anguish, or steam escaping from the tree. You sometimes hear it on a small scale in the log on the hearth. When a field is burned over, the squirrels probably go into the ground. How foreign is the yellow pine to the green woods — and what business has it here?

The fire stopped within a few inches of a partridge's nest to-day, June 4th, whom we took off in our hands and found thirteen creamy-colored eggs. I started up a woodcock when I went to a rill to drink, at the westernmost angle of R. W. E.'s wood-lot.

To-night, June 5th, after a hot day, I hear the first peculiar summer breathing of the frogs.

When all is calm, a small whirlwind will suddenly lift up the blazing leaves and let them fall beyond the line, and set all the woods in a blaze in a moment. Or some slight almost invisible cinder, seed of fire, will be wafted from the burnt district on to the dry turf which covers the surface and fills the crevices of many rocks, and there it will catch as in tinder, and smoke and smoulder, perchance, for half an hour, heating several square yards of ground where yet no fire is

visible, until it spreads to the leaves and the wind fans it into a blaze.

Men go to a fire for entertainment. When I see how eagerly men will run to a fire, whether in warm or in cold weather, by day or by night, dragging an engine at their heels, I am astonished to perceive how good a purpose the love of excitement is made to serve. What other force, pray, what offered pay, what disinterested neighborliness could ever effect so much? No, these are boys who are to be dealt with, and these are the motives that prevail. There is no old man or woman dropping into the grave but covets excitement.

Yesterday, when I walked to Goodman's Hill, it seemed to me that the atmosphere was never so full of fragrance and spicy odors. There is a great variety in the fragrance of the apple blossoms as well as their tints. Some are quite spicy. The air seemed filled with the odor of ripe strawberries, though it is quite too early for them. The earth was not only fragrant but sweet and spicy to the smell, reminding us of Arabian gales and what mariners tell of the spice islands. The first of June, when the lady's-slipper and the wild pink have come out in sunny places on the hillsides, then the summer is begun according to the clock of the seasons.

Here it is the 8th of June, and the grass is growing apace. In the front yards of the village they are already beginning to cut it. The fields look luxuriant and verdurous, but, as the weather is warmer, the atmosphere is not so clear. In distant woods the partridge sits on

her eggs, and at evening the frogs begin to dream and boys begin to bathe in the river and ponds.

Cultivate the habit of early rising. It is unwise to keep the head long on a level with the feet.

The cars come and go with such regularity and precision, and the whistle and rumble are heard so far, that town clocks and family clocks are already half dispensed with, and it is easy to foresee that one extensive well-conducted and orderly institution like a railroad will keep time and order for a whole country. The startings and arrivals of the cars are the epochs in a village day.<sup>1</sup>

Not till June can the grass be said to be waving in the fields. When the frogs dream, and the grass waves, and the buttercups toss their heads, and the heat disposes to bathe in the ponds and streams, then is summer begun.

June 9th, 1850, Walden is still rising, though the rains have ceased and the river has fallen very much. I see the pollen of the pitch pine now beginning to cover the surface of the pond. Most of the pines at the north-northwest end have none, and on some there is only one pollen-bearing flower.

I saw a striped snake which the fire in the woods had killed, stiffened and partially blackened by the flames, with its body partly coiled up and raised from the ground,

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 130; Riv. 184, 185.]



and its head still erect as if ready to dart out its tongue and strike its foe. No creature can exhibit more venom than a snake, even when it is not venomous, strictly speaking.

The fire ascended the oak trees very swiftly by the moss which fringed them.

It has a singular effect on us when we hear the geologist apply his terms to Judea, — speak of “limestone” and “blocks of trap and conglomerate, boulders of sandstone and quartz” there. Or think of a chemical analysis of the water of the Dead Sea!

The pitch and white pines are two years or more maturing their seed.

Certain rites are practiced by the Smrities (among the Hindoos) at the digging of wells.

In early times the Brahmans, though they were the legislators of India, possessed no executive power and lived in poverty; yet they were for the most part independent and respected.

Galbraith's *Math. Tables*, Edinburgh, 1834. For descriptions of instruments he refers to Jones's edition of Adam's *Geom. and Graphical Essays*, Biot's *Traité d'Astronomie Physique*, Base du *Système Métrique*, Woodhouse's, Vince's, and Pearson's *Treatises of Astronomy*. For problems connected with trigonometrical surveying, to the third volume of Hutton's *Course of Math.* by Dr. O. Gregory, Baron Zach's work on the *Attraction of Mountains*, the *Base du Système de Métrique Décimal*, and Puissant's *Géodesie*.

Olive or red seems the fittest color for a man, a deni-

zen of the woods. The *pale white man!* I do not wonder that the African pitied him.<sup>1</sup>

The white pine cones are now two inches long, curved sickle-like from the topmost branches, reminding you of the tropical trees which bear their fruit at their heads.<sup>2</sup>

The life in us is like the water in the river; it may rise this year higher than ever it was known to before and flood the uplands — even this may be the eventful year — and drown out all our muskrats.<sup>3</sup>

There [are] as many strata at different levels of life as there are leaves in a book. Most men probably have lived in two or three. When on the higher levels we can remember the lower levels, but when on the lower we cannot remember the higher.

My imagination, my love and reverence and admiration, my sense of the miraculous, is not so excited by any event as by the remembrance of my youth. Men talk about Bible miracles because there is no miracle in their lives. Cease to gnaw that crust. There is ripe fruit over your head.

Woe to him who wants a companion, for he is unfit to be the companion even of himself.

We inspire friendship in men when we have contracted friendship with the gods.

When we cease to sympathize with and to be personally related to men, and begin to be universally related, then we are capable of inspiring others with the sentiment of love for us.

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 226; Riv. 277.]

<sup>2</sup> I find that they are last year's. The white pine has not blossomed.

<sup>3</sup> [*Walden*, p. 366; Riv. 513.]

We hug the earth. How rarely we mount! How rarely we climb a tree! We might get a little higher, methinks. That pine would make us dizzy. You can see the mountains from it as you never did before.<sup>1</sup>

Shall not a man have his spring as well as the plants?

The halo around the shadow is visible both morning and evening.<sup>2</sup>

After this and some other fires in the woods which I helped to put out, a more effectual system by which to quell them occurred to me. When the bell rings, hundreds will run to a fire in the woods without carrying any implement, and then waste much time after they get there either in doing nothing or what is worse than nothing, having come mainly out of curiosity, it being as interesting to see it burn as to put it out. I thought that it would be well if forty or fifty men in every country town should enroll themselves into a company for this purpose and elect suitable officers. The town should provide a sufficient number of rakes, hoes, and shovels, which it should be the duty of certain of the company to convey to [the] woods in a wagon, together with the drum, on the first alarm, people being unwilling to carry their own tools for fear they will be lost. When the captain or one of the numerous vice-captains arrives, having inspected the fire and taken his measures, let him cause the roll to be called, however the men may be engaged, and just take a turn or two with his men to form them into sections and see where they are. Then

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 244, 245; Riv. 300.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Walden*, pp. 224, 225; Riv. 316.]

he can appoint and equip his rake-men and his hoe-men and his bough-men, and drop them at the proper places, always retaining the drummer and a scout; and when he has learned through his scout that the fire has broken out in a new place, he, by beat of drum, can take up one or two men of each class — as many as can be spared — and repair to the scene of danger.

One of my friends suggests instead of the drum some delicious music, adding that then he would come. It might be well, to refresh the men when wearied with work, and cheer them on their return. Music is the proper regulator.

So, far in the East, among the Yezidis, or Worshipers of the Devil, so called, and the Chaldæans, and so forth, you may hear these remarkable disputations on doctrinal points.<sup>1</sup>

Any reverence, even for a material thing, proceeds from an elevation of character. Layard, speaking of the reverence for the sun exhibited by the Yezidis, or Worshipers of the Devil, says: "They are accustomed to kiss the object on which its first beams fall; and I have frequently, when travelling in their company at sunrise, observed them perform this ceremony. For fire, as symbolic, they have nearly the same reverence; they never spit into it, but frequently pass their hands through the flame, kiss them, and rub them over their right eyebrow, or sometimes over the whole face."

Who taught the oven-bird to conceal her nest? It is

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 54; Riv. 62.]

on the ground, yet out of sight. What cunning there is in nature! No man could have arranged it more artfully for the purpose of concealment. Only the escape of the bird betrays it.

I observe to-night, June 15th, the air over the river by the Leaning Hemlocks filled with myriads of newly fledged insects drifting and falling as it were like snowflakes from the maples, only not so white. Now they drift up the stream, now down, while the river below is dimpled with the fishes rising to swallow the innumerable insects which have fallen [into] it and are struggling with it. I saw how He fed his fish. They, swimming in the dark nether atmosphere of the river, rose lazily to its surface to swallow such swimmers of the light upper atmosphere as sank to its bottom.<sup>1</sup>

I picked up to-day the lower jaw of a hog, with white and sound teeth and tusks, which reminded me that there was an animal health and vigor distinct from the spiritual health. This animal succeeded by other means than temperance and purity.<sup>2</sup>

There are thirty-eight lighthouses in Massachusetts. The light on the Highlands of Neversink is visible the greatest distance, *viz.* thirty miles. There are two there, one revolving, one not.

The fantastic open light crosses which the limbs of the larch make, seen against the sky, of the sky-blue color its foliage.

In a swamp where the trees stand up to their knees, two or three feet deep, in the fine bushes as in a moss bed.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Kirby and Spence, vol. i.    <sup>2</sup> [*Walden*, p. 242; Riv. 341.]

The arbor-vitæ fans, rich, heavy, elaborate, like bead-work.

*June 20.* I can see from my window three or four cows in a pasture on the side of Fair Haven Hill, a mile and a half distant. There is but one tree in the pasture, and they are all collected and now reposing in its shade, which, as it is early though sultry, is extended a good way along the ground. It makes a pretty landscape. That must have been an epoch in the history of the cow when they discovered to stand in the shadow of a tree. I wonder if they are wise enough to recline on the north side of it, that they may not be disturbed so soon. It shows the importance of leaving trees for shade in the pastures as well as for beauty. There is a long black streak, and in it the cows are collected. How much more they will need this shelter at noon! It is a pleasant life they lead in the summer, — roaming in well-watered pastures, grazing, and chewing the cud in the shade, — quite a philosophic life and favorable for contemplation, not like their pent-up winter life in close and foul barns. If only they could say as on the prairies, "Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

Cattle and horses, however, retain many of their wild habits or instincts wonderfully. The seeds of instinct are preserved under their thick hides, like seeds in the bowels of the earth, an indefinite period.<sup>1</sup> I have heard of a horse which his master could not catch in his pasture when the first snowflakes were falling, who persisted in wintering out. As he persisted in keeping out

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 234; Riv. 287.]

of his reach, his master finally left him. When the snow had covered the ground three or four inches deep, the horse pawed it away to come at the grass, — just as the wild horses of Michigan do, who are turned loose by their Indian masters, — and so he picked up a scanty subsistence. By the next day he had had enough of free life and pined for his stable, and so suffered himself to be caught.

A blacksmith, my neighbor, heard a great clattering noise the other day behind his shop, and on going out found that his mare and his neighbor the pumpmaker's were fighting. They would run at one another, then turn round suddenly and let their heels fly. The rattling of their hoofs one against the other was the noise he heard. They repeated this several times with intervals of grazing, until one prevailed. The next day they bore the marks of some bruises, some places where the skin was rucked up, and some swellings.

And then for my afternoon walks I have a garden, larger than any artificial garden that I have read of and far more attractive to me, — mile after mile of embowered walks, such as no nobleman's grounds can boast, with animals running free and wild therein as from the first, — varied with land and water prospect, and, above all, so retired that it is extremely rare that I meet a single wanderer in its mazes. No gardener is seen therein, no gates nor [*sic*]. You may wander away to solitary bowers and brooks and hills.

The ripple marks on the sandy bottom of Flint's Pond, where the rushes grow, feel hard to the feet of

the wader, though the sand is really soft, — made firm perchance by the weight of the water.<sup>1</sup>

The rushes over the water are white with the exuviae, the skeletons, of insects, — like blossoms, — which have deposited their eggs on their tops. The skeletons looked like those of shad-flies, though some living insects were not.

I have seen crimson-colored eggs painting the leaves of the black birch quite beautifully.

And now the ascending sun has contracted the shadow of the solitary tree, and they are compelled to seek the neighboring wood for shelter.

*June 21.* The flowers of the white pine are now in their prime, but I see none of their pollen on the pond.

This piece of rural pantomime, this bucolic, is enacted before me every day. Far over the hills on that fair hillside, I look into the pastoral age.

But these are only the disadvantages of a fire. It is without doubt an advantage on the whole. It sweeps and ventilates the forest floor, and makes it clear and clean. It is nature's besom. By destroying the punier underwood it gives prominence to the larger and sturdier trees, and makes a wood in which you can go and come. I have often remarked with how much more comfort and pleasure I could walk in woods through which a fire had run the previous year. It will clean the forest floor like a broom perfectly smooth and clear, — no twigs

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 216; Riv. 305.]

left to crackle underfoot, the dead and rotten wood removed, — and thus in the course of two or three years new huckleberry fields are created for the town, — for birds and men.

When the lightning burns the forest its Director makes no apology to man, and I was but His agent. Perhaps we owe to this accident partly some of the noblest natural parks. It is inspiring to walk amid the fresh green sprouts of grass and shrubbery pushing upward through the charred surface with more vigorous growth.

Wherever a man goes men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes an arrowhead is found with the mouldering shaft still attached. (*Vide* Charles Hubbard.) A little boy from Compton, R. I., told me that his father found an arrowhead sticking in a dead tree and nearly buried in it. Where is the hand that drew that bow? The arrow shot by the Indian is still found occasionally, sticking in the trees of our forest.

