

1862

The war went on with enormous impact. The North continued to lose.

Thoreau lay on his day bed in the parlor. He dictated a few letters to his sister Sophia and revised his lectures on "Walking," "Autumnal Tints," "Wild Apples," and "Night and Moonlight" for a publication that he surely knew was to be posthumous. He coughed a great deal. Death by tuberculosis was in store for him; yet he awaited death with a peace of mind that impressed everyone who saw him. He died on the morning of May 6, 1862, at the age of forty-four.

[1862]

From DANIEL RICKETSON

Brooklawn, 7th Jan., 1862.

From MYRON BENTON

According to Sanborn, Benton wrote that the news of Thoreau's illness had affected him as if it were that "of a personal friend whom I had known a long time," and he went on:

The secret of the influence by which your writings charm me is altogether as intangible, though real, as the attraction of Nature herself. I read and re-read your books with ever fresh delight. Nor is it pleasure alone; there is a singular spiritual healthiness with which they seem imbued,—the expression of a soul essentially sound, so free from any morbid tendency. [After mentioning that his own home was in a pleasant valley, once the hunting-ground of the Indians, Benton said:]

I was in hope to read something more from your pen in Mr. Conway's "Dial," but only recognized that fine pair of Walden twinlets. Of your two books, I perhaps prefer the "Week,"—but after all, "Walden" is but little less a favorite. In the former, I like especially those little snatches of poetry interspersed throughout. I would like to ask what progress you have made in a work some way connected with natural history,—I think it was on Botany,—which Mr. Emerson told me something about in a short interview I had with him two years ago at Poughkeepsie. . . . If you should feel perfectly able at any time to drop me a few lines, I would like much to know what your state of health is, and if there is, as I cannot but hope, a prospect of your speedy recovery.

Benton was not personally acquainted with Thoreau. Ultimately he became a fairly good regional poet. According to Sanborn, he was then living in Dutchess County, New York. Sanborn dates the letter January 6, 1862. Text, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, pp. 461-62.

My dear Friend,—

I thought you would like to have a few lines from me, providing they required no answer.

I have quite recovered from my illness, and am able to walk and skate as usual. My son, Walton, and I do both nearly every day of late. The weather here—as I suppose has been the case with you at Concord—has been very cold, the thermometer as low one morn (Saturday last) as five degrees above zero.

We propose soon to take our annual tour on skates over the Middleboro' ponds.

I received your sister's letter in reply to mine inquiring after your health. I was sorry to hear of your having pleurisy, but it may prove favorable after all to your case, as a counter-irritant often does to sick people. It appears to me you will in time recover—Nature can't spare you, and we all, your friends, can't spare you. So you must look out for us and hold on these many years yet.

I wish I could see you oftener. I don't believe in your silence and absence from congenial spirits. Companionship is one of the greatest blessings to me.

Remember me kindly to my valued friends Mr. and Mrs. Alcott.

Yours truly, in haste,

D. R.

P.S. Thank your sister for her letter.

At any time when you wish to visit us, just send a line. You are always welcome.

Text, Ricketson, pp. 117-18.

From THEOPHILUS BROWN

Worcester Jan. 10, 1862

Friend Thoreau—

The demand for your books here seems to be rather on the increase. Two copies of the Week are wanted & I am requested to write for them.

Walden also is wanted but I presume you can't help us to that.

You will have to get out another edition of that. I hope the next edition of both books will be small in size & right for the pocket, & for "field service"

Is it discouraging to you to have me speak thus of your books?—to see me sticking at what you have left? *Have you* left it?

Whether it be discouraging to you or the contrary, I have long desired to acknowledge my indebtedness to you for them & to tell you that through them the value of everything seems infinitely enhanced to me.

We took to the river and our skates, instead of the cars, on leaving you. & had a good time of it, *keeping above* the ice all the way.

The little snow-storm that we started in grew into quite a large one, or fast one, & made the day all the better. There was a sober cheer in the day, such as belongs to stormy days.

