

Tribune office, Ellery Channing thus wrote to Thoreau, after he had returned home, disappointed with New York, to make lead pencils in his father's shop at Concord.

ELLERY CHANNING TO THOREAU (AT CONCORD).

March 5, 1845.

MY DEAR THOREAU, — The handwriting of your letter is so miserable that I am not sure I have made it out. If I have, it seems to me you are the same old sixpence you used to be, rather rusty, but a genuine piece. I see nothing for you in this earth but that field which I once christened "Briars;" go out upon that, build yourself a hut, and there begin the grand process of devouring yourself alive. I see no alternative, no other hope for you. Eat yourself up; you will eat nobody else, nor anything else. Concord is just as good a place as any other; there are, indeed, more people in the streets of that village than in the streets of this. This is a singularly muddy town; muddy, solitary, and silent.

In your line, I have not done a great deal since I arrived here; I do not mean the Pencil line, but the Staten Island line, having been there once, to walk on a beach by the telegraph, but did not visit the scene of your dominical duties. Staten Island is very distant from No. 30 Ann Street. I saw polite William Emerson in November last, but have not caught any glimpse of him since then. I am as usual suffering the various alternations from agony to despair, from hope to fear, from pain to pleasure. Such wretched one-sided pro-

II

GOLDEN AGE OF ACHIEVEMENT

THIS was the golden age of hope and achievement for the Concord poets and philosophers. Their ranks were not yet broken by death (for Stearns Wheeler was hardly one of them), their spirits were high, and their faith in each other unbounded. Emerson wrote thus from Concord, while Thoreau was perambulating Staten Island and calling on "the false booksellers:" "Ellery Channing is excellent company, and we walk in all directions. He remembers you with great faith and hope; thinks you ought not to see Concord again these ten years — that you ought to grind up fifty ConCORDS in your mill — and much other opinion and counsel he holds in store on this topic. Hawthorne walked with me yesterday afternoon, and not until after our return did I read his 'Celestial Railroad,' which has a serene strength which we cannot afford not to praise, in this low life."

The Transcendentalists had their quarterly, and even their daily organ, for Mr. Greeley put the *Tribune* at their service, and gave places on its staff to Margaret Fuller and her brother-in-law Channing, and would gladly have made room for Emerson in its columns, if the swift utterance of a morning paper had suited his habit of publication. While in the

ductions as you know nothing of the universal man; you may think yourself well off.

That baker, Hecker, who used to live on two crackers a day, I have not seen; nor Black, nor Vethake, nor Danesaz, nor Rynders, nor any of Emerson's old cronies, excepting James, a little fat, rosy Swedenborgian amateur with the look of a broker and the brains and heart of a Pascal. William Channing, I see nothing of him; he is the dupe of good feelings, and I have all-too-many of these now. I have seen something of your friends, Waldo and Tappan, and have also seen our good man McKean, the keeper of that stupid place, the Mercantile Library.

Acting on Channing's hint, and an old fancy of his own, Thoreau, in the summer of 1845, built his cabin at Walden and retired there; while Hawthorne entered the Salem custom-house, and Alcott, returning defeated from his Fruitlands paradise, was struggling with poverty and discouragement at Concord. Charles Lane, his English comrade, withdrew to New York or its vicinity, and in 1846 to London, whence he had come in 1842, full of hope and enthusiasm. A few notes of his, or about him, may here find place. They were sent to Thoreau at Concord, and show that Lane continued to value his candid friend. The first, written after leaving Fruitlands, introduces the late Father Hecker, who had been one of the family there, to Thoreau. The second and third relate to the sale of the Alcott-Lane Library, and other matters.

CHARLES LANE TO THOREAU (AT CONCORD).

BOSTON, December 3, 1843.

DEAR FRIEND, — As well as my wounded hands permit, I have scribbled something for friend Hecker, which if agreeable may be the opportunity for entering into closer relations with him; a course I think likely to be mutually encouraging, as well as beneficial to all men. But let it reach him in the manner most conformable to your own feelings. That from all perils of a false position you may shortly be relieved, and landed in the position where you feel "at home," is the sincere wish of yours most friendly,

CHARLES LANE.

MR. HENRY THOREAU,
Earl House, Coach Office.

NEW YORK, February 17, 1846.

DEAR FRIEND, — The books you were so kind as to deposit about two years and a half ago with Messrs. Wiley & Putnam have all been sold, but as they were left in your name it is needful, in strict business, that you should send an order to them to pay to me the amount due. I will therefore thank you to inclose me such an order at your earliest convenience in a letter addressed to your admiring friend,

CHARLES LANE,
Post Office, New York City.

BOONTON, N. J., March 30, 1846.

DEAR FRIEND, — If the human nature participates of the elemental I am no longer in danger of becoming

suburban, or super-urban, that is to say, too urbane. I am now more likely to be converted into a petrification, for slabs of rock and foaming waters never so abounded in my neighborhood. A very Peter I shall become: on this rock *He* has built *his church*. You would find much joy in these eminences and in the views therefrom.

My pen has been necessarily unproductive in the continued motion of the sphere in which I have lately been moved. You, I suppose, have not passed the winter to the world's unprofit.

You never have seen, as I have, the book with a preface of 450 pages and a text of 60. My letter is like unto it.

I have only to add that your letter of the 26th February did its work, and that I submit to you cordial thanks for the same. Yours truly,

CHAS. LANE.

I hope to hear occasionally of your doings and those of your compeers in your classic plowings and diggings.

TO HENRY D. THOREAU,
Concord Woods.

Thoreau's letters to Lane have not come into any editor's hands. In England, before Lane's discovery by Alcott, in 1842, he had been the editor of the *Mark-Lane Gazette* (or something similar), which gave the price-current of wheat, etc., in the English markets. Emerson found him in Hampstead, London, in February, 1848, and wrote to Thoreau: "I went

last Sunday, for the first time, to see Lane at Hampstead, and dined with him. He was full of friendliness and hospitality; has a school of sixteen children, one lady as matron, then Oldham. That is all the household. They looked just comfortable."

"Lane instructed me to ask you to forward his *Dials* to him, which must be done, if you can find them. Three bound volumes are among his books in my library. The fourth volume is in unbound numbers at J. Munroe & Co.'s shop, received there in a parcel to my address, a day or two before I sailed, and which I forgot to carry to Concord. It must be claimed without delay. It is certainly there, — was opened by me and left; and they can inclose all four volumes to Chapman for me."

This would indicate that he had not lost interest in the days and events of his American sojourn, — unpleasant as some of these must have been to the methodical, prosaic Englishman.

While at Walden, Thoreau wrote but few letters; there is, however, a brief correspondence with Mr. J. E. Cabot, then an active naturalist, coöperating with Agassiz in his work on the American fishes, who had requested Thoreau to procure certain species from Concord. The letters were written from the cabin at Walden, and it is this same structure that figures in the letters from Thoreau to Emerson in England, as the proposed nucleus of the cottage of poor Hugh the gardener, before he ran away from Concord, as there narrated, on a subsequent page. The first sending of river-fish was in the end of April, 1847. Then followed this letter:—

TO ELLIOT CABOT (AT BOSTON).

CONCORD, May 8, 1847.

DEAR SIR, — I believe that I have not yet acknowledged the receipt of your notes, and a five-dollar bill. I am very glad that the fishes afforded Mr. Agassiz so much pleasure. I could easily have obtained more specimens of the *Sternotherus odoratus*; they are quite numerous here. I will send more of them ere long. Snapping turtles are perhaps as frequently met with in our muddy river as anything, but they are not always to be had when wanted. It is now rather late in the season for them. As no one makes a business of seeking them, and they are valued for soups, science may be forestalled by appetite in this market, and it will be necessary to bid pretty high to induce persons to obtain or preserve them. I think that from seventy-five cents to a dollar apiece would secure all that are in any case to be had, and will set this price upon their heads, if the treasury of science is full enough to warrant it.

You will excuse me for taking toll in the shape of some, it may be, impertinent and unscientific inquiries. There are found in the waters of the Concord, so far as I know, the following kinds of fishes: —

Pickereel. Besides the common, fishermen distinguish the brook, or grass pickereel, which bites differently, and has a shorter snout. Those caught in Walden, hard by my house, are easily distinguished from those caught in the river, being much heavier in proportion to their size, stouter, firmer-fleshed, and lighter-colored.

The little pickereel which I sent last, jumped into the boat in its fright.

Pouts. Those in the pond are of different appearance from those that I have sent.

Breams. Some more green, others more brown.