It is astonishing how much information is to be got out of very unpromising witnesses. A wise man will avail himself of the observation of all. Every boy and simpleton has been an observer in some field, — so many more senses they are, differently located. Will inquire of eyes what they have seen, of ears what they have heard, of hands what they have done, of feet where they have been.

July 16. I have not yet been able to collect half a

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 190; Riv. 268.]

thimbleful of the pollen of the pine on Walden, abundant as it was last summer.

There is in our yard a little pitch pine four or five years old and not much more than a foot high, with small cones on it but no male flowers; and yet I do not know of another pitch pine tree within half a mile.

Many men walk by day; few walk by night. It is a very different season. Instead of the sun, there are the moon and stars; instead of the wood thrush, there is the whip-poor-will; instead of butterflies, fireflies, winged sparks of fire! who would have believed it? What kind of life and cool deliberation dwells in a spark of fire in dewy abodes? Every man carries fire in his eye, or in his blood, or in his brain. Instead of singing birds, the croaking of frogs and the intenser dream of crickets. The potatoes stand up straight, the corn grows, the bushes loom, and, in a moonlight night, the shadows of rocks and trees and bushes and hills are more conspicuous than the objects themselves. The slightest inequalities in the ground are revealed by the shadows; what the feet find comparatively smooth appears rough and diversified to the eye. The smallest recesses in the rocks are dim and cavernous; the ferns in the wood appear to be of tropical size; the pools seen through the leaves become as full of light as the sky. "The light of day takes refuge in their bosom," as the Purana says of the ocean. The woods are heavy and dark. Nature slumbers. The rocks retain the warmth of the sun which they have absorbed all night.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 326-328; Riv. 401-403.]

The names of those who bought these fields of the red men, the wild men of the woods, are Buttrick, Davis, Barrett, Bulkley, etc., etc. (*Vide* History.) Here and there still you will find a man with Indian blood in his veins, an eccentric farmer descended from an Indian chief; or you will see a solitary pure-blooded Indian, looking as wild as ever among the pines, one of the last of the Massachusetts tribes, stepping into a railroad car with his gun.

Still here and there an Indian squaw with her dog, her only companion, lives in some lone house, insulted by school-children, making baskets and picking berries her employment. You will meet her on the highway, with few children or none, with melancholy face, history, destiny; stepping after her race; who had stayed to tuck them up in their long sleep. For whom berries condescend to grow. I have not seen one on the Musketaquid for many a year, and some who came up in their canoes and camped on its banks a dozen years ago had to ask me where it came from. A lone Indian woman without children, accompanied by her dog, wearing the shroud of her race, performing the last offices for her departed race. Not yet absorbed into the elements again; a daughter of the soil; one of the nobility of the land. The white man an imported weed, — burdock and mullein, which displace the ground-nut.

As a proof that oysters do not move, I have been told by a Long Island oysterman that they are found in large clusters surrounding the parent oyster in the position in which they must have grown, the young being several years old.

I find the actual to be far less real to me than the imagined. Why this singular prominence and importance is given to the former, I do not know. In proportion as that which possesses my thoughts is removed from the actual, it impresses me. I have never met with anything so truly visionary and accidental as some actual events. They have affected me less than my dreams. Whatever actually happens to a man is wonderfully trivial and insignificant, — even to death itself, I imagine. He complains of the fates who drown him, that they do not touch *him*. They do not deal directly with him. I have in my pocket a button which I ripped off the coat of the Marquis of Ossoli<sup>1</sup> on the seashore the other day. Held up, it intercepts the light and casts a shadow, — an *actual* button so called, — and yet all the life it is connected with is less substantial to me than my faintest dreams. This stream of events which we consent to call actual, and that other mightier stream which alone carries us with it, — what makes the difference? On the one our bodies float, and we have sympathy with it through them; on the other, our spirits. We are ever dying to one world and being born into another, and possibly no man knows whether he is at any time dead in the sense in which he affirms that phenomenon of another, or not. Our thoughts are the epochs of our life: all else is but as a journal of the winds that blew while we were here.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [In July, 1850, Thoreau went to Fire Island with other friends of Margaret Fuller to search for her remains. See *Cape Cod*, pp. 107, 108; Riv. 126, 127. See also next page.]

<sup>2</sup> [Part of draft of a letter to H. G. O. Blake, dated Aug. 9, 1850. Other parts follow. *Familiar Letters*.]

I do not think much of the actual. It is something which we have long since done with. It is a sort of vomit in which the unclean love to wallow.

There was nothing at all remarkable about them. They were simply some bones lying on the beach. They would not detain a walker there more than so much seaweed. I should think that the fates would not take the trouble to show me any bones again, I so slightly appreciate the favor.<sup>1</sup>

Do a little more of that work which you have sometime confessed to be good, which you feel that society and your justest judge rightly demands of you. Do what you reprove yourself for not doing. Know that you are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with yourself without reason. Let me say to you and to myself in one breath, Cultivate the tree which you have found to bear fruit in your soil. Regard not your past failures nor successes. All the past is equally a failure and a success; it is a success in as much as it offers you the present opportunity. Have you not a pretty good thinking faculty, worth more than the rarest gold watch? Can you not pass a judgment on something? Does not the stream still rise to its fountain-head in you? Go to the devil and come back again. Dispose of evil. Get punished once for all. Die, if you can. Depart. Exchange your salvation for a glass of water. If you know of any risk to run, run it. If you don't know of any, enjoy confidence. Do not trouble yourself to be religious; you will never get a thank-you for it. If you can drive a nail and have any nails to drive, drive them. If you have any experiments

<sup>1</sup> [See *Cape Cod*, p. 108; Riv. 127. See also p. 80 of this volume.]

you would like to try, try them; now's your chance. Do not entertain doubts, if they are not agreeable to you. Send them to the tavern. Do not eat unless you are hungry; there's no need of it. Do not read the newspapers. Improve every opportunity to be melancholy. Be as melancholy as you can be, and note the result. Rejoice with fate. As for health, consider yourself well, and mind your business. Who knows but you are dead already? Do not stop to be scared yet; there are more terrible things to come, and ever to come. Men die of fright and live of confidence. Be not simply obedient like the vegetables; set up your own Ebenezer. Of man's "*disobedience and the fruit*," etc. Do not engage to find things as you think they are. Do what nobody can do for you. Omit to do everything else.<sup>1</sup>

According to Lieutenant Davis, the forms, extent, and distribution of sand-bars and banks are principally determined by tides, not by winds and waves.<sup>2</sup> On sand-bars recently elevated above the level of the ocean, fresh water is obtained by digging a foot or two. It is very common for wells near the shore to rise and fall with the tide. It is an interesting fact that the low sand-bars in the midst of the ocean, even those which are laid bare only at low tide, are reservoirs of fresh water at which the thirsty mariner can supply himself. Perchance, like huge sponges, they hold the rain and dew which falls on them, and which, by capillary attraction, is prevented from mingling with the surrounding brine.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Familiar Letters*, Aug. 9, 1850.] <sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 155; Riv. 185.]

<sup>3</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 225; Riv. 271.]

It is not easy to make our lives respectable to ourselves by any course of activity. We have repeatedly to withdraw ourselves into our shells of thought like the tortoise, somewhat helplessly; and yet there is even more than philosophy in that. I do not love to entertain doubts and questions.

I am sure that my acquaintances mistake me. I am not the man they take me for. On a little nearer view they would find me out. They ask my advice on high matters, but they do not even know how poorly on't I am for hats and shoes. I have hardly a shift. Just as shabby as I am in my outward apparel, — aye, and more lamentably shabby, for nakedness is not so bad a condition after all, — am I in my inward apparel. If I should turn myself inside out, my rags and meanness would appear. I am something to him that made me, undoubtedly, but not much to any other that he has made.<sup>1</sup> All I can say is that I live and breathe and have my thoughts.

What is peculiar in the life of a man consists not in his obedience, but his opposition, to his instincts. In one direction or another he strives to live a supernatural life.

Would it not be worth the while to discover nature in Milton?<sup>2</sup> Be native to the universe. I, too, love Concord best, but I am glad when I discover, in oceans and wildernesses far away, the materials out of which a million Concords can be made, — indeed, unless I discover them, I am lost myself, — that there too I am at

<sup>1</sup> [*Familiar Letters*, Aug. 9, 1850.]

<sup>2</sup> [Blake was at the time living in Milton, Mass.]

home. Nature is as far from me as God, and sometimes I have thought to go West after her. Though the city is no more attractive to me than ever, yet I see less difference between a city and some dimmest swamp than formerly. It is a swamp too dismal and dreary, however, for me. I would as lief find a few owls and frogs and mosquitoes less. I prefer even a more cultivated place, free from miasma and crocodiles, and I will take my choice.<sup>1</sup>

From time to time I overlook the promised land, but I do not feel that I am travelling toward it. The moment I begin to look there, men and institutions get out of the way that I may see. I see nothing permanent in the society around me, and am not quite committed to any of its ways.

The heaven-born Numa, or Lycurgus, or Solon, gravely makes laws to regulate the exportation of tobacco. Will a divine legislator legislate for slaves, or to regulate the exportation of tobacco? What shall a State say for itself at the last day, in which this is a principal production?

What have grave, not to say divine, legislators — Numas, Lycurguses, Solons — to do with the exportation or the importation of tobacco. There was a man appealed to me the other day, “Can you give me a chaw of tobacco?” I *legislated* for him. Suppose you were to submit the question to any *son of God*, in what State would you get it again?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Familiar Letters*, Aug. 9, 1850.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 478; *Misc.*, Riv. 282, 283.]



Do not waste any reverence on my attitude. I manage to sit up where I have dropped. Except as you reverence the evil one, — or rather the evil *myriad*. As for missing friends, — fortunate perhaps is he who has any to miss, whose place a thought will not supply. I have an ideal friend in whose place actual persons sometimes stand for a season. The last I may often miss, but the first I recover when I am myself again. What if we do miss one another? have we not agreed upon a rendezvous? While each travels his own way through the wood with serene and inexpressible joy, though it be on his hands and knees over the rocks and fallen trees, he cannot but be on the right way; there is no wrong way to him. I have found myself as well off when I have fallen into a quagmire, as in an arm-chair in the most hospitable house. The prospect was pretty much the same. Without anxiety let us wander on, admiring whatever beauty the woods exhibit.<sup>1</sup>

Do you know on what bushes a little peace, faith, and contentment grow? Go a-berrying early and late after them.<sup>2</sup> Miss our friends! It is not easy to get rid of them. We shall miss our bodies directly.

As to conforming outwardly, and living your own life inwardly, I have not a very high opinion of that course. Do not let your right hand know what your left hand does in that line of business. I have no doubt it will prove a failure.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Familiar Letters*, Aug. 9, 1850.]

<sup>2</sup> [Channing, p. 78.]

<sup>3</sup> [*Familiar Letters*, Aug. 9, 1850.]

The wind through the blind just now sounded like the baying of a distant hound, — somewhat plaintive and melodious.

The railroad cuts make cliffs for swallows.

Getting into Patchogue late one night in an oyster-boat, there was a drunken Dutchman aboard whose wit reminded me of Shakespeare. When we came to leave the beach, our boat was aground, and we were detained three hours waiting for the tide. In the meanwhile two of the fishermen took an extra dram at the beach house. Then they stretched themselves on the seaweed by the shore in the sun to sleep off the effects of their debauch. One was an inconceivably broad-faced young Dutchman, — but oh! of such a peculiar breadth and heavy look, I should not know whether to call it more ridiculous or sublime. You would say that he had humbled himself so much that he was beginning to be exalted. An indescribable mynheerish stupidity. I was less disgusted by their filthiness and vulgarity, because I was compelled to look on them as animals, as swine in their sty. For the whole voyage they lay flat on their backs on the bottom of the boat, in the bilge-water and wet with each bailing, half insensible and wallowing in their vomit. But ever and anon, when aroused by the rude kicks or curses of the skipper, the Dutchman, who never lost his wit nor equanimity, though snoring and rolling in the vomit produced by his debauch, blurted forth some happy repartee like an illuminated swine. It was the earthiest, slimiest wit I ever heard. The countenance was one of

a million. It was unmistakable Dutch. In the midst of a million faces of other races it could not be mistaken. It told of Amsterdam. I kept racking my brains to conceive how he could have been born in America, how lonely he must feel, what he did for fellowship. When we were groping up the narrow creek of Patchogue at ten o'clock at night, keeping our boat off, now from this bank, now from that, with a pole, the two inebriates roused themselves betimes. For in spite of their low estate they seemed to have all their wits as much about them as ever, aye, and all the self-respect they ever had. And the Dutchman gave wise directions to the steerer, which were not heeded. Suddenly rousing himself up where the sharpest-eyed might be bewildered in the darkness, he leaned over the side of the boat and pointed straight down into the creek, averring that that identical hole was a first-rate place for eels. And again he roused himself at the right time and declared what luck he had once had with his pots (not his cups) in another place, which we were floating over in the dark. At last he suddenly stepped on to another boat which was moored to the shore, with a divine ease and sureness, saying, "Well, good-night, take care of yourselves, I can't be with you any longer." He was one of the few remarkable men whom I have met. I have been impressed by one or two men in their cups. There was really a divinity stirred within them, so that in their case I have revered the drunken, as savages the insane, man. So stupid that he could never be intoxicated. When I said, "You have had a hard time of it to-day," he answered with indescribable good humor out of the

very midst of his debauch, with watery eyes, "Well, it does n't happen every day." It was happening then.<sup>1</sup> He had taken me aboard on his back, the boat lying a rod from the shore, before I knew his condition. In the darkness our skipper steered with a pole on the bottom, for an oysterman knows the bottom of his bay as well as the shores, and can tell where he is by the soundings.<sup>2</sup>

There was a glorious lurid sunset to-night, accompanied with many sombre clouds, and when I looked into the west with my head turned, the grass had the same fresh green, and the distant herbage and foliage in the horizon the same bark blue, and the clouds and sky the same bright colors beautifully mingled and dissolving into one another, that I have seen in pictures of tropical landscapes and skies. Pale saffron skies with faint fishes of rosy clouds dissolving in them. A blood-stained sky. I regretted that I had an impatient companion. What shall we make of the fact that you have only to stand on your head a moment to be enchanted with the beauty of the landscape?