But to come back to business. I was requested to ask you to write your name in one of the books. & I would like to have you write it in the other—

I have forgotten the price of your books but I have the impression that it is \$1.25 and accordingly will enclose \$2.50. If I am not right you will tell me.

Your friend
Theo. Brown.

This is one of the few pieces of correspondence between the Worcester tailor and Thoreau. Evidently their common friend H. G. O. Blake normally acted as the channel of communication: Thoreau says as much in one of his letters to Blake. MS., Berg; previously unpublished.

[1862]

From F. B. SANBORN

Sunday morning Jan'y 12th

My dear Friend;

If you have read the magazine which I loaned you the other day, (The Continental) will you have the goodness to give it to the bearer who will take it to Mrs [Sarah Bradford?] Ripley's for Miss [Amelia?] Goodwin.

Yours truly
F. B. Sanborn

H. D. Thoreau, Esq

No year is given in the manuscript of this letter, but the Continental Monthly, a Boston publication devoted to literature and national affairs, issued its first number under date of January 1862. Furthermore, 1862 was the only year during the friendship of Sanborn and Thoreau in which January 12 fell on a Sunday. MS., Huntington; previously unpublished.

To THE EDITORS OF "THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY"

Concord Feb. 11th 62

Messrs, Editors,

Only extreme illness has prevented my answering your note earlier. I have no objection to having the papers you refer to printed in your monthly—if my feeble health will permit me to prepare them for the printer. What will you give me for them? They are, or have been used as, lectures of the usual length,—taking about an hour to read & I don't see how they can be divided without injury—How many pages

can you print at once?— Of course, I should expect that no sentiment or sentence be altered or omitted without my consent, & to retain the copyright of the paper after you had used it in your monthly.— Is your monthly copyrighted?

Yours respectfully,
S. E. Thoreau
for H. D. Thoreau.

Ticknor & Fields took over the Atlantic Monthly in November 1859, having paid \$10,000 for it to its original publishers, Phillips, Sampson & Co. James Russell Lowell remained as editor under the new owners until June 1861 and was then succeeded by one of them, James T. Fields. Fields, who had come to Boston as a shrewd New Hampshire youth, gradually distinguished himself in two ways: by his remarkable understanding of the public's taste and by his ability to cultivate good writers. Now he was evidently intent on bringing back to the Atlantic a writer whom Lowell had grossly offended.

By this time the most that Thoreau could manage was rough drafts in pencil, which his devoted sister Sophia copied in ink. Ultimately unable to do even that, he dictated. MS., Huntington, in Sophia Thoreau's hand from Thoreau's penciled draft.

To TICKNOR & FIELDS

Concord Feb 20th 1862

Messrs Ticknor & Fields,

I send you herewith, the paper called Autumnal Tints. I see that it will have to be divided, & I would prefer that the first portion terminate with page 42, in order that it may make the more impression. The rest I think will take care of itself.

I may as well say now that on pages 55-6-7-8 I have described the Scarlet Oak leaf very minutely. In my lecturing I have always carried a

[1862]

very large & handsome one displayed on a white ground, which did me great service with the audience. Now if you will read those pages, I think that you will see the advantage of having a simple outline engraving of this leaf & also of the White Oak leaf on the opposite page, that the readers may the better appreciate my words— I will supply the leaves to be copied when the time comes.

When you answer the questions in my last note, please let me know about how soon this article will be published.

Yours respectfully,
Henry D. Thoreau.
by S. E. Thoreau.

MS., Huntington, in Sophia Thoreau's hand.

To TICKNOR & FIELDS

Concord Feb 24th 1862

Messrs Ticknor & Fields

Oct. 25th 1853 I received from Munroe & Co. the following note; "We send by express this day a box & bundle containing 250 copies of Concord River, & also 450. in sheets. All of which we trust you will find correct."

I found by count the number of bound volumes to be correct. The sheets have lain untouched just as received, in stout paper wrappers ever since.

I find that I now have 146 bound copies. Therefore the whole number

in my possession is,	Bound copies	146
	In sheets	450
		<hr/> 596

You spoke when here, of printing a new edition of the Walden. If you incline to do so, I shall be happy to make an arrangement with you to that effect.