Suckers. The horned, which I sent first, and the black. I am not sure whether the common or Boston sucker is found here. Are the three which I sent last, which were speared in the river, identical with the three black suckers, taken by hand in the brook, which I sent before? I have never examined them minutely.

Perch. The river perch, of which I sent five specimens in the box, are darker-colored than those found in the pond. There are myriads of small ones in the latter place, and but few large ones. I have counted ten transverse bands on some of the smaller.

Lampreys. Very scarce since the dams at Lowell and Billerica were built.

Shiners. *Leuciscus chrysoleucus*, silver and golden. What is the difference?

Roach or *Chiverin* (*Leuciscus pulchellus*, *argenteus*, or what not). The *white* and the *red*. The former described by Storer, but the latter, which deserves distinct notice, not described, to my knowledge. Are the minnows (called here dace), of which I sent three live specimens, I believe, one larger and two smaller, the young of this species?

Trout. Of different appearance in different brooks in this neighborhood.

Eels.

Red-finned Minnows, of which I sent you a dozen

alive. I have never recognized them in any books. Have they any scientific name?

If convenient, will you let Dr. Storer see these brook minnows? There is also a kind of dace or fresh-water smelt in the pond, which is, perhaps, distinct from any of the above. What of the above does M. Agassiz particularly wish to see? Does he want more specimens of kinds which I have already sent? There are also minks, muskrats, frogs, lizards, tortoises, snakes, caddice-worms, leeches, muscles, etc., or rather, *here they are*. The funds which you sent me are nearly exhausted. Most fishes can now be taken with the hook, and it will cost but little trouble or money to obtain them. The snapping turtles will be the main expense. I should think that five dollars more, at least, might be profitably expended.

TO ELLIOT CABOT (AT BOSTON).

CONCORD, June 1, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—I send you 15 pouts, 17 perch, 13 shiners, 1 larger land tortoise, and 5 muddy tortoises, all from the pond by my house. Also 7 perch, 5 shiners, 8 breams, 4 dace (?), 2 muddy tortoises, 5 painted do., and 3 land do., all from the river. One black snake, alive, and one dormouse (?) caught last night in my cellar. The tortoises were all put in alive; the fishes were alive yesterday, *i. e.*, Monday, and some this morning. Observe the difference between those from the pond, which is pure water, and those from the river.

I will send the light-colored trout and the pickerel with the longer snout, which is our large one, when I

meet with them. I have set a price upon the heads of snapping turtles, though it is late in the season to get them.

If I wrote red-finned eel, it was a slip of the pen; I meant red-finned minnow. This is their name here; though smaller specimens have but a slight reddish tinge at the base of the pectorals.

Will you, at your leisure, answer these queries?

Do you mean to say that the twelve banded minnows which I sent are undescribed, or only one? What are the scientific names of those minnows which have any? Are the four dace I send to-day identical with one of the former, and what are they called? Is there such a fish as the black sucker described, — distinct from the common?

AGASSIZ TO THOREAU (AT CONCORD).

In October, 1849, Agassiz, in reply to a request from Thoreau that he would lecture in Bangor, sent this characteristic letter:—

“I remember with much pleasure the time when you used to send me specimens from your vicinity, and also our short interview in the Marlborough Chapel.¹ I am under too many obligations of your kindness to forget it. I am very sorry that I missed your visit in Boston; but for eighteen months I have now been settled in Cambridge. It would give me great pleasure to engage for the lectures you ask from me for the Bangor Lyceum; but I find it has been last winter such a heavy tax upon my health, that I wish for the present to make

¹ Where Agassiz was giving a course of Lowell lectures.

no engagements; as I have some hope of making my living this year by other efforts, — and beyond the necessity of my wants, both domestic and scientific, I am determined not to exert myself; as all the time I can thus secure to myself must be exclusively devoted to science. My only business is my intercourse with nature; and could I do without draughtsmen, lithographers, etc., I would live still more retired. This will satisfy you that whenever you come this way I shall be delighted to see you, — since I have also heard something of your mode of living.”

Agassiz had reason indeed to remember the collections made by Thoreau, since (from the letters of Mr. Cabot) they aided him much in his comparison of the American with the European fishes. When the first firkin of Concord fish arrived in Boston, where Agassiz was then working, “he was highly delighted, and began immediately to spread them out and arrange them for his draughtsman. Some of the species he had seen before, but never in so fresh condition; others, as the breams and the pout, he had seen only in spirits, and the little tortoise he knew only from the books. I am sure you would have felt fully repaid for your trouble,” adds Mr. Cabot, “if you could have seen the eager satisfaction with which he surveyed each fin and scale.” Agassiz himself wrote the same day: “I have been highly pleased to find that the small mud turtle was really the *Sternotherus odoratus*, as I suspected, — a very rare species, quite distinct from the snapping turtle. The suckers were all of one and the same species

(*Catostomus tuberculatus*); the female has the tubercles. As I am very anxious to send some snapping turtles home with my first boxes, I would thank Mr. T. very much if he could have some taken for me.”

Mr. Cabot goes on: “Of the perch Agassiz remarked that it was almost identical with that of Europe, but distinguishable, on close examination, by the tubercles on the sub-operculum. . . . More of the painted tortoises would be acceptable. The snapping turtles are very interesting to him as forming a transition from the turtles proper to the alligator and crocodile. . . . We have received three boxes from you since the first.” (May 27.) “Agassiz was much surprised and pleased at the extent of the collections you sent during his absence in New York. Among the fishes there is one, and probably two, new species. The fresh-water smelt he does not know. He is very anxious to see the pickrel with the long snout, which he suspects may be the *Esox estor*, or Maskalongé; he has seen this at Albany. . . . As to the minks, etc., I know they would all be very acceptable to him. When I asked him about these, and more specimens of what you have sent, he said, ‘I dare not make any request, for I do not know how much trouble I may be giving to Mr. Thoreau; but my method of examination requires many more specimens than most naturalists would care for.’” (June 1.) “Agassiz is delighted to find one, and he thinks two, more new species; one is a Pomotis, — the bream without the red spot in the operculum, and with a red belly and fins. The other is the shallower and lighter colored shiner. The four dace you sent last are *Leuciscus ar-*

genteus. They are different from that you sent before under this name, but which was a new species. Of the four kinds of minnow, two are new. There is a black sucker (*Catostomus nigricans*), but there has been no specimen among those you have sent, and A. has never seen a specimen. He seemed to know your mouse, and called it the white-bellied mouse. It was the first specimen he had seen. I am in hopes to bring or send him to Concord, to look after new *Leucisci*, etc." Agassiz did afterwards come, more than once, and examined turtles with Thoreau.

Soon after this scientific correspondence, Thoreau left his retreat by Walden to take the place of Emerson in his household, while his friend went to visit Carlyle and give lectures in England. The letters that follow are among the longest Thoreau ever composed, and will give a new conception of the writer to those who may have figured him as a cold, stoical, or selfish person, withdrawn from society and its duties. The first describes the setting out of Emerson for Europe.

TO SOPHIA THOREAU (AT BANGOR).

CONCORD, October 24, 1847.

DEAR SOPHIA, — I thank you for those letters about Ktaadn, and hope you will save and send me the rest, and anything else you may meet with relating to the Maine woods. That Dr. Young is both young and green too at traveling in the woods. However, I hope he got "yarbs" enough to satisfy him. I went to Boston the 5th of this month to see Mr. Emerson off to Europe. He sailed in the Washington Irving packet-

ship; the same in which Mr. [F. H.] Hedge went before him. Up to this trip the first mate aboard this ship was, as I hear, one Stephens, a Concord boy, son of Stephens the carpenter, who used to live above Mr. Dennis's. Mr. Emerson's stateroom was like a carpeted dark closet, about six feet square, with a large keyhole for a window. The window was about as big as a saucer, and the glass two inches thick, not to mention another skylight overhead in the deck, the size of an oblong doughnut, and about as opaque. Of course it would be in vain to look up, if any contemplative promenader put his foot upon it. Such will be his lodgings for two or three weeks; and instead of a walk in Walden woods he will take a promenade on deck, where the few trees, you know, are stripped of their bark. The steam-tug carried the ship to sea against a head wind without a rag of sail being raised.

I don't remember whether you have heard of the new telescope at Cambridge or not. They think it is the best one in the world, and have already seen more than Lord Rosse or Herschel. I went to see Perez Blood's, some time ago, with Mr. Emerson. He had not gone to bed, but was sitting in the wood-shed, in the dark, alone, in his astronomical chair, which is all legs and rounds, with a seat which can be inserted at any height. We saw Saturn's rings, and the mountains in the moon, and the shadows in their craters, and the sunlight on the spurs of the mountains in the dark portion, etc., etc. When I asked him the power of his glass, he said it was 85. But what is the power of the

Cambridge glass? 2000!!! The last is about twenty-three feet long.