I met with a man on the beach who told me that when he wanted to jump over a brook he held up one leg a certain height, and then, if a line from his eye through his toe touched the opposite bank, he knew that he could jump it. I asked him how he knew when he held his leg at the right angle, and he said he knew the hitch very well. An Irishman told me that he held up one leg and if he could bring his toe in a range with his eye and the opposite bank he knew that he could

<sup>1</sup> [Channing, pp. 36, 37.]

<sup>2</sup> [See pp. 78, 79.]

jump it. Why, I told him, I can blot out a star with my toe, but I would not engage to jump the distance. It then appeared that he knew when he had got his leg at the right height by a certain hitch there was in it. I suggested that he should connect his two ankles with a string.<sup>1</sup>

I knew a clergyman who, when any person died, was wont to speak of that portion of mankind who survived as living monuments of God's mercy. A negative kind of life to live!

I can easily walk ten, fifteen, twenty, any number of miles, commencing at my own door, without going by any house, without crossing a road except where the fox and the mink do. Concord is the oldest inland town in New England, perhaps in the States, and the walker is peculiarly favored here. There are square miles in my vicinity which have no inhabitant. First along by the river, and then the brook, and then the meadow and the woodside. Such solitude! From a hundred hills I can see civilization and abodes of man afar. These farmers and their works are scarcely more obvious than woodchucks.<sup>2</sup>

As I was going by with a creaking wheelbarrow, one of my neighbors, who heard the music, ran out with his grease-pot and brush and greased the wheels.

<sup>1</sup> [An example of Thoreau's practice work, — the same story told in two forms. For its final form see *Cape Cod*, p. 88; Riv. 103, 104.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 212; Riv. 260.]

That is a peculiar season when about the middle of August the farmers are getting their meadow-hay. If you sail up the river, you will see them in all meadows, raking hay and loading it on to carts, great towering [?] teams, under which the oxen stand like beetles, chewing the cud, waiting for men to put the meadow on. With the heaviest load they dash aside to crop some more savory grass, — the half-broken steers.

There was reason enough for the first settler's selecting the elm out of all the trees of the forest with which to ornament his villages. It is beautiful alike by sunlight and moonlight, and the most beautiful specimens are not the largest. I have seen some only twenty-five or thirty years old, more graceful and healthy, I think, than any others. It is almost become a villageous tree, — like martins and bluebirds.

The high blueberry has the wildest flavor of any of the huckleberry tribe. It is a little mithridatic. It is like eating a poisonous berry which your nature makes harmless. I derive the same pleasure as if I were eating dog-berries, nightshade, and wild parsnip with impunity.

Man and his affairs, — Church and State and school, trade and commerce and agriculture, — Politics, — for that is the word for them all here to-day, — I am pleased to see how little space it occupies in the landscape. It is but a narrow field. That still narrower highway yonder leads to it. I sometimes direct the traveller<sup>1</sup> [Two pages missing.]

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 212, 213; Riv. 260, 261.]

And once again,  
 When I went a-maying,  
 And once or twice more  
 I had seen thee before,  
 For there grow the mayflower  
 (*Epigæa repens*)  
 And the mountain cranberry  
 And the screech owl *strepens*.

O whither dost thou go?  
 Which way dost thou flow?  
 Thou art the way.  
 Thou art a road  
 Which Dante never trode.  
 Not many they be  
 Who enter therein,  
 Only the guests of the  
 Irishman Quin.<sup>1</sup>

There was a cross-eyed fellow used to help me survey, — he was my stake-driver, — and all he said was, at every stake he drove, “There, I should n’t like to undertake to pull *that* up with my teeth.”

It sticks in my *crop*. That’s a good phrase. Many things stick there.

The man of wild habits,  
 Partridges and rabbits,  
 Who has no cares  
 Only to set snares,

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 215; Riv. 263.]

Who liv’st all alone,  
 Close to the bone,  
 And where life is sweetest  
 Constantly eatest.

Where they once dug for money,  
 But never found “ony.”

To market fares  
 With early apples and pears.  
 When the spring stirs my blood  
 With the instinct to travel,  
 I can get enough gravel  
 On the Old Marlborough Road.

If you’ll leave your abode  
 With your fancy unfurled,  
 You may go round the world  
 By the Old Marlborough Road.

Nobody repairs it,  
 For nobody wears it.  
 It is a living way,  
 As the Christians say.  
 What is it, what is it,  
 But a direction out there  
 And the bare possibility  
 Of going somewhere?  
 Great guide-boards of stone,  
 But travellers none.  
 It is worth going there to see  
 Where you might be.

They 're a great endeavor  
 To be something for ever.  
 They are a monument to somebody,  
 To some selectman  
 Who thought of the plan.  
 What king  
 Did the thing,  
 I am still wondering.  
 Cenotaphs of the towns  
 Named on their crowns;  
 Huge as Stonehenge;  
 Set up how or when,  
 By what selectmen?  
 Gourgas or Lee,  
 Clark or Darby?  
 Blank tablets of stone,  
 Where a traveller might groan,  
 And in one sentence  
 Grave all that is known;  
 Which another might read,  
 In his extreme need.  
 I know two or three  
 Sentences, *i. e.*,  
 That might there be.  
 Literature that might stand  
 All over the land.  
 Which a man might remember  
 Till after December,  
 And read again in the spring,  
 After the thawing.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, pp. 214-216; Riv. 263, 264.]

Old meeting-house bell,  
 I love thy music well.  
 It peals through the air,  
 Sweetly full and fair,  
 As in the early times,  
 When I listened to its chimes.

I walk over the hills, to compare *great* things with  
*small*, as through a gallery of pictures, ever and anon  
 looking through a gap in the wood, as through the frame  
 of a picture, to a more distant wood or hillside, painted  
 with several more coats of air. It is a cheap but pleasant  
 effect. To a landscape in picture, glassed with air.

What is a horizon without mountains?

A field of water betrays the spirit that is in the air. It  
 has new life and motion. It is intermediate between  
 land and sky. On land, only the grass and trees wave,  
 but the water itself is *rippled* by the wind. I see the  
 breeze dash across it in streaks and flakes of light. It is  
 somewhat singular that we should *look down* on the  
 surface of water. We shall look down on the surface of  
 air next, and mark where a still subtler spirit sweeps  
 over *it*.<sup>1</sup>

Without inlet it lies,  
 Without outlet it flows.  
 From and to the skies  
 It comes and it goes.  
 I am its source,  
 And my life is its course.

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, pp. 209, 210; Riv. 296.]

I am its stony shore  
And the breeze that passes o'er.<sup>1</sup>

[Two thirds of a page missing.]

All that the money-digger had ever found was a pine-tree shilling, once as he was dunging out. He was paid much more for dunging out, but he valued more the money which he found. The boy thinks most of the cent he found, not the cent he earned; for it suggests to him that he may find a great deal more, but he knows that he can't earn *much*, and perhaps did not deserve that.

[Two pages missing.]

Among the worst of men that ever lived,  
However, we did seriously attend,  
A little space we let our thoughts ascend,  
Experienced our religion and confessed  
'T was good for us to be there, — be anywhere.  
Then to a heap of apples we addressed,  
And cleared a five-rail fence with hand on the topmost  
rider *sine* care.  
Then our Icarian thoughts returned to ground,  
And we went on to heaven the long way round.

What's the railroad to me?  
I never go to see  
Where it ends.  
It fills a few hollows,  
And makes banks for the swallows;

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 215; Riv. 303.]

It sets the sand a-flowing,  
And blackberries a-growing.<sup>1</sup>

Aug. 31.

TALL AMBROSIA

Among the signs of autumn I perceive  
The Roman wormwood (called by learned men  
*Ambrosia elatior*, food for gods,  
For by impartial science the humblest weed  
Is as well named as is the proudest flower)  
Sprinkles its yellow dust over my shoes  
As I brush through the now neglected garden.  
We trample under foot the food of gods  
And spill their nectar in each drop of dew.  
My honest shoes, fast friends that never stray  
Far from my couch, thus powdered, countrified,  
Bearing many a mile the marks of their adventure,  
At the post-house disgrace the Gallic gloss  
Of those well-dressed ones who no morning dew  
Nor Roman wormwood ever have gone through,  
Who never walk, but are *transported* rather,  
For what old crime of theirs I do not gather.

The gray blueberry bushes, venerable as oaks, — why is not their fruit poisonous? Bilberry called *Vaccinium corymbosum*; some say *amœnum*, or blue bilberry, and *Vaccinium disomorphum* Mx., black bilberry. Its fruit hangs on into September, but loses its wild and sprightly taste.

Th' ambrosia of the Gods 's a weed on earth,  
Their nectar is the morning dew which on-  
Ly our shoes taste, for they are simple folks.

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, pp. 135, 136; Riv. 192.]

'T is very fit the ambrosia of the gods  
Should be a weed on earth, as nectar is  
The morning dew which our shoes brush aside;  
For the gods are simple folks, and we should pine upon  
their humble fare.

The purple flowers of the humble trichostema mingled with the wormwood, smelling like it; and the spring-scented, dandelion-scented primrose, yellow primrose. The swamp-pink (*Azalea viscosa*), its now withered pistils standing out.

The odoriferous sassafras, with its delicate green stem, its three-lobed leaf, tempting the traveller to bruise it, it sheds so rare a perfume on him, equal to all the spices of the East. Then its rare-tasting root bark, like nothing else, which I used to dig. The first navigators freighted their ships with it and deemed it worth its weight in gold.

The alder-leaved clethra (*Clethra alnifolia*), sweet-smelling queen of the swamp; its long white racemes.

We are most apt to remember and cherish the flowers which appear earliest in the spring. I look with equal affection on those which are the latest to bloom in the fall.

The choke-berry (*Pyrus arbutifolia*).

The beautiful white waxen berries of the cornel, either *Cornus alba* or *paniculata*, white-berried or panicked, beautiful both when full of fruit and when its cymes are naked; delicate red cymes or stems of berries; spreading its little fairy fingers to the skies, its little palms; fairy palms they might be called.

One of the viburnums, *Lentago* or *pyrifolium* or

*nudum*, with its poisonous-looking fruit in cymes, first greenish-white, then red, then purple, or all at once.

The imp-eyed, red, velvety-looking berry of the swamps.<sup>1</sup>

The spotted polygonum (*Polygonum Persicaria*), seen in low lands amid the potatoes now, wild prince's-feather (?), slight flower that does not forget to grace the autumn.

The late whortleberry — dangleberry — that ripens now that other huckleberries and blueberries are shrivelled and spoiling, September 1st; dangle down two or three inches; can rarely find many. They have a more transparent look, large, blue, long-stemmed, dangling, fruit of the swamp concealed.

I detect the pennyroyal which my feet have bruised.

Butter-and-eggs still hold out to bloom.

I notice that cows never walk abreast, but in single file commonly, making a narrow cow-path, or the herd walks in an irregular and loose wedge. They retain still the habit of all the deer tribe, acquired when the earth was all covered with forest, of travelling from necessity in narrow paths in the woods.

At sundown a herd of cows, returning homeward from pasture over a sandy knoll, pause to paw the sand and challenge the representatives of another herd, raising a cloud of dust between the beholder and the setting sun. And then the herd boys rush to mingle in the fray and separate the combatants, two cows with horns interlocked, the one pushing the other down the bank.

<sup>1</sup> Wild holly?

My grandmother called her cow home at night from the pasture over the hill, by thumping on a mortar out of which the cow was accustomed to eat salt.

At Nagog I saw a hundred bushels of huckleberries in one field.

The Roman wormwood, pigweed, a stout, coarse red-topped (?) weed (*Amaranthus hybridus*), and spotted polygonum; these are the lusty growing plants now, September 2d.

Tall, slender, minute white-flowered weed in gardens, annual fleabane (*Erigeron Canadensis*).

One of my neighbors, of whom I borrowed a horse, cart, and harness to-day, which last was in a singularly dilapidated condition, considering that he is a wealthy farmer, did not know but I would make a book about it.

As I was stalking over the surface of this planet in the dark to-night, I started a plover resting on the ground and heard him go off with whistling wings.

My friends wonder that I love to walk alone in solitary fields and woods by night. Sometimes in my loneliest and wildest midnight walk I hear the sound of the whistle and the rattle of the cars, where perchance some of those very friends are being whirled by night over, as they think, a well-known, safe, and public road. I see that men do not make or choose their own paths, whether they are railroads or trackless through the wilds, but what the powers permit each one enjoys. My solitary

course has the same sanction that the Fitchburg Railroad has. If they have a charter from Massachusetts and — what is of much more importance — from Heaven, to travel the course and in the fashion they do, I have a charter, though it be from Heaven alone, to travel the course I do, — to take the necessary lands and pay the damages. It is by the grace of God in both cases.

Now, about the first of September, you will see flocks of small birds forming compact and distinct masses, as if they were not only animated by one spirit but actually held together by some invisible fluid or film, and will hear the sound of their wings rippling or fanning the air as they flow through it, flying, the whole mass, ricochet like a single bird, — or as they flow over the fence. Their mind must operate faster than man's, in proportion as their bodies do.