Yours respectfully
H. D. Thoreau
by S. E. Thoreau

P S. I will send you an article as soon as I can prepare it, which has no relation to the seasons of the year.

MS., Huntington, in *Sophia Thoreau's hand*.

To TICKNOR & FIELDS

Concord Feb 28th 1862.

Messrs Ticknor & Fields,

I send you with this a paper called The Higher Law, it being much shorter & easier to prepare than that on Walking. It will not need to be divided on account of its length, as indeed the subject does not permit it. I should like to know that you receive it & also about what time it will be published.

Yours truly
H D. Thoreau
by S. E. Thoreau.

Ticknor & Fields—vice Fields himself, we presume—liked the essay but objected to its title. Thoreau substituted the more forceful "Life without Principle" (Thoreau to Ticknor & Fields, March 4, 1862). MS., Huntington, in Sophia Thoreau's hand.

To TICKNOR & FIELDS

Concord March 1st 1862

Messrs Ticknor & Fields,

This Scarlet Oak leaf is the smallest one in my collection, yet it must lose a bristle or two to gain admittance to your page.

I wish simply for a faithful outline engraving of the leaf bristles & all. In the middle of page 57 or of a neighboring page, is a note in pencil—The leaf should be opposite to this page & this note to be altered into a note for the bottom of the page like this—viz "The original of the leaf on the opposite page was picked from such a pile"

Yours truly
Henry D Thoreau,
by S. E. Thoreau.

MS., Huntington, in *Sophia Thoreau's hand*.

To TICKNOR & FIELDS

Concord March 4th 62.

Messrs Ticknor & Fields,

I hereby acknowledge the receipt of your check for one hundred dollars on account of manuscript sent to you.—As for another title for the Higher Law article, I can think of nothing better than, Life without Principle. The paper on Walking will be ready ere long.

I shall be happy to have you print 250. copies of Walden on the terms mentioned & will consider this answer as settling the business. I wish to make one alteration in the new edition viz, to leave out from the title the words "Or Life in the Woods."

Yours truly
H. D. Thoreau
by S. E. Thoreau

According to Warren S. Tryon and William Charvat, *The Cost Books of Ticknor and Fields* (p. 290), a second printing of *Walden* amounting to 280 (rather than 250) copies was manufactured by the firm in March and April of 1862. MS., Huntington, in *Sophia Thoreau's hand*.

To TICKNOR & FIELDS

Concord Mar. 11th 1862

Messrs Ticknor & Fields,

I send with this the paper on Walking & also the proofs of Autumnal Tints.

The former paper will bear dividing into two portions very well, the natural joint being, I think at the end of page 44. At any rate the two parcels being separately tied up, will indicate it—

I do not quite like to have the Autumnal Tints described as in two parts, for it appears as if the author had made a permanent distinction between them; Would it not be better to say at the end of the first portion "To be continued in the next number"?

As for the leaf, I had not thought how it should be engraved, but left it to you. Your note suggests that perhaps it is to be done at my expense. What is the custom? and what would be the cost of a steel engraving? I think that an ordinary wood engraving would be much better than nothing.

Yours truly
Henry D. Thoreau
by S. E. Thoreau.

MS., Huntington, in *Sophia Thoreau's hand*.

[1862]

To MYRON BENTON

Concord, March 21, 1862.

Dear Sir,—

I thank you for your very kind letter, which, ever since I received it, I have intended to answer before I died, however briefly. I am encouraged to know, that, so far as you are concerned, I have not written my books in vain. I was particularly gratified, some years ago, when one of my friends and neighbors said, "I wish you would write another book,—write it for me." He is actually more familiar with what I have written than I am myself.

The verses you refer to in Conway's "Dial," were written by F. B. Sanborn of this town. I never wrote for that journal.

I am pleased when you say that in "The Week" you like especially "those little snatches of poetry interspersed through the book," for these, I suppose, are the least attractive to most readers. I have not been engaged in any particular work on Botany, or the like, though, if I were to live, I should have much to report on Natural History generally.