I think you may have a grand time this winter pursuing some study, — keeping a journal, or the like, — while the snow lies deep without. Winter is the time for study, you know, and the colder it is the more studious we are. Give my respects to the whole Penobscot tribe, and tell them that I trust we are good brothers still, and endeavor to keep the chain of friendship bright, though I do dig up a hatchet now and then. I trust you will not stir from your comfortable winter quarters, Miss Bruin, or even put your head out of your hollow tree, till the sun has melted the snow in the spring, and “the green buds, they are a-swellin’.”

From your

BROTHER HENRY.

This letter will explain some of the allusions in the first letter to Emerson in England. Perez Blood was a rural astronomer living in the extreme north quarter of Concord, next to Carlisle, with his two maiden sisters, in the midst of a fine oak wood; their cottage being one of the points in view when Thoreau and his friends took their afternoon rambles. Sophia Thoreau, the younger and soon the only surviving sister, was visiting her cousins in Maine, the “Penobscot tribe” of whom the letter makes mention, with an allusion to the Indians of that name near Bangor. His letter to her and those which follow were written from Emerson’s house, where Thoreau lived during the master’s absence across the ocean. It was in the orchard of this house that Alcott was building that summer-house at which

Thoreau, with his geometrical eye, makes merry in the next letter.

TO R. W. EMERSON (IN ENGLAND).

CONCORD, November 14, 1847.

DEAR FRIEND, — I am but a poor neighbor to you here, — a very poor companion am I. I understand that very well, but that need not prevent my *writing* to you now. I have almost never written letters in my life, yet I think I can write as good ones as I frequently see, so I shall not hesitate to write this, such as it may be, knowing that you will welcome anything that reminds you of Concord.

I have banked up the young trees against the winter and the mice, and I will look out, in my careless way, to see when a pale is loose or a nail drops out of its place. The broad gaps, at least, I will occupy. I heartily wish I could be of good service to this household. But I, who have only used these ten digits so long to solve the problem of a living, how can I? The world is a cow that is hard to milk, — life does not come so easy, — and oh, how thinly it is watered ere we get it! But the young bunting calf, he will get at it. There is no way so direct. This is to earn one’s living by the sweat of his brow. It is a little like joining a community, this life, to such a hermit as I am; and as I don’t keep the accounts, I don’t know whether the experiment will succeed or fail finally. At any rate, it is good for society, so I do not regret my transient nor my permanent share in it.

Lidian [Mrs. Emerson] and I make very good house-

keepers. She is a very dear sister to me. Ellen and Edith and Eddy and Aunty Brown keep up the tragedy and comedy and tragic-comedy of life as usual. The two former have not forgotten their old acquaintance; even Edith carries a young memory in her head, I find. Eddy can teach us all how to pronounce. If you should discover any rare hoard of wooden or pewter horses, I have no doubt he will know how to appreciate it. He occasionally surveys mankind from my shoulders as wisely as ever Johnson did. I respect him not a little, though it is I that lift him up so unceremoniously. And sometimes I have to set him down again in a hurry, according to his "mere will and good pleasure." He very seriously asked me, the other day, "Mr. Thoreau, will you be my father?" I am occasionally Mr. Rough-and-tumble with him that I may not miss *him*, and lest he should miss *you* too much. So you must come back soon, or you will be superseded.

Alcott has heard that I laughed, and so set the people laughing, at his arbor, though I never laughed louder than when I was on the ridge-pole. But now I have not laughed for a long time, it is so serious. He is very grave to look at. But, not knowing all this, I strove innocently enough, the other day, to engage his attention to my mathematics. "Did you ever study geometry, the relation of straight lines to curves, the transition from the finite to the infinite? Fine things about it in Newton and Leibnitz." But he would hear none of it, — men of taste preferred the natural curve. Ah, he is a crooked stick himself. He is getting on now so many *knots* an hour. There is one knot at

present occupying the point of highest elevation, — the present highest point; and as many knots as are not handsome, I presume, are thrown down and cast into the pines. Pray show him this if you meet him anywhere in London, for I cannot make him hear much plainer words here. He forgets that I am neither old nor young, nor anything in particular, and behaves as if I had still some of the animal heat in me. As for the building, I feel a little oppressed when I come near it. It has no great disposition to be beautiful; it is certainly a wonderful structure, on the whole, and the fame of the architect will endure as long as it shall stand. I should not show you this side alone, if I did not suspect that Lidian had done complete justice to the other.

Mr. [Edmund] Hosmer has been working at a tannery in Stow for a fortnight, though he has just now come home sick. It seems that he was a tanner in his youth, and so he has made up his mind a little at last. This comes of reading the New Testament. Was n't one of the Apostles a tanner? Mrs. Hosmer remains here, and John looks stout enough to fill his own shoes and his father's too.

Mr. Blood and his company have at length seen the stars through the great telescope, and he told me that he thought it was worth the while. Mr. Peirce made him wait till the crowd had dispersed (it was a Saturday evening), and then was quite polite, — conversed with him, and showed him the micrometer, etc.; and he said Mr. Blood's glass was large enough for all ordinary astronomical work. [Rev.] Mr. Frost and Dr. [Josiah]

Bartlett seemed disappointed that there was no greater difference between the Cambridge glass and the Concord one. They used only a power of 400. Mr. Blood tells me that he is too old to study the calculus or higher mathematics. At Cambridge they think that they have discovered traces of another satellite to Neptune. They have been obliged to exclude the public altogether, at last. The very dust which they raised, "which is filled with minute crystals," etc., as professors declare, having to be wiped off the glasses, would ere long wear them away. It is true enough, Cambridge college is really beginning to wake up and redeem its character and overtake the age. I see by the catalogue that they are about establishing a scientific school in connection with the university, at which any one above eighteen, on paying one hundred dollars annually (Mr. Lawrence's fifty thousand dollars will probably diminish this sum), may be instructed in the highest branches of science, — in astronomy, "theoretical and practical, with the use of the instruments" (so the great Yankee astronomer may be born without delay), in mechanics and engineering to the last degree. Agassiz will ere long commence his lectures in the zoölogical department. A chemistry class has already been formed under the direction of Professor Horsford. A new and adequate building for the purpose is already being erected. They have been foolish enough to put at the end of all this earnest the old joke of a diploma. Let every sheep keep but his own skin, I say.

I have had a tragic correspondence, for the most part all on one side, with Miss —. She did really

wish to — I hesitate to write — marry me. That is the way they spell it. Of course I did not write a deliberate answer. How could I deliberate upon it? I sent back as distinct a *no* as I have learned to pronounce after considerable practice, and I trust that this *no* has succeeded. Indeed, I wished that it might burst, like hollow shot, after it had struck and buried itself and made itself felt there. *There was no other way.* I really had anticipated no such foe as this in my career.

I suppose you will like to hear of my book, though I have nothing worth writing about it. Indeed, for the last month or two I have forgotten it, but shall certainly remember it again. Wiley & Putnam, Munroe, the Harpers, and Crosby & Nichols have all declined printing it with the least risk to themselves; but Wiley & Putnam will print it in their series, and any of them anywhere, at *my* risk. If I liked the book well enough, I should not delay; but for the present I am indifferent. I believe this is, after all, the course you advised, — to let it lie.

I do not know what to say of myself. I sit before my green desk, in the chamber at the head of the stairs, and attend to my thinking, sometimes more, sometimes less distinctly. I am not unwilling to think great thoughts if there are any in the wind, but what they are I am not sure. They suffice to keep me awake while the day lasts, at any rate. Perhaps they will redeem some portion of the night ere long.

I can imagine you ^{an} astonishing, bewildering, confounding, and sometimes delighting John Bull with your Yankee notions, and that he begins to take a pride in

the relationship at last ; introduced to all the stars of England in succession, after the lecture, until you pine to thrust your head once more into a genuine and unquestionable nebula, if there be any left. I trust a common man will be the most uncommon to you before you return to these parts. I have thought there was some advantage even in death, by which we "mingle with the herd of common men."

Hugh [the gardener] still has his eye on the Walden *agellum*, and orchards are waving there in the windy future for him. That's the where-I'll-go-next, thinks he; but no important steps are yet taken. He reminds me occasionally of this open secret of his, with which the very season seems to labor, and affirms seriously that as to his wants — wood, stone, or timber — I know better than he. That is a clincher which I shall have to avoid to some extent; but I fear that it is a wrought nail and will not break. Unfortunately, the day after cattle-show — the day after small beer — he was among the missing, but not long this time. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the leopard his spots, nor indeed Hugh — his Hugh.