What a generation this is! It travels with some brains in its hat, with a couple of spare cigars on top of them. It carries a heart in its breast, covered by a lozenge in its waistcoat pocket.

John Garfield brought me this morning (September 6th) a young great heron (*Ardea Herodias*), which he shot this morning on a pine tree on the North Branch. It measured four feet, nine inches, from bill to toe and six feet in alar extent, and belongs to a different race from myself and Mr. Frost. I am glad to recognize him for a native of America, — why not an American citizen?



In the twilight, when you can only see the outlines of the trees in the horizon, the elm-tops indicate where the houses are. I have looked afar over fields and even over distant woods and distinguished the conspicuous graceful, sheaf-like head of an elm which shadowed some farmhouse. From the northwest (?) part of Sudbury you can see an elm on the Boston road, on the hilltop in the horizon in Wayland, five or six miles distant. The elm is a tree which can be distinguished farther off perhaps than any other. The wheelwright still makes his hubs of it, his spokes of white oak, his fellies of yellow oak, which does not crack on the corners. In England, 't is said, they use the ash for fellies.

There is a little grove in a swampy place in Conantum where some rare things grow, — several bass trees, two kinds of ash, sassafras, maidenhair fern, the white-berryed plant (ivory?), etc., etc., and the sweet viburnum (?) in the hedge near by.

This will be called the wet year of 1850. The river is as high now, September 9th, as in the spring, and hence the prospects and the reflections seen from the village are something novel.

Roman wormwood, pigweed, amaranth, polygonum, and one or two coarse kinds of grass reign now in the cultivated fields.

Though the potatoes have man with all his implements on their side, these rowdy and rampant weeds completely bury them, between the last hoeing and the digging. The potatoes hardly succeed with the utmost care: these weeds only ask to be *let alone* a little

while. I judge that they have not got the rot. I sympathize with all this luxuriant growth of weeds. Such is the year. The weeds grow as if in sport and frolic.

You might say green as green-briar.

I do not know whether the practice of putting indigo-weed about horses' tackling to keep off flies is well founded, but I hope it is, for I have been pleased to notice that wherever I have occasion to tie a horse I am sure to find indigo-weed not far off, and therefore this, which is so universally dispersed, would be the fittest weed for this purpose.

The thistle is now in bloom, which every child is eager to clutch once, — just a child's handful.

The prunella, self-heal, small purplish-flowered plant of low grounds.

Charles <sup>1</sup> grew up to be a remarkably eccentric man. He was of large frame, athletic, and celebrated for his feats of strength. His lungs were proportionally strong. There was a man who heard him named once, and asked if it was the same Charles Dunbar whom he remembered when he was a little boy walking on the coast of Maine. A man came down to the shore and hailed a vessel that was sailing by. He should never forget that man's name.

It was well grassed, and delicate flowers grew in the middle of the road.

<sup>1</sup> [Charles Dunbar was Thoreau's uncle. See Sanborn, pp. 21-23, 92, 93; also *Journal*, vol. iv, Jan. 1, 1853, and vol. viii, Apr. 3, 1856.]

I saw a delicate flower had grown up two feet  
 high  
 Between the horses' path and the wheel-track,  
 Which Dakin's and Maynard's wagons had  
 Passed over many a time.  
 An inch more to right or left had sealed its fate,  
 Or an inch higher. And yet it lived and flourished  
 As much as if it had a thousand acres  
 Of untrodden space around it, and never  
 Knew the danger it incurred.  
 It did not borrow trouble nor invite an  
 Evil fate by apprehending it.<sup>1</sup>  
 For though the distant market-wagon  
 Every other day inevitably rolled  
 This way, it just as inevitably rolled  
 In those ruts. And the same  
 Charioteer who steered the flower  
 Upward guided the horse and cart aside from it.  
 There were other flowers which you would say  
 Incurred less danger, grew more out of the way,  
 Which no cart rattled near, no walker daily passed,  
 But at length one rambling deviously —  
 For no rut restrained — plucked them,  
 And then it appeared that they stood  
 Directly in his way, though he had come  
 From farther than the market-wagon.  
 And then it appeared that this brave flower which  
 grew between the wheel and horse did actually stand  
 farther out of the way than that which stood in the wide  
 prairie where the man of science plucked it.

<sup>1</sup> [Channing, p. 293 (as prose).]

To-day I climbed a handsome rounded hill  
 Covered with hickory trees, wishing to see  
 The country from its top, for low hills  
 Show unexpected prospects. I looked  
 Many miles over a woody lowland  
 Toward Marlborough, Framingham, and Sudbury;  
 And as I sat amid the hickory trees  
 And the young sumachs, enjoying the prospect, a  
 neat herd of cows approached, of unusually fair pro-  
 portions and smooth, clean skins, evidently petted by  
 their owner, who must have carefully selected them.  
 One more confiding heifer, the fairest of the herd, did  
 by degrees approach as if to take some morsel from  
 our hands, while our hearts leaped to our mouths with  
 expectation and delight. She by degrees drew near  
 with her fair limbs progressive, making pretense of  
 browsing; nearer and nearer, till there was wafted  
 toward us the bovine fragrance, — cream of all the  
 dairies that ever were or will be, — and then she raised  
 her gentle muzzle toward us, and snuffed an honest  
 recognition within hand's reach. I saw 't was possible  
 for his herd to inspire with love the herdsman. She  
 was as delicately featured as a hind. Her hide was  
 mingled white and fawn-color, and on her muzzle's  
 tip there was a white spot not bigger than a daisy, and  
 on her side toward me the map of Asia plain to see.  
 Farewell, dear heifer! Though thou forgettest me,  
 my prayer to heaven shall be that thou may'st not for-  
 get thyself. There was a whole bucolic in her snuff.  
 I saw her name was Sumach. And by the kindred  
 spots I knew her mother, more sedate and matronly,

with full-grown bag; and on her sides was Asia, great and small, the plains of Tartary, even to the pole, while on her daughter it was Asia Minor. She not disposed to wanton with the herdsman.

And as I walked, she followed me, and took an apple from my hand, and seemed to care more for the hand than apple. So innocent a face as I have rarely seen on any creature, and I have looked in face of many heifers. And as she took the apple from my hand, I caught the apple of her eye. She smelled as sweet as the clethra blossom. There was no sinister expression. And for horns, though she had them, they were so well disposed in the right place, bent neither up nor down, I do not now remember she had any. No horn was held toward me.<sup>1</sup>

Sept. 11. *Wednesday*. The river higher than I ever knew it at this season, as high as in the spring.

Yesterday, September 14, walked to White Pond in Stow, on the Marlborough road, having passed one pond called sometimes Pratt's Pond, sometimes Bottomless Pond, in Sudbury. Saw afterward another pond beyond Willis's also called Bottomless Pond, in a thick swamp. To name two ponds bottomless when both of them have a bottom! Verily men choose darkness rather than light.<sup>2</sup>

The farmers are now cutting — topping — their corn, gathering their early fruit, raking their cranberries, digging their potatoes, etc.

<sup>1</sup> [Channing, pp. 76, 77; Sanborn, pp. 258, 259.]

<sup>2</sup> [See *Walden*, p. 315; Riv. 441.]

Everything has its use, and man seeks sedulously for the best article for each use. The watchmaker finds the oil of the porpoise's jaw the best for oiling his watches. Man has a million eyes, and the race knows infinitely more than the individual. Consent to be wise through your race.

Autumnal mornings, when the feet of countless sparrows are heard like rain-drops on the roof by the boy who sleeps in the garret.

Villages with a single long street lined with trees, so straight and wide that you can see a chicken run across it a mile off.

Sept. 19. The gerardia, yellow trumpet-like flower. Veiny-leaved hawkweed (leaves handsome, radical excepting one or two; know them well) (*Hieracium venosum*), flower like a dandelion. Canada snapdragon, small pea-like blue flower in the wood-paths, (*Antirrhinum Canadense*). Pine-weed, thickly branched low weed with red seed-vessels, in wood-paths and fields, (*Sarothra gentianoides*). Cucumber-root (*Medeola*). Tree-primrose. Red-stemmed cornel. The very minute flower which grows now in the middle of the Marlborough road.

I am glad to have drunk water so long, as I prefer the natural sky to an opium-eater's heaven, — would keep sober always, and lead a sane life not indebted to stimulants. Whatever my practice may be, I believe that it

is the only drink for a wise man, and only the foolish habitually use any other. Think of dashing the hopes of a morning with a cup of coffee, or of an evening with a dish of tea! Wine is not a noble liquor, except when it is confined to the pores of the grape. Even music is wont to be intoxicating. Such apparently slight causes destroyed Greece and Rome, and will destroy England and America.<sup>1</sup>

I have seen where the rain dripped from the trees on a sand-bank on the Marlborough road, that each little pebble which had protected the sand made the summit of a sort of basaltic column of sand, — a phenomenon which looked as if it might be repeated on a larger scale in nature.

The goldenrods and asters impress me not like individuals but great families covering a thousand hills and having a season to themselves.

The indigo-weed turns black when dry, and I have been interested to find in each of its humble seed-vesicles a worm.

The Deep Cut is sometimes excited to productiveness by a rain in midsummer. It impresses me somewhat as if it were a cave, with all its stalactites turned wrong side outward. Workers in bronze should come here for their patterns.

Those were carrots which I saw naturalized in Wheeler's field. It was four or five years since he planted there.

To-day I saw a sunflower in the woods.

It is pleasant to see the *Viola pedata* blossoming again

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 240; Riv. 338.]

now, in September, with a beauty somewhat serener than that of these yellow flowers.

The trees on the bank of the river have white furrows worn about them, marking the height of the freshets, at what levels the water has stood.

Water is so much more fine and sensitive an element than earth. A single boatman passing up or down unavoidably shakes the whole of a wide river, and disturbs its every reflection. The air is an element which our voices shake still further than our oars the water.

The red maples on the river, standing far in the water when the banks are overflowed and touched by the earliest frosts, are memorable features in the scenery of the stream at this season.

Now you can scent the ripe grapes far off on the banks as you row along. Their fragrance is finer than their flavor.

My companion said he would drink when the boat got under the bridge, because the water would be cooler in the shade, though the stream quickly passes through the piers from shade to sun again. It is something beautiful, the act of drinking, the stooping to imbibe some of this widespread element, in obedience to instinct, without whim. We do not so simply drink in other influences.

It is pleasant to have been to a place by the way a river went.

The forms of trees and groves change with every stroke of the oar.

It seems hardly worth the while to risk the dangers of the sea between Leghorn and New York for the sake of a cargo of juniper berries and bitter almonds.

Oh, if I could be intoxicated on air and water!<sup>1</sup> on hope and memory! and always see the maples standing red in the midst of the waters on the meadow!

Those have met with losses, who have lost their children. I saw the widow this morning whose son was drowned.

That I might never be blind to the beauty of the landscape! To hear music without any vibrating cord!

A family in which there was singing in the morning. To hear a neighbor singing! All other speech sounds thereafter like profanity. A man cannot sing falsehood or cowardice; he must sing truth and heroism to attune his voice to some instrument. It would be noblest to sing with the wind. I have seen a man making himself a viol, patiently and fondly paring the thin wood and shaping it, and when I considered the end of the work he was ennobled in my eyes. He was building himself a ship in which to sail to new worlds. I am much indebted to my neighbor who will now and then in the intervals of his work draw forth a few strains from his accordion. Though he is but a learner, I find when his strains cease that I have been elevated.

The question is not whether you drink, but what liquor.

Plucked a wild rose the 9th of October on Fair Haven Hill.

Butter-and-eggs, which blossomed several months ago, still freshly [in] bloom (October 11th).

He knew what shrubs were best for withes.

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 240; Riv. 338.]

This is a remarkable year. Huckleberries are still quite abundant and fresh on Conantum. There have been more berries than pickers or even worms. (October 9th.)

I am always exhilarated, as were the early voyagers, by the sight of sassafras (*Laurus Sassafras*). The green leaves bruised have the fragrance of lemons and a thousand spices. To the same order belong cinnamon, cassia, camphor.

Hickory is said to be an Indian name. (Nuttall's continuation of Michaux.)

The seed vessel of the sweet-briar is a very beautiful glossy elliptical fruit. What with the fragrance of its leaves, its blossom, and its fruit, it is thrice crowned.

I observed to-day (October 17th) the small blueberry bushes by the path-side, now blood-red, full of white blossoms as in the spring, the blossoms of spring contrasting strangely with the leaves of autumn. The former seemed to have expanded from sympathy with the maturity of the leaves.

Walter Colton in his "California"<sup>1</sup> says, "Age is no certain evidence of merit, since folly runs to seed as fast as wisdom."

The imagination never forgives an insult.

Left Concord, Wednesday morning, September 25th, 1850, for Quebec. Fare \$7.00 to and fro. Obligated to leave Montreal on return as soon as Friday, October 4th. The country was new to me beyond Fitchburg.

<sup>1</sup> [Three Years in California, 1850.]

In Ashburnham and afterwards I noticed the woodbine.<sup>1</sup>

[Eighty-four pages missing, — doubtless the Canada journal.]

However mean your life is, meet it and live; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may perchance have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poorhouse. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man's house. The snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts as anywhere, and, indeed, the town's poor seem to live the most independent lives of any. They are simply great enough to receive without misgiving. Cultivate poverty like sage, like a garden herb. Do not trouble yourself to get new things, whether clothes or friends. That is dissipation. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. If I were confined to a corner in a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts.<sup>2</sup>

In all my travels I never came to the abode of the present.