You ask particularly after my health. I *suppose* that I have not many months to live; but, of course, I know nothing about it. I may add that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing.

Yours truly,
Henry D. Thoreau,
by Sophia E. Thoreau.

Text, *Familiar Letters of Thoreau*, pp. 463–64.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

SPRING NOTES

New Bedford, 23d March, '62.

My dear Friend,—

As it is some time since I wrote you, I have thought that as a faithful chronicler of the season in this section, I would announce to you the present stage of our progress. I will not begin with the origin of creation as many worthy historians are wont, but would say that we have had a pretty steady cold winter through the months of January and February, but since the coming in of March the weather has been mild, though for the past week cloudy and some rain. Today the wind is southerly and the thermometer—3 p.m.—46°, north side of our house. A flock of wild geese flew over about an hour ago, which I viewed with my spy-glass—their course about due east. Few things give me a stronger sense of the sublime than the periodical flight of these noble birds. Blue-birds arrived here about a fortnight ago, but a farmer who lives about 1½ miles from here north, says he heard them on the 7th Feb'y. I hear the call of the golden winged woodpecker, and the sweet notes of the meadow lark in the morning, and yesterday morning for the first time this spring, we were saluted with the song of a robin in a tree near our house. The song sparrow has been calling the *maids to hang on their teakettles* for several weeks, and this morning I heard the *crackle* of the cow-bunting. I must not forget, too, that last evening I heard the ground notes *speed, speed* of the woodcock and his warbling while descending from his spiral flight. The catkins begin to expand upon the willows, and the grass in warm and rich spots to look green.

Truly spring is here, and each day adds to the interest of the season. I hope you will catch a share of its healthful influences; at least feast upon the stock you have in store, for as friend Alcott says, in his quaint way, you have all weathers within you. Am I right in my intimations that you are mending a little, and that you will be able once more to resume your favorite pursuits so valuable to us all as well as to yourself? May I not hope to see you the coming season at Brooklawn where you are always a welcome guest? I see that you are heralded in the Atlantic

[1862]

for April, and find a genial appreciative notice of you under the head of "Forester," which I suppose comes from either Alcott or Emerson, and Channing's lines at the close, which I was also glad to see.

I am reading a very interesting book called "Footnotes from the page of Nature, or first forms of vegetation." By Rev. Hugh Macmillan, Cambridge and London, 1861. It treats of Mosses, Lichens, Fresh Water Algae and Fungi. The author appears to be rich in lore and writes in an easy manner with no pretension to science. Don't fail to read it if you can obtain it. It is lent to me by a friendly naturalist.

Hoping to hear of your improved state of health, and with the affectionate regards of my whole family, as well as my own,

I remain, dear friend,

Yours faithfully,

Dan'l Ricketson.

P.S. I notice that Walden is to appear in a second edition, and hope that your publishers will consider your interests as well as their own. Would they not like to buy your unbound copies of "The Week"?

"The Forester," in the April Atlantic Monthly, was by Bronson Alcott. Text, Ricketson, pp. 119-21.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

The Shanty, Brooklawn, 30 March, 1862.

Dear Thoreau,—

Alone, and idle here this pleasant Sunday p.m., I thought I might write you a few lines, not that I expect you to answer, but only to bring myself a little nearer to you. I have to chronicle this time, the arrival of the purple Finch, and a number of warblers and songsters of the sparrow tribe.

The spring is coming on nicely here, and to-day it is mild, calm, and sunny. I hope you are able to get out a little and breathe the pure air of your fields and woods. While sawing some pine wood the other day, the fragrance suggested to my mind that you might be benefited by living among, or at least frequenting pine woods. I have heard of people much improved in health who were afflicted in breathing, from this source, and I once seriously thought of taking my wife to the pine woods between here and Plymouth, or rather between Middleborough and Plymouth, where the pine grows luxuriantly in the dry yellow ground of that section.

I have thought you might, if still confined, transport yourself in imagination or spirit to your favorite haunts, which might be facilitated by taking a piece of paper and mapping out your usual rambles around Concord, making the village the centre of the chart and giving the name of each part, marking out the roads and footpaths as well as the more prominent natural features of the country.