As I walked over Conantum, the other afternoon, I saw a fair column of smoke rising from the woods directly over my house that was (as I judged), and already began to conjecture if my deed of sale would not be made invalid by this. But it turned out to be John Richardson's young wood, on the southeast of your field. It was burnt nearly all over, and up to the rails and the road. It was set on fire, no doubt, by the same Lucifer that lighted Brooks's lot before. So you

see that your small lot is comparatively safe for this season, the back fire having been already set for you.

They have been choosing between John Keyes and Sam Staples, if the world wants to know it, as representative of this town, and Staples is chosen. The candidates for governor — think of my writing this to you! — were Governor Briggs and General Cushing, and Briggs is elected, though the Democrats have gained. Ain't I a brave boy to know so much of politics for the nonce? But I should n't have known it if Coombs had n't told me. They have had a peace meeting here, — I should n't think of telling you if I did n't know anything would do for the English market, — and some men, Deacon Brown at the head, have signed a long pledge, swearing that they will "treat all mankind as brothers henceforth." I think I shall wait and see how they treat me first. I think that Nature meant kindly when she made our brothers few. However, my voice is still for peace. So good-by, and a truce to all joking, my dear friend, from

H. D. T.

Upon this letter some annotations are to be made. "Eddy" was Emerson's youngest child, Edward Waldo, then three years old and upward, — of late years his father's biographer. Hugh, the gardener, of whom more anon, bargained for the house of Thoreau on Emerson's land at Walden, and for a field to go with it; but the bargain came to naught, and the cabin was removed three or four miles to the northwest, where it became a granary for Farmer Clark and his squirrels, near the entrance to the park known as Estabrook's.

Edmund Hosmer was the farming friend and neighbor with whom, at one time, G. W. Curtis and his brother took lodgings, and at another time the Alcott family. The book in question was "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers."

To these letters Emerson replied from England:—

DEAR HENRY,—Very welcome in the parcel was your letter, very precious your thoughts and tidings. It is one of the best things connected with my coming hither that you could and would keep the homestead; that fire-place shines all the brighter, and has a certain permanent glimmer therefor. Thanks, ever more thanks for the kindness which I well discern to the youth of the house: to my darling little horseman of pewter, wooden, rocking, and what other breeds,—destined, I hope, to ride Pegasus yet, and, I hope, not destined to be thrown; to Edith, who long ago drew from you verses which I carefully preserve; and to Ellen, whom by speech, and now by letter, I find old enough to be companionable, and to choose and reward her own friends in her own fashions. She sends me a poem to-day, which I have read three times!

TO R. W. EMERSON (IN ENGLAND).

CONCORD, December 15, 1847.

DEAR FRIEND,—You are not so far off but the affairs of *this* world still attract you. Perhaps it will be so when we are dead. Then look out. Joshua R. Holman, of Harvard, who says he lived a month with [Charles] Lane at Fruitlands, wishes to *hire* said Lane's

farm for one or more years, and will pay \$125 rent, taking out of the same a half, if necessary, for repairs,—as for a new bank-wall to the barn cellar, which he says is indispensable. Palmer is gone, Mrs. Palmer is going. This is all that is known or that is worth knowing. Yes or no? What to do?

Hugh's plot begins to thicken. He starts thus: eighty dollars on one side; Walden, field and house, on the other. How to bring these together so as to make a garden and a palace?

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| \$80 | <input type="checkbox"/> Field | <input type="checkbox"/> House |
| 1st, let \$10 go over to unite the two lots. | | |
| \$70 | | |
| \$6 for Wetherbee's rocks to found your palace on. | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| \$64 | | |
| \$64 — so far, indeed, we have already got. | | |
| \$4 to bring the rocks to the field. | | |
| \$60 | | |
| Save \$20 by all means, to measure the field, and you have left | | |
| \$40 to complete the palace, build cellar, and dig well. Build the cellar yourself, and let <i>well</i> alone, — and now how does it stand? | | |
| \$40 to complete the palace somewhat like this. | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

For when one asks, "Why do you want twice as much room more?" the reply is, "Parlor, kitchen, and bedroom,—these make the palace."

"Well, Hugh, what will you do? Here are forty dollars to buy a new house, twelve feet by twenty-five, and add it to the old."

"Well, Mr. Thoreau, as I tell you, I know no more than a child about it. It shall be just as you say."

“Then build it yourself, get it roofed, and get in.

“Commence at one end and leave it half done,
And let time finish what money’s begun.”

So you see we have forty dollars for a nest egg; sitting on which, Hugh and I alternately and simultaneously, there may in course of time be hatched a house that will long stand, and perchance even lay fresh eggs one day for its owner; that is, if, when he returns, he gives the young chick twenty dollars or more in addition, by way of “swichin,” to give it a start in the world.

The *Massachusetts Quarterly Review* came out the 1st of December, but it does not seem to be making a sensation, at least not hereabouts. I know of none in Concord who take or have seen it yet.

We wish to get by all possible means some notion of your success or failure in England, — more than your two letters have furnished. Can’t you send a fair sample both of young and of old England’s criticism, if there is any printed? Alcott and [Ellery] Channing are equally greedy with myself.

HENRY THOREAU.

C. T. Jackson takes the *Quarterly* (new one), and will lend it to us. Are you not going to send your wife some news of your good or ill success by the newspapers?

TO R. W. EMERSON (IN ENGLAND).

CONCORD, December 29, 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I thank you for your letter. I was very glad to get it; and I am glad again to write to you. However slow the steamer, no time intervenes

between the writing and the reading of thoughts, but they come freshly to the most distant port. I am here still, and very glad to be here, and shall not trouble you with any complaints because I do not fill my place better. I have had many good hours in the chamber at the head of the stairs, — a solid time, it seems to me. Next week I am going to give an account to the Lyceum of my expedition to Maine. Theodore Parker lectures to-night. We have had Whipple on Genius, — too weighty a subject for him, with his antithetical definitions new-vamped, — what it *is*, what it is *not*, but altogether what it is *not*; cuffing it this way and cuffing it that, as if it were an India-rubber ball. Really, it is a subject which should expand, expand, accumulate itself before the speaker’s eyes as he goes on, like the snowballs which the boys roll in the street; and when it stops, it should be so large that he cannot start it, but must leave it there. [H. N.] Hudson, too, has been here, with a dark shadow in the core of him, and his desperate wit, so much indebted to the surface of him, — wringing out his words and snapping them off like a dish-cloth; very remarkable, but not memorable. Singular that these two best lecturers should have so much “wave” in their timber, — their solid parts to be made and kept solid by shrinkage and contraction of the whole, with consequent checks and fissures.

Ellen and I have a good understanding. I appreciate her genuineness. Edith tells me after her fashion: “By and by I shall grow up and be a woman, and then I shall remember how you exercised me.” Eddy has been to Boston to Christmas, but can remember nothing but

the coaches, all Kendall's coaches. There is no variety of that vehicle that he is not familiar with. He *did* try twice to tell us something else, but, after thinking and stuttering a long time, said, "I don't know what the word is," — the *one* word, forsooth, that would have disposed of all that Boston phenomenon. If you did not know him better than I, I could tell you more. He is a good companion for me, and I am glad that we are all natives of Concord. It is *young Concord*. Look out, World!

Mr. Alcott seems to have sat down for the winter. He has got Plato and other books to read. He is a large-featured and hospitable to traveling thoughts and thinkers as ever; but with the same Connecticut philosophy as ever, mingled with what is better. If he would only stand upright and toe the line! — though he were to put off several degrees of largeness, and put on a considerable degree of littleness. After all, I think we must call him particularly *your* man.

I have pleasant walks and talks with Channing, James Clark — the Swedenborgian that was — is at the poorhouse, insane with too large views, so that he cannot support himself. I see him working with Fred and the rest. Better than be there and not insane. It is strange that they will make ado when a man's body is buried, but not when he thus really and tragically dies, or seems to die. Away with your funeral processions, — into the ballroom with them! I hear the bell toll hourly over there.¹

Lidian and I have a standing quarrel as to what is

¹ The town almshouse was across the field from the Emerson house.

a suitable state of preparedness for a traveling professor's visit, or for whomsoever else; but further than this we are not at war. We have made up a dinner, we have made up a bed, we have made up a party, and our own minds and mouths, three several times for your professor, and he came not. Three several turkeys have died the death, which I myself carved, just as if he had been there; and the company, too, convened and demeaned themselves accordingly. Everything was done up in good style, I assure you, with only the part of the professor omitted. To have seen the preparation (though Lidian says it was nothing extraordinary) I should certainly have said he was a-coming, but he did not. He must have found out some shorter way to Turkey, — some overland route, I think. By the way, he was complimented, at the conclusion of his course in Boston, by the mayor moving the appointment of a committee to draw up resolutions expressive, etc., which was done.