I live in the angle of a leaden wall, into whose alloy was poured a little bell-metal. Sometimes in the repose of my mid-day there reaches my ears a confused tintin-

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 3; Riv. 3.]    <sup>2</sup> [*Walden*, p. 361; Riv. 505, 506.]

nabulum from without. It is the noise of my contemporaries.<sup>1</sup>

That the brilliant leaves of autumn are not withered ones is proved by the fact that they wilt when gathered as soon as the green.

But now, October 31st, they are all withered. This has been the most perfect afternoon in the year. The air quite warm enough, perfectly still and dry and clear, and not a cloud in the sky. Scarcely the song of a cricket is heard to disturb the stillness. When they ceased their song I do not know. I wonder that the impetus which our hearing had got did not hurry us into deafness over a precipitous silence. There must have been a thick web of cobwebs on the grass this morning, promising this fair day, for I see them still through the afternoon, covering not only the grass but the bushes and the trees. They are stretched across the unfrequented roads from weed to weed, and broken by the legs of the horses.

I thought to-day that it would be pleasing to study the dead and withered plants, the ghosts of plants, which now remain in the fields, for they fill almost as large a space to the eye as the green have done. They live not in memory only, but to the fancy and imagination.

As we were passing through Ashburnham, by a new white house which stood at some distance in a field, one passenger exclaimed so that all the passengers could hear him, "There, there's not so good a house as that in all Canada." And I did not much wonder at his remark. There is a neatness as well as thrift and elastic

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 362; Riv. 507.]

comfort, a certain flexible easiness of circumstance when not rich, about a New England house which the Canadian houses do not suggest. Though of stone, they were no better constructed than a stone barn would be with us. The only building on which money and taste are expended is the church.<sup>1</sup> At Beauport we examined a magnificent cathedral, not quite completed, where I do not remember that there were any but the meanest houses in sight around it.

Our Indian summer, I am tempted to say, is the finest season of the year. Here has been such a day as I think Italy never sees.

Though it has been so warm to-day, I found some of the morning's frost still remaining under the north side of a wood, to my astonishment.

Why was this beautiful day made, and no man to improve it? We went through Seven-Star (?) Lane to White Pond.

Looking through a stately pine grove, I saw the western sun falling in golden streams through its aisles. Its west side, opposite to me, was all lit up with golden light; but what was I to it? Such sights remind me of houses which we never inhabit, — that commonly I am not at home in the world. I see somewhat fairer than I enjoy or possess.

A fair afternoon, a celestial afternoon, cannot occur but we mar our pleasure by reproaching ourselves that we do not make all our days beautiful. The thought of what I am, of my pitiful conduct, deters me from receiving what joy I might from the glorious days that visit me.

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 100; Riv. 124.]

After the era of youth is passed, the knowledge of ourselves is an alloy that spoils our satisfactions.

I am wont to think that I could spend my days contentedly in any retired country house that I see; for I see it to advantage now and without incumbrance; I have not yet imported my humdrum thoughts, my prosaic habits, into it to mar the landscape. What is this beauty in the landscape but a certain fertility in me? I look in vain to see it realized but in my own life. If I could wholly cease to be ashamed of myself, I think that all my days would be fair.

When I asked at the principal bookstore in Montreal to see such books as were published there, the answer was that none were published there but those of a statistical character and the like, that their books came from the States.<sup>1</sup>

[Two thirds of a page missing]

As once he was riding past Jennie Dugan's, was invited by her boys to look into their mother's spring-house. He looked in. It *was* a delectable place to keep butter and milk cool and sweet in dog-days, — but there was a leopard frog swimming in the milk, and another sitting on the edge of the pan.

[Half a page missing.]

Thou art a personality so vast and universal that I have never seen one of thy features. I am suddenly very near to another land than can be bought and sold; this is not Charles Miles's swamp. This is a far, far-

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 15; Riv. 18.]

away field on the confines of the actual Concord, where nature is partially present. These farms I have myself surveyed; these lines I have run; these bounds I have set up; they have no chemistry to fix them; they fade from the surface of the glass (the picture); this light is too strong for them.

[Four and two thirds pages missing.]

My dear, my dewy sister, let thy rain descend on me. I not only love thee, but I love the best of thee; that is to love thee rarely. I do not love thee every day. Commonly I love those who are less than thou. I love thee only on great days. Thy dewy words feed me like the manna of the morning. I am as much thy sister as thy brother. Thou art as much my brother as my sister. It is a portion of thee and a portion of me which are of kin. Thou dost not have to woo me. I do not have to woo thee. O my sister! O Diana, thy tracks are on the eastern hills. Thou surely passedst that way. I, the hunter, saw them in the morning dew. My eyes are the hounds that pursue thee. Ah, my friend, what if I do not answer thee? I hear thee. Thou canst speak; I cannot. I hear and forget to answer. I am occupied with hearing. I awoke and thought of thee; thou wast present to my mind. How camest thou there? Was I not present to thee likewise? <sup>1</sup>

The oystermen had anchored their boat near the shore without regard to the state of the tide, and when we came to it to set sail, just after noon, we found that it was aground. Seeing that they were preparing to

<sup>1</sup> [Channing, pp. 70, 71; Sanborn, pp. 259, 260.]

push it off, I was about to take off my shoes and stockings in order to wade to it first, but a Dutch sailor with a singular bullfrog or trilobite expression of the eyes, whose eyes were like frog ponds in the broad platter of his cheeks and gleamed like a pool covered with frog-spittle, immediately offered me the use of his back. So mounting, with my legs under his arms, and hugging him like one of [the] family, he set me aboard of the periauger?

They then leaned their hardest against the stern, bracing their feet against the sandy bottom in two feet of water, the Dutchman with his broad back among them. In the most Dutch-like and easy way they applied themselves to this labor, while the skipper tried to raise the bows, never jerking or hustling but silently exerting what vigor was inherent in them, doing, no doubt, their utmost endeavor, while I pushed with a spike pole; but it was all in vain. It was decided to be unsuccessful; we did not disturb its bed by a grain of sand. "Well, what now?" said I. "How long have we got to wait?" "Till the tide rises," said the captain. But no man knew of the tide, how it was. So I went in to bathe, looking out for sharks and chasing crabs, and the Dutchman waded out among the mussels to spear a crab. The skipper stuck a clamshell into the sand at the water's edge to discover if it was rising, and the sailors, — the Dutchman and the other, — having got more drink at Oakes's, stretched themselves on the seaweed close to the water's edge [and] went to sleep. After an hour or more we could discover no change in the shell even by a hair's breadth, from which we learned



that it was about the turn of the tide and we must wait some hours longer.<sup>1</sup>

I once went in search of the relics of a human body — a week after a wreck — which had been cast up the day before on to the beach, though the sharks had stripped off the flesh. I got the direction from a light-house. I should find it a mile or two distant over the sand, a dozen rods from the water, by a stick which was stuck up covered with a cloth. Pursuing the direction pointed out, I expected that I should have to look very narrowly at the sand to find so small an object, but so completely smooth and bare was the beach — half a mile wide of sand — and so magnifying the mirage toward the sea that when I was half a mile distant the insignificant stick or sliver which marked the spot looked like a broken mast in the sand. As if there was no other object, this trifling sliver had puffed itself up to the vision to fill the void; and there lay the relics in a certain state, rendered perfectly inoffensive to both bodily and spiritual eye by the surrounding scenery, — a slight inequality in the sweep of the shore. Alone with the sea and the beach, attending to the sea, whose hollow roar seemed addressed to the ears of the departed, — articulate speech to them. It was as conspicuous on that sandy plain as if a generation had labored to pile up a cairn there. Where there were so few objects, the least was obvious as a mausoleum. It reigned over the shore. That dead body possessed the shore as no living one could. It showed a title to the sands which no living ruler could.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [See pp. 49-51.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod*, pp. 107, 108; Riv. 126, 127. See also pp. 49-51 of this volume.]

My father was commissary at Fort Independence in the last war. He says that the baker whom he engaged returned eighteen ounces of bread for sixteen of flour, and was glad of the job on those terms.

In a pleasant spring morning all men's sins are forgiven. You may have known your neighbor yesterday for a drunkard and a thief, and merely pitied or despised him, and despaired of the world; but the sun shines bright and warm this first spring morning, and you meet him quietly, serenely at any work, and see how even his exhausted, debauched veins and nerves expand with still joy and bless the new day, feel the spring influence with the innocence<sup>1</sup> [Two thirds of a page missing.]

There is a good echo from that wood to one standing on the side of Fair Haven. It was particularly good to-day. The woodland lungs seemed particularly sound to-day; they echoed your shout with a fuller and rounder voice than it was given in, seeming to *mouth* it. It was uttered with a sort of sweeping intonation half round a vast circle, *ore rotundo*, by a broad dell among the tree-tops passing it round to the entrance of all the aisles of the wood. You had to choose the right key or pitch, else the woods would not echo it with any spirit, and so with eloquence. Of what significance is any sound if Nature does not echo it? It does not prevail. It dies away as soon as uttered. I wonder that wild men have not made more of echoes, or that we do

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, pp. 346, 347; Riv. 484, 485.]

not hear that they have made more. It would be a pleasant, a soothing and cheerful mission to go about the country in search of them, — articulating, speaking, vocal, oracular, resounding, sonorous, hollow, prophetic places; places wherein to found an oracle, sites for oracles, sacred ears of Nature.

I used to strike with a paddle on the side of my boat on Walden Pond, filling the surrounding woods with circling and dilating sound, awaking the woods, “stirring them up,” as a keeper of a menagerie his lions and tigers, a growl from all. All melody is a sweet echo, as it were coincident with [the] movement of our organs. We wake the echo of the place we are in, its slumbering music.

I should think that savages would have made a god of echo.

I will call that Echo Wood.

Crystal Water for White Pond.

There was a sawmill once on Nut Meadow Brook, near Jennie’s Road. These little brooks have their history. They once turned sawmills. They even used their *influence* to destroy the primitive [forests] which grew on their banks, and now, for their reward, the sun is let in to dry them up and narrow their channels. Their crime rebounds against themselves. You still find the traces of ancient dams where the simple brooks were taught to use their influence to destroy the primitive forests on their borders, and now for penalty they flow in shrunken channels, with repentant and plaintive tinkling through the wood, being by an evil spirit turned against their neighbor forests.

What does education often do? It makes a straight-cut ditch of a free, meandering brook.

You must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when it walks.

The actual life of men is not without a dramatic interest to the thinker. It is not in all its respects prosaic. Seventy thousand pilgrims proceed annually to Mecca from the various nations of Islam.

I was one evening passing a retired farmhouse which had a smooth green plat before it, just after sundown, when I saw a hen turkey which had gone to roost on the front fence with her wings outspread over her young now pretty well advanced, who were roosting on the next rail a foot or two below her. It completed a picture of rural repose and happiness such as I had not seen for a long time. A particularly neat and quiet place, where the very ground was swept around the woodpile. The neighboring fence of roots, agreeable forms for the traveller to study, like the bones of marine monsters and the horns of mastodons or megatheriums.

You might say of a philosopher that he was in this world as a spectator.

A squaw came to our door to-day with two papposes, and said, “Me want a pie.” Theirs is not common begging. You are merely the rich Indian who shares his goods with the poor. They merely offer you an opportunity to be generous and hospitable.

Equally simple was the observation which an Indian made at Mr. Hoar's door the other day, who went there to sell his baskets. "No, we don't want any," said the one who went to the door. "What! do you mean to starve us?" asked the Indian in astonishment, as he was going out [*sic*] the gate. The Indian seems to have said: I too will do like the white man; I will go into business. He sees his white neighbors well off around him, and he thinks that if he only enters on the profession of basket-making, riches will flow in unto him as a matter of course; just as the lawyer weaves arguments, and by some magical means wealth and standing follow. He thinks that when he has made the baskets he has done his part, now it is yours to buy them. He has not discovered that it is necessary for him to make it worth your while to buy them, or make some which it will be worth your while to buy. With great simplicity he says to himself: I too will be a man of business; I will go into trade. It is n't enough simply to make baskets. You have got to sell them.<sup>1</sup>

I have an uncle who once, just as he stepped on to the dock at New York from a steamboat, saw some strange birds in the water and called to [a] Gothamite to know what they were. Just then his hat blew off into the dock, and the man answered by saying, "Mister, your hat is off," whereupon my uncle, straightening himself up, asked again with vehemence, "Blast you, sir, I want to know what those birds are." By the time that he had got this information, a sailor had recovered his hat.

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, pp. 20, 21; Riv. 32.]

*Nov. 8.* The stillness of the woods and fields is remarkable at this season of the year. There is not even the creak of a cricket to be heard. Of myriads of dry shrub oak leaves, not one rustles. Your own breath can rustle them, yet the breath of heaven does not suffice to. The trees have the aspect of waiting for winter. The autumnal leaves have lost their color; they are now truly sere, dead, and the woods wear a sombre color. Summer and harvest are over. The hickories, birches, chestnuts, no less than the maples, have lost their leaves. The sprouts, which had shot up so vigorously to repair the damage which the choppers had done, have stopped short for the winter. Everything stands silent and expectant. If I listen, I hear only the note of a chickadee, — our most common and I may say native bird, most identified with our forests, — or perchance the scream of a jay, or perchance from the solemn depths of these woods I hear tolling far away the knell of one departed. Thought rushes in to fill the vacuum. As you walk, however, the partridge still bursts away. The silent, dry, almost leafless, certainly fruitless woods. You wonder what cheer that bird can find in them. The partridge bursts away from the foot of a shrub oak like its own dry fruit, immortal bird! This sound still startles us. Dry goldenrods, now turned gray and white, lint our clothes as we walk. And the drooping, downy seed-vessels of the epilobium remind us of the summer. Perchance you will meet with a few solitary asters in the dry fields, with a little color left. The sumach is stripped of everything but its cone of red berries.