I have had two unusually *dreamy* nights—last and the one before. Last night I was climbing mountains with some accidental companion, and among the dizzy heights when near the top I saw and pointed out to my fellow-traveller two enormous birds flying over our heads. These birds soon increased, and, from being as I at first supposed eagles of great size, became griffins! as large as horses, their huge bodies moved along by broadspread wings. The dream continued, but the remainder is as the conclusion of most dreams in strange contrast. I found myself passing through a very narrow and filthy village street, the disagreeable odor of which so quickened my speed as to either awake me or cut off my dream. At any rate, when I awoke my head was aching and I was generally exhausted. But enough of this.

Two young men in a buggy-wagon have just driven up the road singing in very sonorous strains the "John Brown" chorus. I wish its pathetic and heart-stirring appeals could reach the inward ears of Congress and the President. I hope you can see some light on our present benighted way, for I cannot except by the exercise of my faith in an overruling Providence.

I may write you again soon, and hope I do not tire you.

With kind regards to your family and my other Concord friends, I remain,

Yours affectionately,
Dan'l Ricketson.

[1862]

P.S. I have just seen a cricket in the path near the house. Flies are very lively in my shanty windows. Two flocks wild geese just passed, 4 p.m., N.E. by N. Honk-honk! Honk-honk!

Text, Ricketson, *pp.* 121–23.

To TICKNOR & FIELDS

Concord Apr. 2nd '62

Messrs Ticknor & Fields,

I send you herewith the paper on Wild Apples.

You have made me no offer for The "Week." Do not suppose that I rate it too high, I shall be glad to dispose of it; & it will be an advantage to advertize it with Walden.

Yours truly,
Henry D. Thoreau
by S. E. Thoreau.

MS., Huntington, in *Sophia Thoreau's hand.*

From TICKNOR & FIELDS

Boston April 6, 1862

H D Thoreau Esq
Dear Sir,

Your paper on Wild Apples is rece'd. In a few days we will send proof of the article on 'Walking.' Touching the "Week on [page torn] we find by yours of [page torn] those already in cloth if we found them rusty. Since the volume was published prices have changed materially and discounts to Booksellers have largely increased. We now make $\frac{2}{3}$ & 40% to the Trade as a matter of course. What with bad [page torn] we could not [page torn] our check for the amount.

Yours very truly
Ticknor & Fields

In spite of the perhaps pessimistic tone of this letter, Ticknor & Fields reissued Thoreau's first book within the year. They bound the sheets that James Munroe & Co. had printed for publication in 1849, and possibly they gave a new binding and title page to the copies Munroe had bound himself. However, they neglected to remove the back leaf that announced in each copy that Walden would soon be published. MS., Huntington.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

The Shanty, April 6th, 1862.

My dear Philomath,—

Another Sunday has come round, and as usual I am to be found in the Shanty, where I should also be glad to have you bodily present. We have had a little interruption to our fine weather during the past

[1862]

week in the shape of a hail-storm yesterday p.m. and evening, but it is clear again to-day, though cooler.

I have to *Kronikle* the arrival of the white-bellied swallow and the commencement of the frog choir, which saluted my ear for the first time on the evening of the 3d inst. The fields are becoming a little greener, and the trailing moss is already waving along the sides of the rivulets. I have n't walked much, however, as I have been busy about farm work, the months of April and May being my busiest time, but as my real business is with Nature, I do not let any of these "side issues" lead me astray. How serenely and grandly amid the din of arms Nature preserves her integrity, nothing moved; with the return of spring come the birds and the flowers, the swollen streams go dancing on, and all the laws of the great solar system are perfectly preserved. How wise, how great, must be the Creator and Mover of it all! But I descend to the affairs of mortals, which particularly concern us at this time. I do not think that the people of the North appear to be awakened, enlightened, rather, to their duty in this great struggle. I fear that there is a great deal of treachery which time will alone discover and remove, for the Right must eventually prevail. Can we expect when we consult the page of history that this revolution will be more speedily terminated than others of a like nature? The civil war of England lasted, I think, some ten years, and the American Revolution some seven or eight years, besides the years of antecedent agitation. We have no Cromwell, unless Wendell Phillips shall by and by prove one; but at present he rather represents Hampden, whose mournful end was perhaps a better one than to be killed by a rotten-egg mob. The voice of Hogopolis (the mob portion of Cincinnati), if such grunts can be thus dignified, must prove a lasting disgrace. The government party, if we have a government, seems to continue with a saintly perseverance their faith in General McClellan. How much longer this state of delay will continue to be borne it is difficult to foresee, but I trust the force of circumstances (*sub Deo*) will soon require a move for the cause of liberty.