I have made a few verses lately. Here are some, though perhaps not the best, — at any rate they are the shortest, — on that universal theme, yours as well as mine, and several other people's: —

The good how can we trust!
 Only the wise are just.
 The good, we use,
 The wise we cannot choose;
 These there are none above.
 The good, they know and love,
 But are not known again
 By those of lesser ken.
 They do not charm us with their eyes,
 But they transfix with their advice;

No partial sympathy they feel
 With private woe or private weal,
 But with the universe joy and sigh,
 Whose knowledge is their sympathy.

Good-night.

HENRY THOREAU.

P. S. — I am sorry to send such a medley as this to you. I have forwarded Lane's *Dial* to Munroe, and he tells the expressman that all is right.

TO R. W. EMERSON (IN ENGLAND).

CONCORD, January 12, 1848.

It is hard to believe that England is so near as from your letters it appears; and that this identical piece of paper has lately come all the way from there hither, begrimed with the English dust which made you hesitate to use it; from England, which is only historical fairyland to me, to America, which I have put my spade into, and about which there is no doubt.

I thought that you needed to be informed of Hugh's progress. He has moved his house, as I told you, and dug his cellar, and purchased stone of Sol Wetherbee for the last, though he has not hauled it; all which has cost sixteen dollars, which I have paid. He has also, as next in order, run away from Concord without a penny in his pocket, "crying" by the way, — having had another long difference with strong beer, and a first one, I suppose, with his wife, who seems to have complained that he sought other society; the one difference leading to the other, perhaps, but I don't know which was the leader. He writes back to his wife from Sterling, near

Worcester, where he is chopping wood, his distantly kind reproaches to her, which I read straight through to her (not to his bottle, which he has with him, and no doubt addresses orally). He says that he will go on to the South in the spring, and will never return to Concord. Perhaps he will not. Life is not tragic enough for him, and he must try to cook up a more highly seasoned dish for himself. Towns which keep a barroom and a gun-house and a reading-room, should also keep a steep precipice whereoff impatient soldiers may jump. His sun went down, *to me*, bright and steady enough in the west, but it never came up in the east. Night intervened. He departed, as when a man dies suddenly; and perhaps wisely, if he was to go, without settling his affairs. They knew that that was a thin soil and not well calculated for pears. Nature is rare and sensitive on the score of nurseries. You may cut down orchards and grow forests at your pleasure. Sand watered with strong beer, though stirred with industry, will not produce grapes. He dug his cellar for the new part too near the old house, Irish like, though I warned him, and it has caved and let one end of the house down. Such is the state of his domestic affairs. I laugh with the Parcae only. He had got the upland and the orchard and a part of the meadow plowed by Warren, at an expense of eight dollars, still unpaid, which of course is no affair of yours.

I think that if an honest and small-familied man, who has no affinity for moisture in him, but who has an affinity for sand, can be found, it would be safe to rent him the shanty as it is, and the land; or you can very easily and

simply let nature keep them still, without great loss. It may be so managed, perhaps, as to be a home for somebody, who shall in return serve you as fencing stuff, and to fix and locate your lot, as we plant a tree in the sand or on the edge of a stream; without expense to you in the meanwhile, and without disturbing its possible future value.

I read a part of the story of my excursion to Ktaadn to quite a large audience of men and boys, the other night, whom it interested. It contains many facts and some poetry. I have also written what will do for a lecture on "Friendship."

I think that the article on you in *Blackwood's* is a good deal to get from the reviewers, — the first purely literary notice, as I remember. The writer is far enough off, in every sense, to speak with a certain authority. It is a better judgment of posterity than the public had. It is singular how sure he is to be mystified by any uncommon sense. But it was generous to put Plato into the list of mystics. His confessions on this subject suggest several thoughts, which I have not room to express here. The old word *seer*, — I wonder what the reviewer thinks that means; whether that *he* was a man who could *see more than himself*.

I was struck by Ellen's asking me, yesterday, while I was talking with Mrs. Brown, if I did not use "*colored words*." She said that she could tell the color of a great many words, and amused the children at school by so doing. Eddy climbed up the sofa, the other day, *of his own accord*, and kissed the picture of his father, — "right on his shirt, I did."

I had a good talk with Alcott this afternoon. He is certainly the youngest man of his age we have seen, — just on the threshold of life. When I looked at his gray hairs, his conversation sounded pathetic; but I looked again, and they reminded me of the gray dawn. He is getting better acquainted with Channing, though he says that, if they were to live in the same house, they would soon sit with their backs to each other.¹

You must excuse me if I do not write with sufficient directness to yourself, who are a far-off traveler. It is a little like shooting on the wing, I confess.

Farewell.

HENRY THOREAU.

TO R. W. EMERSON (IN ENGLAND).

CONCORD, February 23, 1848.

DEAR WALDO, — For I think I have heard that that is your name, — my letter which was put last into the leathern bag arrived first. Whatever I may *call* you, I know you better than I know your name, and what becomes of the fittest name if in any sense you are here with him who *calls*, and not there simply to be called?

I believe I never thanked you for your lectures, one and all, which I heard formerly read here in Concord. *I know* I never have. There was some excellent reason each time why I did not; but it will never be too late.

¹ At this date Alcott had passed his forty-eighth year, while Channing and Thoreau were still in the latitude of thirty. Hawthorne had left Concord, and was in the Salem custom-house, the Old Manse having gone back into the occupancy of Emerson's cousins, the Ripleys, who owned it.

I have that advantage, at least, over you in my education.

Lidian is too unwell to write to you; so I must tell you what I can about the children and herself. I am afraid she has not told you how unwell she is, — or today perhaps we may say has been. She has been confined to her chamber four or five weeks, and three or four weeks, at least, to her bed, with the jaundice. The doctor, who comes once a day, does not let her read (nor can she now) nor *hear* much reading. She has written her letters to you, till recently, sitting up in bed, but he said he would not come again if she did so. She has Abby and Almira to take care of her, and Mrs. Brown to read to her; and I also, occasionally, have something to read or to say. The doctor says she must not expect to “take any comfort of her life” for a week or two yet. She wishes me to say that she has written two long and full letters to you about the household economies, etc., which she hopes have not been delayed. The children are quite well and full of spirits, and are going through a regular course of picture-seeing, with commentary by me, every evening, for Eddy’s behoof. All the Annuals and “Diadems” are in requisition, and Eddy is forward to exclaim, when the hour arrives, “Now for the demdems!” I overheard this dialogue when Frank [Brown] came down to breakfast the other morning.

Eddy. “Why, Frank, I am astonished that you should leave your boots in the dining-room.”

Frank. “I guess you mean *surprised*, don’t you?”

Eddy. “No, boots!”

“If Waldo were here,” said he, the other night, at bedtime, “we’d be four going upstairs.” Would he like to tell papa anything? No, not anything; but finally, yes, he would, — that one of the white horses in his new barouche is broken! Ellen and Edith will perhaps speak for themselves, as I hear something about letters to be written by them.

Mr. Alcott seems to be reading well this winter: Plato, Montaigne, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Sir Thomas Browne, etc., etc. “I believe I have read them all now, or nearly all,” — those English authors. He is rallying for another foray with his pen, in his latter years, not discouraged by the past, into that crowd of unexpressed ideas of his, that undisciplined Parthian army, which, as soon as a Roman soldier would face, retreats on all hands, occasionally firing backwards; easily routed, not easily subdued, hovering on the skirts of society. Another summer shall not be devoted to the raising of vegetables (Arbors?) which rot in the cellar for want of consumers; but perchance to the arrangement of the material, the brain-crop which the winter has furnished. I have good talks with him. His respect for Carlyle has been steadily increasing for some time. He has read him with new sympathy and appreciation.

I see Channing often. He also goes often to Alcott’s, and confesses that he has made a discovery in him, and gives vent to his admiration or his confusion in characteristic exaggeration; but between this extreme and that you may get a fair report, and draw an inference if you can. Sometimes he will ride a broomstick still, though

there is nothing to keep him, or it, up but a certain centrifugal force of whim, which is soon spent, and there lies your stick, not worth picking up to sweep an oven with now. His accustomed path is strewn with them. But then again, and perhaps for the most part, he sits on the Cliffs amid the lichens, or flits past on noiseless pinion, like the barred owl in the daytime, as wise and unobserved. He brought me a poem the other day, for me, on Walden Hermitage: not remarkable.¹

Lectures begin to multiply on my desk. I have one on Friendship which is new, and the materials of some others. I read one last week to the Lyceum, on The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Government, — much to Mr. Alcott's satisfaction.