This is a peculiar season, peculiar for its stillness. The crickets have ceased their song. The few birds are well-nigh silent. The tinted and gay leaves are now sere and dead, and the woods wear a sombre aspect. A carpet of snow under the pines and shrub oaks will make it look more cheerful. Very few plants have now their spring. But thoughts still spring in man's brain. There are no flowers nor berries to speak of. The grass begins to die at top. In the morning it is stiff with frost. Ice has been discovered in somebody's tub very early this morn, of the thickness of a dollar. The flies are betwixt life and death. The wasps come into the houses and settle on the walls and windows. All insects go into crevices. The fly is entangled in a web and struggles vainly to escape, but there is no spider to secure him; the corner of the pane is a deserted camp. When I lived in the woods the wasps came by thousands to my lodge in November, as to winter quarters, and settled on my windows and on the walls over my head, sometimes deterring visitors from entering. Each morning, when they were numbed with cold, I swept some of them out. But I did not trouble myself to get rid of them. They never molested me, though they bedded with me, and they gradually disappeared into what crevices I do not know, avoiding winter.<sup>1</sup> I saw a squash-bug go slowly behind a clapboard to avoid winter. As some of these melon seeds come up in the garden again in the spring, so some of these squash-bugs come forth. The flies are for a long time in a somnambulist state. They

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 265 (Riv. 372, 373), where October is the month named.]

have too little energy or *vis vitæ* to clean their wings or heads, which are covered with dust. They buzz and bump their heads against the windows two or three times a day, or lie on their backs in a trance, and that is all, — two or three short spurts. One of these mornings we shall hear that Mr. Minott had to break the ice to water his cow. And so it will go on till the ground freezes. If the race had never lived through a winter, what would they think was coming?

Walden Pond has at last fallen a little. It has been so high over the stones — quite into the bushes — that walkers have been excluded from it.<sup>1</sup> There has been no accessible shore. All ponds have been high. The water stood higher than usual in the distant ponds which I visited and had never seen before. It has been a peculiar season. At Goose Pond, I notice that the birches of one year's growth from the stumps standing in the water are all dead, apparently killed by the water, unless, like the pine, they die down after springing from the stump.

It is warm somewhere any day in the year. You will find some nook in the woods generally, at mid-forenoon of the most blustering day, where you may forget the cold. I used to resort to the northeast side of Walden, where the sun, reflected from the pine woods on the stony shore, made it the fireside of the pond. It is so much pleasanter and wholesomer to be warmed by the sun when you can, than by a fire.

I saw to-day a double reflection on the pond of the

<sup>1</sup> It reached its height in '52, and has now fallen decidedly in the fall of '53.

cars passing, one beneath the other, occasioned by a bright rippled streak on the surface of the water, from which a second reflection sprang.

One who would study lichens must go into a new country where the rocks have not been burned.

Therien says that the Canadians say *marche-donc* to their horses; and that the acid fruit must be spelled *painbéna*.<sup>1</sup> He says that the French acre or *arpent* is ten perches by ten, of eighteen feet each.

Nov. 9. It is a pleasant surprise to walk over a hill where an old wood has recently been cut off, and, on looking round, to see, instead of dense ranks of trees almost impermeable to light, distant well-known blue mountains in the horizon and perchance a white village over an expanded open country. I now take this in preference to all my old familiar walks. So a new prospect and walks can be created where we least expected it. The old men have seen other prospects from these hills than we do. There was the old Kettell place, now Watt's, which I surveyed for him last winter and lotted off, where twenty-five years ago I played horse in the paths of a thick wood and roasted apples and potatoes in an old pigeon-place<sup>2</sup> and gathered fruit at the pie-apple tree. A week or two after I surveyed it, it now being rotten and going to waste, I walked there and was surprised to find the place and prospect which I have described.

<sup>1</sup> [See *Excursions*, p. 48; Riv. 59.]

<sup>2</sup> [See pp. 499, 500.]

I found many fresh violets (*Viola pedata*) to-day (November 9th) in the woods.

Saw a cat on the Great Fields, wilder than a rabbit, hunting artfully. I remember to have seen one once walking about the stony shore at Walden Pond. It is not often that they wander so far from the houses. I once, however, met with a cat with young kittens in the woods, quite wild.<sup>1</sup>

The leaves of the larch are now yellow and falling off. Just a month ago, I observed that the white pines were parti-colored, green and yellow, the needles of the previous year now falling. Now I do not observe any yellow ones, and I expect to find that it is only for a few weeks in the fall after the new leaves have done growing that there are any yellow and falling, — that there is a season when we may say the old pine leaves are now yellow, and again, they are fallen. The trees were not so tidy then; they are not so full now. They look best when contrasted with a field of snow.

A rusty sparrow or two only remains to people the drear spaces. It goes to roost without neighbors.

It is pleasant to observe any growth in a wood. There is the pitch pine field northeast of Beck Stow's Swamp, where some years ago I went a-blackberrying and observed that the pitch pines were beginning to come in, and I have frequently noticed since how fairly they grew, dotting the plain as evenly as if dispersed by art. To-day I was aware that I walked in a pitch pine wood, which ere long, perchance, I may survey and lot off for a wood auction and see the chop-

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 257; Riv. 361, 362.]

pers at their work. There is also the old pigeon-place field by the Deep Cut. I remember it as an open grassy field. It is now one of our most pleasant woodland paths. In the former place, near the edge of the old wood, the young pines line each side of the path like a palisade, they grow so densely. It never rains but it pours, and so I think when I see a young grove of pitch pines crowding each other to death in this wide world. These are destined for the locomotive's maw. These branches, which it has taken so many years to mature, are regarded even by the woodman as "trash."

Delicate, dry, feathery (perchance fescue) grasses growing out of a tuft, gracefully bending over the pathway. I do not know what they are, but they belong to the season.

The chickadees, if I stand long enough, hop nearer and nearer inquisitively, from pine bough to pine bough, till within four or five feet, occasionally lisping a note.

The pitcher-plant, though a little frost-bitten and often cut off by the mower, now stands full of water in the meadows. I never found one that had not an insect in it.

I sometimes see well-preserved walls running straight through the midst of high and old woods, built, of course, when the soil was cultivated many years ago, and am surprised to see slight stones still lying one upon another, as the builder placed them, while this huge oak has grown up from a chance acorn in the soil.

Though a man were known to have only one acquaintance in the world, yet there are so many men in

the world, and they are so much alike, that when he spoke what might be construed personally, no one would know certainly whom he meant. Though there were but two on a desolate island, they would conduct toward each other in this respect as if each had intercourse with a thousand others.

I saw in Canada two or three persons wearing homespun gray greatcoats, with comical and conical hoods which fell back on their backs between the shoulders, like small bags ready to be turned up over the head when need was, though then a hat usurped that place. I saw that these must be what are called capots. They looked as if they would be convenient and proper enough as long as the coats were new and tidy, but as if they would soon come to look like rags and unsightly.<sup>1</sup>

Nov. 11. Gathered to-day the autumnal dandelion(?) and the common dandelion.

Some farmers' wives use the white ashes of corn-cobs instead of pearlash.

I am attracted by a fence made of white pine roots. There is, or rather was, one (for it has been tipped into the gutter this year) on the road to Hubbard's Bridge which I can remember for more than twenty years. It is almost as indestructible as a wall and certainly requires fewer repairs. It is light, white, and dry withal, and its fantastic forms are agreeable to my eye. One would not have believed that any trees had such snarled

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, p. 99; Riv. 123.]

and gnarled roots. In some instances you have a coarse network of roots as they interlaced on the surface perhaps of a swamp, which, set on its edge, really looks like a fence, with its paling crossing at various angles, and root repeatedly growing into root, — a rare phenomenon above ground, — so as to leave open spaces, square and diamond-shaped and triangular, quite like a length of fence. It is remarkable how white and clean these roots are, and that no lichens, or very few, grow on them; so free from decay are they. The different branches of the roots continually grow into one another, so as to make grotesque figures, sometimes rude harps whose resonant strings of roots give a sort of musical sound when struck, such as the earth spirit might play on. Sometimes the roots are of a delicate wine-color here and there, an evening tint. No line of fence could be too long for me to study each individual stump. Rocks would have been covered with lichens by this time. Perhaps they are grown into one another that they may stand more firmly.

Now is the time for wild apples. I pluck them as a wild fruit native to this quarter of the earth, fruit of old trees that have been dying ever since I was a boy and are not yet dead. From the appearance of the tree you would expect nothing but lichens to drop from it, but underneath your faith is rewarded by finding the ground strewn with spirited fruit. Frequented only by the woodpecker, deserted now by the farmer, who has not faith enough to look under the boughs.<sup>1</sup> Food for walkers. Sometimes apples red inside, perfused with a

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 309; Riv. 379.]

beautiful blush, faery food, too beautiful to eat, — apple of the evening sky, of the Hesperides.<sup>1</sup>

This afternoon I heard a single cricket singing, chirruping, in a bank, the only one I have heard for a long time, like a squirrel or a little bird, clear and shrill, — as I fancied, like an evening robin, singing in this evening of the year. A very fine and poetical strain for such a little singer. I had never before heard the cricket so like a bird. It is a remarkable note. The earth-song.

That delicate, waving, feathery dry grass which I saw yesterday is to be remembered with the autumn. The dry grasses are not dead for me. A beautiful form has as much life at one season as another.

I notice that everywhere in the pastures minute young fragrant life-everlasting, with only four or five flat-lying leaves and thread-like roots, all together as big as a four-pence, spot the ground, like winter rye and grass which roots itself in the fall against another year. These little things have bespoken their places for the next season. They have a little pellet of cotton or down in their centres, ready for an early start in the spring.

The autumnal (?) dandelion is still bright.

I saw an old bone in the woods covered with lichens, which looked like the bone of an old settler, which yet some little animal had recently gnawed, and I plainly saw the marks of its teeth, so indefatigable is Nature to strip the flesh from bones and return it to dust again. No little rambling beast can go by some dry and ancient bone but he must turn aside and try his teeth upon it.

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 315; Riv. 387.]

An old bone is knocked about till it becomes dust; Nature has no mercy on it. It was quite too ancient to suggest disagreeable associations. It was like a piece of dry pine root. It survives like the memory of a man. With time all that was personal and offensive wears off. The tooth of envy may sometimes gnaw it and reduce it more rapidly, but it is much more a prey to forgetfulness. Lichens grow upon it, and at last, in what moment no man knows, it has completely wasted away and ceases to be a bone any longer.

The fields are covered now with the empty cups of the *Trichostema dichotomum*, all dry.

We had a remarkable sunset to-night. I was walking in the meadow, the source of Nut Meadow Brook.<sup>1</sup>

[Two pages missing.]

We walked in so pure and bright a light, so softly and serenely bright, I thought I had never bathed in such a golden flood, without a ripple or a murmur to it. The west side of every wood and rising ground gleamed like the boundary of Elysium.<sup>2</sup> An adventurous spirit turns the evening into morning. A little black brook in the midst of the marsh, just beginning to meander, winding slowly round a decaying stump,—an artery of the meadow.<sup>3</sup>

Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.

A people who would begin by burning the fences and let the forest stand! I saw the fences half consumed,

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, p. 246; Riv. 302.]

<sup>2</sup> [Excursions, p. 247; Riv. 303.]

<sup>3</sup> [Excursions, p. 247; Riv. 303.]

their ends lost in the middle of the prairie, and some worldly miser with a surveyor looking after his bounds, while heaven had taken place around him, and he did not see the angels around, but was looking for an old post-hole in the midst of paradise. I looked again and saw him standing in the middle of a boggy Stygian fen, surrounded by devils, and he had found his bounds without a doubt, three little stones where a stake had been driven, and, looking nearer, I saw that the Prince of Darkness was his surveyor.<sup>1</sup>

Nov. 14. Saw to-day, while surveying in the Second Division woods, a singular round mound in a valley, made perhaps sixty or seventy years ago. Cyrus Stow thought it was a pigeon-bed, but I soon discovered the coal and that it was an old coal-pit. I once mistook one in the Maine woods for an Indian mound. The indestructible charcoal told the tale. I had noticed singular holes and trenches in the former wood, as if a fox had been dug out. The sun has probably been let in here many times, and this has been a cultivated field; and now it is clothed in a savage dress again. The wild, rank, luxuriant place is where mosses and lichens abound. We find no heroes' cairns except those of heroic colliers, who once sweated here begrimed and dingy, who lodged here, tending their fires, who lay on a beetle here, perchance, to keep awake.

Nov. 15. I saw to-day a very perfect lichen on a rock in a meadow. It formed a perfect circle about fifteen

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, p. 212; Riv. 259, 260.]



inches in diameter though the rock was uneven, and was handsomely shaded by a darker stripe of older leaves, an inch or more wide, just within its circumference, like a rich lamp-mat. The recent growth on the outside, half an inch in width, was a sort of tea-green or bluish-green color.

The ivy berries are now sere and yellowish, or sand-colored, like the berries of the dogwood.

The farmers are now casting out their manure, and removing the muck-heap from the shore of ponds where it will be inaccessible in the winter; or are doing their fall plowing, which destroys many insects and mellows the soil. I also see some pulling their turnips, and even getting in corn which has been left out notwithstanding the crows. Those who have wood to sell, as the weather grows colder and people can better appreciate the value of fuel, lot off their woods and advertise a wood auction.

You can tell when a cat has seen a dog by the size of her tail.

Nov. 16. I found three good arrowheads to-day behind Dennis's. The season for them began some time ago, as soon as the farmers had sown their winter rye, but the spring, after the melting of the snow, is still better.