I read but little of the newspaper reports of the war, rather preferring to be governed by the general characteristics of the case, as they involuntarily affect my mind.

4 p.m. Since writing the foregoing, somewhat more than an hour ago, I have taken a stroll with my son Walton and our dog through the woods and fields west of our house, where you and I have walked several times; the afternoon is sunny and of mild temperature, but the wind

from the N.W. rather cool, rendering overcoat agreeable. Our principal object was to look at lichens and mosses, to which W. is paying some attention. We started up a woodcock at the south edge of the woods, and a large number of robins in a field adjoining, also pigeon-woodpeckers, and heard the warble of bluebirds.

I remain, with faith in the sustaining forces of Nature and Nature's God,

Yours truly and affectionately,
Daniel Ricketson.

Henry D. Thoreau, Concord, Mass.

Text, Ricketson, pp. 123-25.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

The Shanty, Brooklawn, 13th April, 1862.

My dear Friend,—

I received a letter from your dear Sister a few days ago, informing me of your continued illness and prostration of physical strength, which I was not altogether unprepared to learn, as our valued friend Mr. Alcott wrote me by your sister's request in February last, that you were confined at home and very feeble. I am glad, however, to learn from Sophia that you still find comfort and are happy, the reward I have no doubt of a virtuous life, and an abiding faith in the wisdom and goodness of our Heavenly Father. It is undoubtedly wisely ordained that our present lives should be mortal. Sooner or later we must all close our eyes for the last time upon the scenes of this world, and oh! how happy are they who feel the assurance that the spirit shall survive the earthly tabernacle of clay, and pass on to higher and happier spheres of experience.

"It must be so—Plato, thou reasonest well:—
Else, whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality."

(Addison, *Cato*.)

"The soul's dark cottage, battered, and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made:
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
As they draw near to their eternal home.
Leaving the old both worlds at once they view
Who stand upon the threshold of the new."

(Waller.)

It has been the lot of but few, dear Henry, to extract so much from life as you have done. Although you number fewer years than many who have lived wisely before you, yet I know of no one, either in the past or present times, who has drunk so deeply from the sempiternal spring of truth and knowledge, or who in the poetry and beauty of every-day life has enjoyed more or contributed more to the happiness of others. Truly you have not lived in vain—your works, and above all, your brave and truthful life, will become a precious treasure to those whose happiness it has been to have known you, and who will continue to uphold though with feebler hands the fresh and instructive philosophy you have taught them.

But I cannot yet resign my hold upon you here. I will still hope, and if my poor prayer to God may be heard, would ask, that you may be spared to us a while longer, at least. This is a lovely spring day here—warm and mild—the thermometer in the shade at 62 above zero (3 p.m.). I write with my shanty door open and my west curtain down to keep out the sun, a red-winged blackbird is regaling me with a querulous, half-broken song from a neighboring tree just in front of the house, and the gentle southwest wind is soughing through my young pines. Here where you have so often sat with me, I am alone. My dear Uncle James whom you may remember to have seen here, the companion of my woodland walks for more than quarter of a century, died a year ago this month: my boys and girls have grown into men and women, and my dear wife is an invalid still, so, though a pater familias, I often feel quite alone. Years are accumulating upon me, the buoyancy of youth has erewhile departed, and with some bodily and many mental infirmities I sometimes feel that the cords of life are fast separating. I wish at least

to devote the remainder of my life, whether longer or shorter, to the cause of truth and humanity—a life of simplicity and humility. Pardon me for thus dwelling on myself.