Joel Britton has failed and gone into chancery, but the woods continue to fall before the axes of other men. Neighbor Coombs² was lately found dead in the woods near Goose Pond, with his half-empty jug, after he had been rioting a week. Hugh, by the last accounts, was still in Worcester County. Mr. Hosmer, who is himself again, and living in Concord, has just hauled the rest of your wood, amounting to about ten and a half cords.

The newspapers say that they have printed a pirated edition of your Essays in England. Is it as bad as they say, and undisguised and unmitigated piracy? I thought that the printed scrap would entertain Carlyle, notwithstanding its history. If this generation will see out of its hind-head, why then you may turn your

¹ See Sanborn's *Thoreau*, p. 214, and Channing's *Thoreau*, New Edition, pp. 207-210, for this poem.

² This is the political neighbor mentioned in a former letter.

back on its forehead. Will you forward it to him for me?

This stands written in your day-book: "September 3d. Received of Boston Savings Bank, on account of Charles Lane, his deposit with interest, \$131.33. 16th. Received of Joseph Palmer, on account of Charles Lane, three hundred twenty-three $\frac{3}{100}$ dollars, being the balance of a note on demand for four hundred dollars, with interest, \$323.36."

If you have any directions to give about the trees, you must not forget that spring will soon be upon us.

Farewell. From your friend,

HENRY THOREAU.

Before a reply came to this letter, Thoreau had occasion to write to Mr. Elliot Cabot again. The allusions to the "Week" and to the Walden house are interesting.

TO ELLIOT CABOT.

CONCORD, March 8, 1848.

DEAR SIR, — Mr. Emerson's address is as yet, "R. W. Emerson, care of Alexander Ireland, Esq., Examiner Office, Manchester, England." We had a letter from him on Monday, dated at Manchester, February 10, and he was then preparing to go to Edinburgh the next day, where he was to lecture. He thought that he should get through his northern journeying by the 25th of February, and go to London to spend March and April, and if he did not go to Paris in May, then come home. He has been eminently successful, though the papers this side of the water have been so silent about his adventures.

My book,¹ fortunately, did not find a publisher ready to undertake it, and you can imagine the effect of delay on an author's estimate of his own work. However, I like it well enough to mend it, and shall look at it again directly when I have dispatched some other things.

I have been writing lectures for our own Lyceum this winter, mainly for my own pleasure and advantage. I esteem it a rare happiness to be able to *write* anything, but there (if I ever get there) my concern for it is apt to end. Time & Co. are, after all, the only quite honest and trustworthy publishers that we know. I can sympathize, perhaps, with the barberry bush, whose business it is solely to *ripen* its fruit (though that may not be to sweeten it) and to protect it with thorns, so that it holds on all winter, even, unless some hungry crows come to pluck it. But I see that I must get a few dollars together presently to manure my roots. Is your journal able to pay anything, provided it likes an article well enough? I do not promise one. At any rate, I mean always to spend only words enough to purchase silence with; and I have found that this, which is so valuable, though many writers do not prize it, does not cost much, after all.

I have not obtained any more of the mice which I told you were so numerous in my cellar, as my house

¹ From England Emerson wrote: "I am not of opinion that your book should be delayed a month. I should print it at once, nor do I think that you would incur any risk in doing so that you cannot well afford. It is very certain to have readers and debtors, here as well as there. The *Dial* is absurdly well known here. We at home, I think, are always a little ashamed of it, — *I* am, — and yet here it is spoken of with the utmost gravity, and I do not laugh."

was removed immediately after I saw you, and I have been living in the village since.

However, if I should happen to meet with anything rare, I will forward it to you. I thank you for your kind offers, and will avail myself of them so far as to ask if you can anywhere borrow for me for a short time the copy of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* containing a notice of Mr. Emerson. I should like well to read it, and to read it to Mrs. Emerson and others. If this book is not easy to be obtained, do not by any means trouble yourself about it.

TO R. W. EMERSON.¹

CONCORD, March 23, 1848.

DEAR FRIEND, — Lidian says I must write a sentence about the children. Eddy says he cannot sing, — "till mother is a-going to be well." We shall hear his voice very soon, in that case, I trust. Ellen is already thinking what will be done when you come home; but then she thinks it will be some loss that I shall go away. Edith says that I shall come and see them, and always at tea-time, so that I can play with her. Ellen thinks she likes father best because he jumps her sometimes. This is the latest news from

Yours, etc.,

HENRY.

P. S. — I have received three newspapers from you duly which I have not acknowledged. There is an anti-

¹ This letter was addressed, "R. Waldo Emerson, care of Alexander Ireland, Esq., Manchester, England, *via* New York and Steamer Cambria, March 25." It was mailed in Boston, March 24, and received in Manchester, April 19.

Sabbath convention held in Boston to-day, to which Alcott has gone.

That friend to whom Thoreau wrote most constantly and fully, on all topics, was Mr. Harrison Blake of Worcester, a graduate of Harvard two years earlier than Thoreau, in the same class with two other young men from Concord, — E. R. Hoar and H. B. Dennis. This circumstance may have led to Mr. Blake's visiting the town occasionally, before his intimacy with its poet-naturalist began, in the year 1848. At that time, as Thoreau wrote to Horace Greeley, he had been supporting himself for five years wholly by the labor of his hands; his Walden hermit life was over, yet neither its record nor the first book had been published, and Thoreau was known in literature chiefly by his papers in the *Dial*, which had then ceased for four years. In March, 1848, Mr. Blake read Thoreau's chapter on Persius in the *Dial* for July, 1840, — and though he had read it before without being much impressed by it, he now found in it "pure depth and solidity of thought." "It has revived in me," he wrote to Thoreau, "a haunting impression of you, which I carried away from some spoken words of yours. . . . When I was last in Concord, you spoke of retiring farther from our civilization. I asked you if you would feel no longings for the society of your friends. Your reply was in substance, 'No, I am nothing.' That reply was memorable to me. It indicated a depth of resources, a completeness of renunciation, a poise and repose in the universe, which to me is almost inconceivable; which

in you seemed domesticated, and to which I look up with veneration. I would know of that soul which can say 'I am nothing.' I would be roused by its words to a truer and purer life. Upon me seems to be dawning with new significance the idea that God is here; that we have but to bow before Him in profound submission at every moment, and He will fill our souls with his presence. In this opening of the soul to God, all duties seem to centre; what else have we to do? . . . If I understand rightly the significance of your life, this is it: You would sunder yourself from society, from the spell of institutions, customs, conventionalities, that you may lead a fresh, simple life with God. Instead of breathing a new life into the old forms, you would have a new life without and within. There is something sublime to me in this attitude, — far as I may be from it myself. . . . Speak to me in this hour as you are prompted. . . . I honor you because you abstain from action, and open your soul that you may *be* somewhat. Amid a world of noisy, shallow actors it is noble to stand aside and say, 'I will simply *be*.' Could I plant myself at once upon the truth, reducing my wants to their minimum, . . . I should at once be brought nearer to nature, nearer to my fellow-men, — and life would be infinitely richer. But, alas! I shiver on the brink."

Thus appealed to by one who had so well attained the true Transcendental shibboleth, — "God working in us, both to will and to do," — Thoreau could not fail to make answer, as he did at once, and thus: —

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

[The first of many letters.]

CONCORD, March 27, 1848.

I am glad to hear that any words of mine, though spoken so long ago that I can hardly claim identity with their author, have reached you. It gives me pleasure, because I have therefore reason to suppose that I have uttered what concerns men, and that it is not in vain that man speaks to man. This is the value of literature. Yet those days are so distant, in every sense, that I have had to look at that page again, to learn what was the tenor of my thoughts then. I should value that article, however, if only because it was the occasion of your letter.

I do believe that the outward and the inward life correspond; that if any should succeed to live a higher life, others would not know of it; that difference and distance are one. To set about living a true life is to go a journey to a distant country, gradually to find ourselves surrounded by new scenes and men; and as long as the old are around me, I know that I am not in any true sense living a new or a better life. The outward is only the outside of that which is within. Men are not concealed under habits, but are revealed by them; they are their true clothes. I care not how curious a reason they may give for their abiding by them. Circumstances are not rigid and unyielding, but our habits are rigid. We are apt to speak vaguely sometimes, as if a divine life were to be grafted on to or built over this present as a suitable foundation. This might do if

we could so build over our old life as to exclude from it all the warmth of our affection, and addle it, as the thrush builds over the cuckoo's egg, and lays her own atop, and hatches that only; but the fact is, we — so thin is the partition — hatch them both, and the cuckoo's always by a day first, and that young bird crowds the young thrushes out of the nest. No. Destroy the cuckoo's egg, or build a new nest.