I am accustomed to regard the smallest brook with as much interest for the time being as if it were the Orinoco or Mississippi. What is the difference, I would like to know, but mere size? And when a tributary rill empties in, it is like the confluence of famous rivers I have read

of. When I cross one on a fence, I love to pause in mid-passage and look down into the water, and study its bottom, its little mystery. There is none so small but you may see a pickerel regarding you with a wary eye, or a pygmy trout glance from under the bank, or in spring, perchance, a sucker will have found its way far up its stream. You are sometimes astonished to see a pickerel far up some now shrunken rill, where it is a mere puddle by the roadside. I have stooped to drink at a clear spring no bigger than a bushel basket in a meadow, from which a rill was scarcely seen to dribble away, and seen lurking at its bottom two little pickerel not so big as my finger, sole monarchs of this their ocean, and who probably would never visit a larger water.

In literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dullness is only another name for tameness. It is the untamed, uncivilized, free, and wild thinking in Hamlet, in the Iliad, and in all the scriptures and mythologies that delights us, — not learned in the schools, not refined and polished by art. A truly good book is something as wildly natural and primitive, mysterious and marvellous, ambrosial and fertile, as a fungus or a lichen.<sup>1</sup> Suppose the muskrat or beaver were to turn his views [*sic*] to literature, what fresh views of nature would he present! The fault of our books and other deeds is that they are too humane, I want something speaking in some measure to the condition of muskrats and skunk-cabbage as well as of men, — not merely to a pining and complaining coterie of philanthropists.

I discover again about these times that cranberries are

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 231; Riv. 283.]

good to eat in small quantities as you are crossing the meadows.

I hear deep amid the birches some row among the birds or the squirrels, where evidently some mystery is being developed to them. The jay is on the alert, mimicking every woodland note. What *has* happened? Who's dead? The twitter retreats before you, and you are never let into the secret. Some tragedy surely is being enacted, but murder will out. How many little dramas are enacted in the depth of the woods at which man is not present!

When I am considering which way I will walk, my needle is slow to settle, my compass varies by a few degrees and does not always point due southwest; and there is good authority for these variations in the heavens. It pursues the straighter course for it at last, like the ball which has come out of a rifle, or the quoit that is twirled when cast. To-day it is some particular wood or meadow or deserted pasture in that direction that is my southwest.<sup>1</sup>

I love my friends very much, but I find that it is of no use to go to see them. I hate them commonly when I am near them. They belie themselves and deny me continually.

Somebody shut the cat's tail in the door just now, and she made such a caterwaul as has driven two whole worlds out of my thoughts. I saw unspeakable things in the sky and looming in the horizon of my mind, and now they are all reduced to a cat's tail. Vast films of thought floated through my brain, like clouds pregnant

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 217; Riv. 266.]

with rain enough to fertilize and restore a world, and now they are all dissipated.

There is a place whither I should walk to-day. Though oftenest I fail to find, when by accident I ramble into it, great is my delight. I have stood by my door sometimes half an hour, irresolute as to what course I should take.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently all but the evergreens and oaks have lost their leaves now. It is singular that the shrub oaks retain their leaves through the winter. Why do they?

The walnut trees spot the sky with black nuts. Only catkins are seen on the birches.

I saw the other day a dead limb which the wind or some other cause had broken nearly off, which had lost none of its leaves, though all the rest of the tree, which was flourishing, had shed them.

There seems to be in the fall a sort of attempt at a spring, a rejuvenescence, as if the winter were not expected by a part of nature. Violets, dandelions, and some other flowers blossom again, and mulleins and innumerable other plants begin again to spring and are only checked by the increasing cold. There is a slight uncertainty whether there will be any winter this year.

I was pleased to-day to hear a great noise and trampling in the woods produced by some cows which came running toward their homes, which apparently had been scared by something unusual, as their ancestors might have been by wolves. I have known sheep to be scared in the same [way] and a whole flock to run bleating to me for protection.

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 217; Riv. 265, 266.]

What shall we do with a man who is afraid of the woods, their solitude and darkness? What salvation is there for him? God is silent and mysterious.

Some of our richest days are those in which no sun shines outwardly, but so much the more a sun shines inwardly. I love nature, I love the landscape, because it is so sincere. It never cheats me. It never jests. It is cheerfully, musically earnest. I lie and relie [*sic*] on the earth.

Land where the wood has been cut off and is just beginning to come up again is called sprout land.

The sweet-scented life-everlasting has not lost its scent yet, but smells like the balm of the fields.

The partridge-berry leaves checker the ground on the side of moist hillsides in the woods. Are *they* not properly called *checker*-berries?

The era of wild apples will soon be over. I wander through old orchards of great extent, now all gone to decay, all of native fruit which for the most part went to the cider-mill. But since the temperance reform and the general introduction of grafted fruit, no wild apples, such as I see everywhere in deserted pastures, and where the woods have grown up among them, are set out. I fear that he who walks over these hills a century hence will not know the pleasure of knocking off wild apples. Ah, poor man! there are many pleasures which he will be debarred from! Notwithstanding the prevalence of the Baldwin and the Porter, I doubt if as extensive orchards are set out to-day in this town as there were a century ago, when these vast straggling cider-orchards were planted. Men stuck in a tree then by every wall-

side and let it take its chance. I see nobody planting trees to-day in such out of the way places, along almost every road and lane and wall-side, and at the bottom of dells in the wood. Now that they have grafted trees and pay a price for them, they collect them into a plot by their houses and fence them in.<sup>1</sup>

My Journal should be the record of my love. I would write in it only of the things I love, my affection for any aspect of the world, what I love to think of. I have no more distinctness or pointedness in my yearnings than an expanding bud, which does indeed point to flower and fruit, to summer and autumn, but is aware of the warm sun and spring influence only. I feel ripe for something, yet do nothing, can't discover what that thing is. I feel fertile merely. It is seedtime with me. I have lain fallow long enough.

Notwithstanding a sense of unworthiness which possesses me, not without reason, notwithstanding that I regard myself as a good deal of a scamp, yet for the most part the spirit of the universe is unaccountably kind to me, and I enjoy perhaps an unusual share of happiness. Yet I question sometimes if there is not some settlement to come.

Nov. 17. It is a strange age of the world this, when empires, kingdoms, and republics come a-begging to our doors and utter their complaints at our elbows. I cannot take up a newspaper but I find that some wretched government or other, hard pushed and on its last legs, is interceding with me, the reader, to vote for it, —

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 321; Riv. 394, 395.]

more importunate than an Italian beggar. Why does it not keep its castle in silence, as I do? The poor President, what with preserving his popularity and doing his duty, does not know what to do. If you do not read the newspapers, you may be impeached for treason. The newspapers are the ruling power. What Congress does is an afterclap. Any other government is reduced to a few marines at Fort Independence. If a man neglects to read the Daily Times, government will go on its knees to him; this is the only treason in these days. The newspapers devote some of their columns specially to government and politics without charge, and this is all that saves it, but I never read those columns.<sup>1</sup>

I found this afternoon, in a field of winter rye, a snapping turtle's egg, white and elliptical like a pebble, mistaking it for which I broke it. The little turtle was perfectly formed, even to the dorsal ridge, which was distinctly visible.

"Chesipooe Sinus" is on Wytfliet's Map of 159-.

Even the Dutch were forward to claim the great river of Canada. In a map of New Belgium in Ogilby's "America," 1670, the St. Lawrence is also called "De Groote Rivier van Nieu Nederlandt."<sup>2</sup>

On this same map, east of Lake Champlain, called "Lacus Irocoisiensis" or in Dutch "Meer der Irocoisen," is a chain of mountains answering to the Green Mountains of Vermont, and "Irocoisia," or the country of the Iroquois, between the mountains and the lake.

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 480, 481; *Misc.*, Riv. 285, 286.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 91; Riv. 113.]

Nov. 19. The first really cold day. I find, on breaking off a shrub oak leaf, a little life at the foot of the leaf-stalk, so that a part of the green comes off. It has not died quite down to the point of separation, as it will do, I suppose, before spring. Most of the oaks have lost their leaves except on the lower branches, as if they were less exposed and less mature there, and felt the changes of the seasons less. The leaves have either fallen or withered long since, yet I found this afternoon, cold as it is, — and there has been snow in the neighborhood, — some sprouts which had come up this year from the stump of a young black-looking oak, covered still with handsome fresh red and green leaves, very large and unwithered and unwilted. It was on the south side of Fair Haven in a warm angle, where the wood was cut last winter and the exposed edge of the still standing wood running north and south met the cliff at right angles and served for a fence to keep off the wind. There were one or two stumps here whose sprouts had fresh leaves which transported me back to October. Yet the surrounding shrub oak leaves were as dry and dead as usual. There were also some minute birches only a year old, their leaves still freshly yellow, and some young wild apple trees apparently still growing, their leaves as green and tender as in summer. The goldenrods, one or more species of the white and some yellow ones, were many of them still quite fresh, though elsewhere they are all whitish and dry. I saw one whose top rose above the edge of a rock, and so much of it was turned white and dry; but the lower part of its raceme was still yellow. Some of the white species seemed to have started

again as if for another spring. They had sprung up freshly a foot or more, and were budded to blossom, fresh and green. And sometimes on the same stem were old and dry and white downy flowers, and fresh green blossom-buds not yet expanded. I saw there some *pale* blue asters still bright, and the mullein leaves still large and green, one green to its top. And I discovered that when I put my hand on the mullein leaves they felt decidedly warm, but the radical leaves of the golden-rods felt cold and clammy. There was also the columbine, its leaves still alive and green; and I was pleased to smell the pennyroyal which I had bruised, though this dried up long ago. Each season is thus drawn out and lingers in certain localities, as the birds and insects know very well. If you penetrate to some warm recess under a cliff in the woods, you will be astonished at the amount of summer life that still flourishes there. No doubt more of the summer's life than we are aware thus slips by and outmanœuvres the winter, gliding from fence to fence. I have no doubt that a diligent search in proper places would discover many more of our summer flowers thus lingering till the snow came, than we suspect. It is as if the plant made no preparation for winter.

Now that the grass is withered and the leaves are withered or fallen, it begins to appear what is evergreen: the partridge[-berry] and checkerberry, and winter-green leaves even, are more conspicuous.

The old leaves have been off the pines now for a month.

I once found a kernel of corn in the middle of a deep wood by Walden, tucked in behind a lichen on a pine,

about as high as my head, either by a crow or a squirrel. It was a mile at least from any corn-field.

Several species plainly linger till the snow comes.

*Nov. 20.* It is a common saying among country people that if you eat much fried hasty pudding it will make your hair curl. My experience, which was considerable, did not confirm this assertion.

Horace Hosmer was picking out to-day half a bushel or more of a different and better kind of cranberry, as he thought, separating them from the rest. They are very dark red, shaded with lighter, harder and more oblong, somewhat like the fruit of the sweet-briar or a Canada red plum, though I have no common cranberry to compare with them. He says that they grow apart from the others. I must see him about it. It may prove to be one more of those instances in which the farmer detects a new species and makes use of the knowledge from year to year in his profession, while the botanist expressly devoted to such investigation has failed to observe it.

The farmer, in picking over many bushels of cranberries year after year, finds at length, or has forced upon his observation, a new species of that berry, and avails himself thereafter of his discovery for many years before the naturalist is aware of the fact.

Desor, who has been among the Indians at Lake Superior this summer, told me the other day that they had a particular name for each species of tree, as of the maple, but they had but one word for flowers; they did not distinguish the species of the last.

It is often the unscientific man who discovers the new species. It would be strange if it were not so. But we are accustomed properly to call that only a scientific discovery which knows the relative value of the thing discovered, uncovers a fact to mankind.

Nov. 21. For a month past the grass under the pines has been covered with a new carpet of pine leaves. It is remarkable that the old leaves turn and fall in so short a time.

Some of the densest and most impenetrable clumps of bushes I have seen, as well on account of the closeness of their branches as of their thorns, have been wild apples. Its [*sic*] branches as stiff as those of the black spruce on the tops of mountains.<sup>1</sup>

I saw a herd of a dozen cows and young steers and oxen on Conantum this afternoon, running about and frisking in unwieldy sport like huge rats. Any sportiveness in cattle is unexpected. They even played like kittens, in their way; shook their heads, raised their tails, and rushed up and down the hill.<sup>2</sup>

The witch-hazel blossom on Conantum has for the most part lost its ribbons now.

Some distant angle in the sun where a lofty and dense white pine wood, with mingled gray and green, meets a hill covered with shrub oaks, affects me singularly, re-inspiring me with all the dreams of my youth. It is a place far away, yet actual and where we have been. I saw the sun falling on a distant white pine wood whose gray and

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 304; Riv. 373.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 235; Riv. 287, 288.]

moss-covered stems were visible amid the green, in an angle where this forest abutted on a hill covered with shrub oaks. It was like looking into dreamland. It is one of the avenues to my future. Certain coincidences like this are accompanied by a certain flash as of hazy lightning, flooding all the world suddenly with a tremulous serene light which it is difficult to see long at a time.

I saw Fair Haven Pond with its island, and meadow between the island and the shore, and a strip of perfectly still and smooth water in the lee of the island, and two hawks, fish hawks perhaps, sailing over it. I did not see how it could be improved. Yet I do not see what these things can be. I begin to see such an object when I cease to *understand* it and see that I did not realize or appreciate it before, but I get no further than this. How adapted these forms and colors to my eye! A meadow and an island! What are these things? Yet the hawks and the ducks keep so aloof! and Nature is so reserved! I am made to love the pond and the meadow, as the wind is made to ripple the water.<sup>1</sup>

As I looked on the Walden woods eastward across the pond, I saw suddenly a white cloud rising above their tops, now here, now there, marking the progress of the cars which were rolling toward Boston far below, behind many hills and woods.