Hoping to hear of your more favorable symptoms, but committing you (all unworthy as I am) unto the tender care of the great Shepherd, who “tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,”

I remain, my dear friend and counsellor,

Ever faithfully yours,
Dan'l Ricketson.

P.S. It is *barely* possible I may come to see you on Sat'y next.

Text, Ricketson, pp. 125–28.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

The Shanty, Sunday, 7.30 a.m., 4th May, 1862.

My dear Friend,—

I have just returned from driving our cow to pasture and assisting in our usual in and outdoor work, the first making a fire in our sitting-room, a little artificial warmth being still necessary for my invalid wife, although I sit most of the time as I do now, with my Shanty door open, and without fire in my stove.

Well, my dear friend and fellow-pilgrim, spring has again come, and here appears in full glow. The farmers are busy and have been for some weeks, ploughing and planting,—the necessity of paying more attention to agriculture being strongly felt in these *hard* times,—old fields and neglected places are now being brought into requisition, and with a good season our former neglected farms will teem with abundance.

I, too, am busy in my way, but on rather a small scale, principally in my garden and among my fruit trees. Walton, however, is head man, and I am obliged generally to submit to his superior judgment.

About all the birds have returned—the large thrush (*T. rufus*) [Brown Thrasher] arrived here on the 25th last month. I am now daily expecting the catbird and ground robin, and soon the Bob-o-link and golden robin. With the arrival of the two last our vernal choir becomes nearly complete. I have known them both to arrive the same day. Of the great variety of little woodland and wayside warblers, I am familiar with but few, yet some of them are great favorites of mine, particularly the oven bird, warbling vireo, veery (*T. Wilsonii*), etc., etc. The wind flower and blue violet have been in bloom some time, and I suppose the columbine and wild geranium are also, although I have not been to visit them as yet. How beautiful and how wonderful indeed is the return of life—how suggestive and how instructive to mankind! Truly God is great and good and wise and glorious.

I hope this will find you *mending*, and as I hear nothing to the contrary, I trust that it may be so that you are. I did expect to be able to go to Concord soon; I still may, but at present I do not see my way clear, as we “Friends” say. I often think of you, however, and join hands with you in the spirit, if not in the flesh, which I hope always to do.

I see by the papers that Concord has found a new voice in the way of a literary journal y'clept “The Monitor,” which has my good wishes for its success. I conclude that Mr. Sanborn is the pioneer in this enterprise, who appears to be a healthy nursing child of the old mother of heroes. I do not mean to be classic, and only intend to speak of old Mother Concord. I hope Channing will wake up and give us some of his lucubrations, and father Alcott strike his Orphic lyre once more, and Emerson discourse wisdom and verse from the woods around. There sings a whortleberry sparrow (*F. junco*) from our bush pasture beyond the garden. I hear daily your sparrow (*F. Graminus*) [vesper sparrow] with his “here! here! there! there! come quick or I'm gone!” By the way, is not Emerson wrong in his interpretation of the whistle of the Chickadee as “Phoebe”? The low, sweet whistle of the “black cap” is very distinct from the clearly expressed Phoebe of the wood pewee. But I must not be hypercritical with so true a poet and lover of Nature as E.

How grandly is the Lord overruling all for the cause of the slave—defeating the evil machinations of men by the operation of his great universal and regulating laws, by which the universe of mind and matter is governed! I do not look for a speedy termination of the war, although matters look more hopeful, but I cannot doubt but that slavery will

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THOREAU

soon find its exodus. What a glorious country this will be for the next generation should this *curse* be removed!

Amid the song of purple finches, robins, meadow-larks, and sparrows—a kind of *T. solitarius* [hermit thrush] myself—and with a heart full of kind wishes and affection for you, I conclude this hasty epistle.

As ever, yours faithfully,
D. R.

P.S. I believe I answered your sister's kind and thoughtful letter to me.

Sophia Thoreau had written Ricketson on April 7. Two days after he wrote the present letter Thoreau died. Text, Ricketson, pp. 128–31.