Change is change. No new life occupies the old bodies; — they decay. *It* is born, and grows, and flourishes. Men very pathetically inform the old, accept and wear it. Why put up with the almshouse when you may go to heaven? It is embalming, — no more. Let alone your ointments and your linen swathes, and go into an infant's body. You see in the catacombs of Egypt the result of that experiment, — that is the end of it.

I do believe in simplicity. It is astonishing as well as sad, how many trivial affairs even the wisest man thinks he must attend to in a day; how singular an affair he thinks he must omit. When the mathematician would solve a difficult problem, he first frees the equation of all incumbrances, and reduces it to its simplest terms. So simplify the problem of life, distinguish the necessary and the real. Probe the earth to see where your main roots run. I would stand upon facts. Why not see, — use our eyes? Do men know nothing? I know many men who, in common things, are not to be deceived; who trust no moonshine; who count their money correctly, and know how to invest it; who are said to be prudent and knowing, who yet will stand at

a desk the greater part of their lives, as cashiers in banks, and glimmer and rust and finally go out there. If they *know* anything, what under the sun do they do that for? Do they know what *bread* is? or what it is for? Do they know what life is? If they *knew* something, the places which know them now would know them no more forever.

This, our respectable daily life, on which the man of common sense, the Englishman of the world, stands so squarely, and on which our institutions are founded, is in fact the veriest illusion, and will vanish like the baseless fabric of a vision; but that faint glimmer of reality which sometimes illuminates the darkness of daylight for all men, reveals something more solid and enduring than adamant, which is in fact the cornerstone of the world.

Men cannot conceive of a state of things so fair that it cannot be realized. Can any man honestly consult his experience and say that it is so? Have we any facts to appeal to when we say that our dreams are premature? Did you ever hear of a man who had striven all his life faithfully and singly toward an object and in no measure obtained it? If a man constantly aspires, is he not elevated? Did ever a man try heroism, magnanimity, truth, sincerity, and find that there was no advantage in them? that it was a vain endeavor? Of course we do not expect that our paradise will be a garden. We know not what we ask. To look at literature; — how many fine thoughts has every man had! how few fine thoughts are expressed! Yet we never have a fantasy so subtle and ethereal, but

that *talent merely*, with more resolution and faithful persistency, after a thousand failures, might fix and engrave it in distinct and enduring words, and we should see that our dreams are the solidest facts that we know. But I speak not of dreams.

What can be expressed in words can be expressed in life.

My actual life is a fact, in view of which I have no occasion to congratulate myself; but for my faith and aspiration I have respect. It is from these that I speak. Every man's position is in fact too simple to be described. I have sworn no oath. I have no designs on society, or nature, or God. I am simply what I am, or I begin to be that. I *live* in the *present*. I only remember the past, and anticipate the future. I love to live. I love reform better than its modes. There is no history of how bad became better. I believe something, and there is nothing else but that. I know that I am. I know that another is who knows more than I, who takes interest in me, whose creature, and yet whose kindred, in one sense, am I. I know that the enterprise is worthy. I know that things work well. I have heard no bad news.

As for positions, combinations, and details, — what are they? In clear weather, when we look into the heavens, what do we see but the sky and the sun?

If you would convince a man that he does wrong, do right. But do not care to convince him. Men will believe what they see. Let them see.

Pursue, keep up with, circle round and round your life, as a dog does his master's chaise. Do what you

love. Know your own bone; gnaw at it, bury it, unearth it, and gnaw it still. Do not be too moral. You may cheat yourself out of much life so. Aim above morality. Be not simply good; be good for something. All fables, indeed, have their morals; but the innocent enjoy the story. Let nothing come between you and the light. Respect men and brothers only. When you travel to the Celestial City, carry no letter of introduction. When you knock, ask to see God, — none of the servants. In what concerns you much, do not think that you have companions: know that you are alone in the world.

Thus I write at random. I need to see you, and I trust I shall, to correct my mistakes. Perhaps you have some oracles for me.

HENRY THOREAU.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

CONCORD, May 2, 1848.

“We must have our bread.” But what is our bread? Is it baker’s bread? Methinks it should be very *home-made* bread. What is our meat? Is it butcher’s meat? What is that which we *must* have? Is that bread which we are now earning sweet? Is it not bread which has been suffered to sour, and then been sweetened with an alkali, which has undergone the vinous, the acetous, and sometimes the putrid fermentation, and then been whitened with vitriol? Is this the bread which we must have? Man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, truly, but also by the sweat of his brain within his brow. The body can feed the body only. I have

tasted but little bread in my life. It has been mere grub and provender for the most part. Of bread that nourished the brain and the heart, scarcely any. There is absolutely none on the tables even of the rich.

There is not one kind of food for all men. You must and you will feed those faculties which you exercise. The laborer whose body is weary does not require the same food with the scholar whose brain is weary. Men should not labor foolishly like brutes, but the brain and the body should always, or as much as possible, work and rest together, and then the work will be of such a kind that when the body is hungry the brain will be hungry also, and the same food will suffice for both; otherwise the food which repairs the waste energy of the overwrought body will oppress the sedentary brain, and the degenerate scholar will come to esteem all food vulgar, and all getting a living drudgery.

How shall we earn our bread is a grave question; yet it is a sweet and inviting question. Let us not shirk it, as is usually done. It is the most important and practical question which is put to man. Let us not answer it hastily. Let us not be content to get our bread in some gross, careless, and hasty manner. Some men go a-hunting, some a-fishing, some a-gaming, some to war; but none have so pleasant a time as they who in earnest seek to earn their bread. It is true actually as it is true really; it is true materially as it is true spiritually, that they who seek honestly and sincerely, with all their hearts and lives and strength, to earn their bread, do earn it, and it is sure to be very sweet to them. A very little bread, — a very few crumbs are

enough, if it be of the right quality, for it is infinitely nutritious. Let each man, then, earn at least a crumb of bread for his body before he dies, and know the taste of it, — that it is identical with the bread of life, and that they both go down at one swallow.

Our bread need not ever be sour or hard to digest. What Nature is to the mind she is also to the body. As she feeds my imagination, she will feed my body; for what she says she means, and is ready to do. She is not simply beautiful to the poet's eye. Not only the rainbow and sunset are beautiful, but to be fed and clothed, sheltered and warmed aright, are equally beautiful and inspiring. There is not necessarily any gross and ugly fact which may not be eradicated from the life of man. We should endeavor practically in our lives to correct all the defects which our imagination detects. The heavens are as deep as our aspirations are high. So high as a tree aspires to grow, so high it will find an atmosphere suited to it. Every man should stand for a force which is perfectly irresistible. How can any man be weak who dares *to be* at all? Even the tenderest plants force their way up through the hardest earth and the crevices of rocks; but a man no material power can resist. What a wedge, what a beetle, what a catapult, is an *earnest* man! What can resist him?

It is a momentous fact that a man may be *good*, or he may be *bad*; his life may be *true*, or it may be *false*; it may be either a shame or a glory to him. The good man builds himself up; the bad man destroys himself.

But whatever we do we must do confidently (if we

are timid, let us, then, act timidly), not expecting more light, but having light enough. If we confidently expect more, then let us wait for it. But what is this which we have? Have we not already waited? Is this the beginning of time? Is there a man who does not see clearly beyond, though only a hair's breadth beyond where he at any time stands?

If one hesitates in his path, let him not proceed. Let him respect his doubts, for doubts, too, may have some divinity in them. That we have but little faith is not sad, but that we have but little faithfulness. By faithfulness faith is earned. When, in the progress of a life, a man swerves, though only by an angle infinitely small, from his proper and allotted path (and this is never done quite unconsciously even at first; in fact, that was his broad and scarlet sin, — ah, he knew of it more than he can tell), then the drama of his life turns to tragedy, and makes haste to its fifth act. When once we thus fall behind ourselves, there is no accounting for the obstacles which rise up in our path, and no one is so wise as to advise, and no one so powerful as to aid us while we abide on that ground. Such are cursed with *duties*, and the *neglect of their duties*. For such the decalogue was made, and other far more voluminous and terrible codes.

These departures, — who have not made them? — for they are as faint as the parallax of a fixed star, and at the commencement we say they are nothing, — that is, they originate in a kind of sleep and forgetfulness of the soul when it is naught. A man cannot be too circumspect in order to keep in the straight road, and be

sure that he sees all that he may at any time see, that so he may distinguish his true path.