October must be the month of ripe and tinted leaves. Throughout November they are almost entirely withered and sombre, the few that remain. In this month the sun is valued. When it shines warmer or brighter we are sure to observe it. There are not so many colors to attract

<sup>1</sup> [See p. 161.]

the eye. We begin to remember the summer. We walk fast to keep warm. For a month past I have sat by a fire.

Every sunset inspires me with the desire to go to a *West* as distant and as fair as that into which the sun goes down.<sup>1</sup>

I get nothing to eat in my walks now but wild apples, sometimes some cranberries, and some walnuts. The squirrels have got the hazelnuts and chestnuts.

*Nov. 23.* To-day it has been finger-cold.<sup>2</sup> Unexpectedly I found ice by the side of the brooks this afternoon nearly an inch thick. Prudent people get in their barrels of apples to-day.<sup>3</sup> The difference of the temperature of various localities is greater than is supposed. If I was surprised to find ice on the sides of the brooks, I was much more surprised to find quite a pond in the woods, containing an acre or more, quite frozen over so that I walked across it. It was in a cold corner, where a pine wood excluded the sun. In the larger ponds and the river, of course, there is no ice yet. It is a shallow, weedy pond. I lay down on the ice and looked through at the bottom. The plants appeared to grow more uprightly than on the dry land, being sustained and protected by the water. Caddis-worms were everywhere crawling about in their handsome quiver-like sheaths or cases.

The wild apples, though they are more mellow and edible, have for some time lost their beauty, as well as

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 219; Riv. 268.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 319; Riv. 392.]

<sup>3</sup> [*Ibid.*]

the leaves, and now too they are beginning to freeze. The apple season is well-nigh over. Such, however, as are frozen while sound are not unpleasant to eat when the spring sun thaws them.<sup>1</sup>

I find it to be the height of wisdom not to endeavor to oversee myself and live a life of prudence and common sense, but to see over and above myself, entertain sublime conjectures, to make myself the thoroughfare of thrilling thoughts, live all that can be lived. The man who is dissatisfied with himself, what can he not do?

*Nov. 24.* Plucked a buttercup on Bear Hill to-day.

I have certain friends whom I visit occasionally, but I commonly part from them early with a certain bitter-sweet sentiment. That which we love is so mixed and entangled with that we hate in one another that we are more grieved and disappointed, aye, and estranged from one another, by meeting than by absence. Some men may be my acquaintances merely, but one whom I have been accustomed to regard, to idealize, to have dreams about as a friend, and mix up intimately with myself, can never degenerate into an acquaintance. I must know him on that higher ground or not know him at all. We do not confess and explain, because we would fain be so intimately related as to understand each other without speech. Our friend must be broad. His must be an atmosphere coextensive with the universe, in which we can expand and breathe. For the most part we are smothered and stifled by one another. I go and see my friend and try his atmosphere. If our

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 319; Riv. 392.]

atmospheres do not mingle, if we repel each other strongly, it is of no use to stay.

*Nov. 25.* I feel a little alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit. I would fain forget all my morning's occupation, my obligations to society. But sometimes it happens that I cannot easily shake off the village; the thought of some work, some surveying, will run in my head, and I am not where my body is, I am out of my senses. In my walks I would return to my senses like a bird or a beast. What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods? <sup>1</sup>

This afternoon, late and cold as it is, has been a sort of Indian summer. Indeed, I think that we have summer days from time to time the winter through, and that it is often the snow on the ground makes the whole difference. This afternoon the air was indescribably clear and exhilarating, and though the thermometer would have shown it to be cold, I thought that there was a finer and purer warmth than in summer; a wholesome, intellectual warmth, in which the body was warmed by the mind's contentment. The warmth was hardly sensuous, but rather the satisfaction of existence.

I found Fair Haven skimmed entirely over, though the stones which I threw down on it from the high bank on the east broke through. Yet the river was open. The landscape looked singularly clean and pure and dry, the air, like a pure glass, being laid over the picture,

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 211; *Riv.* 258, 259.]

the trees so tidy, stripped of their leaves; the meadows and pastures, clothed with clean dry grass, looked as if they had been swept; ice on the water and winter in the air, but yet not a particle of snow on the ground. The woods, divested in great part of their leaves, are being ventilated. It is the season of perfect works, of hard, tough, ripe twigs, not of tender buds and leaves. The leaves have made their wood, and a myriad new withes stand up all around pointing to the sky, able to survive the cold. It is only the perennial that you see, the iron age of the year.

These expansions of the river skim over before the river itself takes on its icy fetters. What is the analogy?

I saw a muskrat come out of a hole in the ice. He is a man wilder than Ray or Melvin. While I am looking at him, I am thinking what he is thinking of me. He is a different sort of a man, that is all. He would dive when I went nearer, then reappear again, and had kept open a place five or six feet square so that it had not frozen, by swimming about in it. Then he would sit on the edge of the ice and busy himself about something, I could not see whether it was a clam or not. What a cold-blooded fellow! thoughts at a low temperature, sitting perfectly still so long on ice covered with water, mumbling a cold, wet clam in its shell. What safe, low, moderate thoughts it must have! It does not get on to stilts. The generations of muskrats do not fail. They are not preserved by the legislature of Massachusetts.

Boats are drawn up high which will not be launched again till spring.



There is a beautiful fine wild grass which grows in the path in sprout land, now dry, white, and waving, in light beds soft to the touch.

I experience such an interior comfort, far removed from the sense of cold, as if the thin atmosphere were rarefied by heat, were the medium of invisible flames, as if the whole landscape were one great hearthside, that where the shrub oak leaves rustle on the hillside, I seem to hear a crackling fire and see the pure flame, and I wonder that the dry leaves do not blaze into yellow flames.

I find but little change yet on the south side of the Cliffs; only the leaves of the wild apple are a little frostbitten on their edges and curled dry there; but some wild cherry leaves and blueberries are still fresh and tender green and red, as well as all the other leaves and plants which I noticed there the other day.

When I got up so high on the side of the Cliff the sun was setting like an Indian-summer sun. There was a purple tint in the horizon. It was warm on the face of the rocks, and I could have sat till the sun disappeared, to dream there. It was a mild sunset such as is to be attended to. Just as the sun shines into us warmly and serenely, our Creator breathes on us and re-creates us.

Nov. 26. An inch of snow on ground this morning, — our first.

Went to-night to see the Indians, who are still living in tents. Showed the horns of the moose, the black moose they call it, that goes in lowlands. Horns three

or four feet wide. (The red moose they say is another kind; runs on mountains and has horns six feet wide.) Can move their horns. The broad, flat side portions of the horns are covered with hair, and are so soft when the creature is alive that you can run a knife through them.<sup>1</sup> They color the lower portions a darker color by rubbing them on alders, etc., to harden them. Make *kee-nong-gun* or pappoose cradle, of the broad part of the horn, putting a rim on it. Once scared, will run all day. A dog will hang to their lips and be carried along and swung against a tree and drop off. Always find two or three together. Can't run on glare ice, but can run in snow four feet deep. The caribou can run on ice.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes spear them with a sharp pole, sometimes with a knife at the end of a pole. Signs, good or bad, from the turn of the horns. Their caribou-horns had been gnawed by mice in their wigwams. The moose-horns and others are not gnawed by mice while the creature is alive. Moose cover themselves with water, all but noses, to escape flies.<sup>3</sup> About as many now as fifty years ago.

Imitated the sounds of the moose, caribou, and deer with a birch-bark horn, which last they sometimes make very long. The moose can be heard eight or ten miles sometimes, — a loud sort of bellowing sound, clearer, more sonorous than the looing of cattle. The caribou's, a sort of snort; the small deer, like a lamb.

Made their clothes of the young moose-skin. Cure the meat by smoking it; use no salt in curing it, but when they eat it.

<sup>1</sup> [*Maine Woods*, p. 153; Riv. 187.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Ibid.*]

<sup>3</sup> [*Ibid.*]

Their spear very serviceable. The inner, pointed part, of a hemlock knot; the side spring pieces, of hickory. Spear salmon, pickerel, trout, chub, etc.; also by birch-bark light at night, using the other end of spear as pole.



Their sled, *jeborgon* or *jebongon* (?), one foot wide, four or five long, of thin wood turned up in front; draw by a strong rope of basswood bark.

Canoe of moose-hide. One hide will hold three or four. Can be taken apart and put together very quickly. Can take out cross-bars and bring the sides together. A very convenient boat to carry and cross streams with. They say they did not make birch canoes till they had edge tools. The birches the lightest. They think our birches the same, only second growth.

Their *kee-nong-gun*, or cradle, has a hoop to prevent the child being hurt when it falls. Can't eat dirt; can be hung up out of way of snakes.

*Aboak-henjo* [?], a birch-bark vessel for water. Can boil meat in it with hot stones; takes a long time. Also a vessel of birch bark, shaped like a pan. Both ornamented by scratching the bark, which is wrong side out. Very neatly made. Valued our kettles much.



Did not know use of eye in axe. Put a string through it and wore it round neck. Cut toes.

Did not like gun. Killed one moose; scared all the rest.

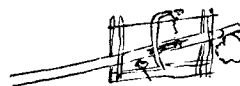
The *squaw-heegun* for cooking, a mere stick put

through the game and stuck in the ground slanted over the fire, a spit. Can be eating one side while the other is doing.

The *ar-tu-e-se*, a stick, string, and bunch of leaves, which they toss and catch on the point of the stick. Make great use of it. Make the clouds go off the sun with it.

Snowshoes of two kinds; one of same shape at both ends so that the Mohawks could not tell which way they were going. (Put some rags in the heel-hole to make a toe-mark?)

Log trap to catch many kinds of animals. Some for bears let the log fall six or seven feet. First there is a frame, then the little stick



Side View

which the animal

moves, presses down, as he goes through under the log; then the crooked stick is hung over the top of the frame, and holds



up the log by a string; the weight of the log on this keeps the little stick up.

A drizzling and misty day this has been, melting the snow. The mist, divided into a thousand ghostly forms, was blowing across Walden. Mr. Emerson's Cliff Hill, seen from the railroad through the mist, looked like a dark, heavy, frowning New Hampshire mountain. I do not understand fully why hills look so much larger

at such a time, unless, being the most distant we see and in the horizon, we suppose them farther off and so magnify them. I think there can be no looming about it.

*Nov. 28. Thursday.* Cold drizzling and misty rains, which have melted the little snow. The farmers are beginning to pick up their dead wood. Within a day or two the walker finds gloves to be comfortable, and begins to think of an outside coat and of boots. Embarks in his boots for the winter voyage.

The Indian talked about "our folks" and "your folks," "my grandfather" and "my grandfather's cousin," Samoset.

It is remarkable, but nevertheless true, as far as my observation goes, that women, to whom we commonly concede a somewhat finer and more sibylline nature, yield a more implicit obedience even to their animal instincts than men. The nature in them is stronger, the reason weaker. There are, for instance, many young and middle-aged men among my acquaintance — shoemakers, carpenters, farmers, and others — who have scruples about using animal food, but comparatively few girls or women. The latter, even the most refined, are the most intolerant of such reforms. I think that the reformer of the severest, as well as finest, class will find more sympathy in the intellect and philosophy of man than in the refinement and delicacy of woman. It is, perchance, a part of woman's conformity and easy nature. Her savior must not be too strong, stern, and intellectual, but charitable above all things.

The thought of its greater independence and its close-

ness to nature diminishes the pain I feel when I see a more interesting child than usual destined to be brought up in a shanty. I see that for the present the child is happy and is not puny, and has all the wonders of nature for its toys. Have I not faith that its tenderness will in some way be cherished and protected, as the buds of the spring in the remotest and wildest wintry dell no less than in the garden plot and summer-house?

I am the little Irish boy  
That lives in the shanty.  
I am four years old to-day  
And shall soon be one and twenty.

I shall grow up  
And be a great man,  
And shovel all day  
As hard as I can.

Down in the Deep Cut,  
. . . . .  
Where the men lived  
Who made the railroad.

For supper  
I have some potato  
And sometimes some bread,  
And then, if it's cold,  
I go right to bed.

I lie on some straw  
Under my father's coat.

At recess I play  
 With little Billy Gray,  
 And when school is done,  
 Then home I run.

And if I meet the cars,  
 I get on the other track,  
 And then I know whatever comes  
 I need n't look back.

My mother does not cry,  
 And my father does not scold,  
 For I am a little Irish boy,  
 And I'm four years old.

Every day I go to school  
 Along the railroad.  
 It was so cold it made me cry  
 The day that it snowed.

And if my feet ache  
 I do not mind the cold,  
 For I am a little Irish boy,  
 And I'm four years old.<sup>1</sup>

Nov. 29. Still misty, drizzling weather without snow or ice. The puffballs, with their open rays, checker the path-side in the woods, but they are not yet dry enough to make much dust. Damp weather in the fall seems to cause them to crack open, *i. e.* their outer skin.

<sup>1</sup> [See *Journal*, vol. iii, pp. 149, 150, 241-244.]

They look white like the shells of five-fingers on the shore.

The trees and shrubs look larger than usual when seen through the mist, perhaps because, though near, yet being in the visible horizon and there being nothing beyond to compare them with, we naturally magnify them, supposing them further off.

It is very still yet in the woods. There are no leaves to rustle, no crickets to chirp, and but few birds to sing.

The pines standing in the ocean of mist, seen from the Cliffs, are trees in every stage of transition from the actual to the imaginary. The near are more distinct, the distant more faint, till at last they are a mere shadowy cone in the distance. What, then, are these solid pines become? You can command only a circle of thirty or forty rods in diameter. As you advance, the trees gradually come out of the mist and take form before your eyes. You are reminded of your dreams. Life looks like a dream. You are prepared to see visions. And now, just before sundown, the night wind blows up more mist through the valley, thickening the veil which already hung over the trees, and the gloom of night gathers early and rapidly around. Birds lose their way.