You ask if there is no doctrine of sorrow in my philosophy. Of acute sorrow I suppose that I know comparatively little. My saddest and most genuine sorrows are apt to be but transient regrets. The place of sorrow is supplied, perchance, by a certain hard and proportionately barren indifference. I am of kin to the sod, and partake largely of its dull patience, — in winter expecting the sun of spring. In my cheapest moments I am apt to think that it is n't my business to be "seeking the spirit," but as much its business to be seeking me. I know very well what Goethe meant when he said that he never had a chagrin but he made a poem out of it. I have altogether too much patience of this kind. I am too easily contented with a slight and almost animal happiness. My happiness is a good deal like that of the woodchucks.

Methinks I am never quite committed, never wholly the creature of my moods, but always to some extent their critic. My only integral experience is in my vision. I see, perchance, with more integrity than I feel.

But I need not tell you what manner of man I am, — my virtues or my vices. You can guess if it is worth the while; and I do not discriminate them well.

I do not write this at my hut in the woods. I am at present living with Mrs. Emerson, whose house is an old home of mine, for company during Mr. Emerson's absence.

You will perceive that I am as often talking to myself, perhaps, as speaking to you.

Here is a confession of faith, and a bit of self-portraiture worth having; for there is little except faithful statement of the fact. Its sentences are based on the questions and experiences of his correspondent; yet they diverge into that atmosphere of humor and hyperbole so native to Thoreau; in whom was the oddest mixture of the serious and the comic, the literal and the romantic. He addressed himself also, so far as his unbending personality would allow, to the mood or the need of his correspondent; and he had great skill in fathoming character and describing in a few touches the persons he encountered; as may be seen in his letters to Emerson, especially, who also had, and in still greater measure, this "fatal gift of penetration," as he once termed it. This will be seen in the contrast of Thoreau's correspondence with Mr. Blake, and that he was holding at the same time with Horace Greeley, — persons radically unlike.

In August, 1846, Thoreau sent to Greeley his essay on Carlyle, asking him to find a place for it in some magazine. Greeley sent it to R. W. Griswold, then editing *Graham's Magazine* in Philadelphia, who accepted it and promised to pay for it, but did not publish it till March and April, 1847; even then the promised payment was not forthcoming. On the 31st of March, 1848, a year and a half after it had been put in Griswold's possession, Thoreau wrote again to Greeley, saying that no money had come to hand. At once, and at the very time when Mr. Blake was opening his spiritual state to Thoreau (April 3, 1848), the busy editor of the *Tribune* replied: "It saddens and sur-

prises me to know that your article was not paid for by Graham; and, since my honor is involved, I will see that you are paid, and that at no distant day." Accordingly, on May 17, he adds: "To-day I have been able to lay my hand on the money due you. I made out a regular bill for the contribution, drew a draft on G. R. Graham for the amount, gave it to his brother in New York for collection, and received the money. I have made Graham pay you seventy-five dollars, but I only send you fifty dollars," having deducted twenty-five dollars for the advance of that sum he had made a month before to Thoreau for his "Ktaadn and the Maine Woods," which finally came out in *Sartain's Union Magazine* of Philadelphia, late in 1848. To this letter and remittance of fifty dollars Thoreau replied, May 19, 1848, substantially thus:—

TO HORACE GREELEY (AT NEW YORK).

CONCORD, May 19, 1848.

MY FRIEND GREELEY,—I have to-day received from you fifty dollars. It is five years that I have been maintaining myself entirely by manual labor,—not getting a cent from any other quarter or employment. Now this toil has occupied so few days,—perhaps a single month, spring and fall each,—that I must have had more leisure than any of my brethren for study and literature. I have done rude work of all kinds. From July, 1845, to September, 1847, I lived by myself in the forest, in a fairly good cabin, plastered and warmly covered, which I built myself. There I earned all I needed, and kept to my own affairs. During that time

my weekly outlay was but seven and twenty cents; and I had an abundance of all sorts. Unless the human race perspire more than I do, there is no occasion to live by the sweat of their brow. If men cannot get on without money (the smallest amount will suffice), the truest method of earning it is by working as a laborer at one dollar per day. You are least dependent so; I speak as an expert, having used several kinds of labor.

Why should the scholar make a constant complaint that his fate is specially hard? We are too often told of "the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties,"—how poets depend on patrons and starve in garrets, or at last go mad and die. Let us hear the other side of the story. Why should not the scholar, if he is really wiser than the multitude, do coarse work now and then? Why not let his greater wisdom enable him to do without things? If you say the wise man is unlucky, how could you distinguish him from the foolishly unfortunate?

My friend, how can I thank you for your kindness? Perhaps there is a better way,—I will convince you that it is felt and appreciated. Here have I been sitting idle, as it were, while you have been busy in my cause, and have done so much for me. I wish you had had a better subject; but good deeds are no less good because their object is unworthy.

Yours was the best way to collect money,—but I should never have thought of it; I might have waylaid the debtor perchance. Even a business man might not have thought of it,—and I cannot be called that, as business is understood usually,—not being familiar

with the routine. But your way has this to commend it also, — if you make the draft, you decide how much to draw. You drew just the sum suitable.

The Ktaadn paper can be put in the guise of letters, if it runs best so; dating each part on the day it describes. Twenty-five dollars more for it will satisfy me; I expected no more, and do not hold you to pay that, — for you asked for something else, and there was delay in sending. So, if you use it, send me twenty-five dollars now or after you sell it, as is most convenient; but take out the expenses that I see you must have had. In such cases carriers generally get the most; but you, as carrier here, get no money, but risk losing some, besides much of your time; while I go away, as I must, giving you unprofitable thanks. Yet trust me, my pleasure in your letter is not wholly a selfish one. May my good genius still watch over me and my added wealth!

P. S. — My book grows in bulk as I work on it; but soon I shall get leisure for those shorter articles you want, — then look out.

The “book,” of course, was the “Week,” then about to go through the press; the shorter articles were some that Greeley suggested for the Philadelphia magazines. Nothing came of this, but the correspondence was kept up until 1854, and led to the partial publication of “Cape Cod” and “The Yankee in Canada” in the newly launched *Putnam’s Magazine*, of which G. W. Curtis was editor. But he differed with Thoreau on a matter of style or opinion (the articles appearing as

anonymous, or editorial), and the author withdrew his MS. The letters of Greeley in this entertaining series are all preserved; but Greeley seems to have given Thoreau’s away for autographs; and the only one accessible as yet is that just paraphrased.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT MILTON).

CONCORD, August 10, 1849.

MR. BLAKE, — I write now chiefly to say, before it is too late, that I shall be glad to see you in Concord, and will give you a chamber, etc., in my father’s house, and as much of my poor company as you can bear.

I am in too great haste this time to speak to your, or out of my, condition. I might say, — you might say, — comparatively speaking, be not anxious to avoid poverty. In this way the wealth of the universe may be securely invested. What a pity if we do not live this short time according to the laws of the long time, — the eternal laws! Let us see that we stand erect here, and do not lie along by our *whole length* in the dirt. Let our meanness be our footstool, not our cushion. In the midst of this labyrinth let us live a *thread* of life. We must act with so rapid and resistless a purpose in *one* direction, that our vices will necessarily trail behind. The nucleus of a comet is almost a star. Was there ever a genuine dilemma? The laws of earth are for the feet, or inferior man; the laws of heaven are for the head, or superior man; the latter are the former sublimed and expanded, even as radii from the earth’s centre go on diverging into space. Happy

the man who observes the heavenly and the terrestrial law in just proportion; whose every faculty, from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, obeys the law of its level; who neither stoops nor goes on tiptoe, but lives a balanced life, acceptable to nature and to God.

These things I say; other things I do.

I am sorry to hear that you did not receive my book earlier. I directed it and left it in Munroe's shop to be sent to you immediately, on the twenty-sixth of May, before a copy had been sold.

Will you remember me to Mr. Brown, when you see him next: he is well remembered by

HENRY THOREAU.

I still owe you a worthy answer.

TO HARRISON BLAKE.

CONCORD, November 20, 1849.

MR. BLAKE, — I have not forgotten that I am your debtor. When I read over your letters, as I have just done, I feel that I am unworthy to have received or to answer them, though they are addressed, as I would have them, to the ideal of me. It behooves me, if I would reply, to speak out of the rarest part of myself.

At present I am subsisting on certain wild flavors which nature wafts to me, which unaccountably sustain me, and make my apparently poor life rich. Within a year my walks have extended themselves, and almost every afternoon (I read, or write, or make pencils in the forenoon, and by the last means get a living for my body) I visit some new hill, or pond, or wood, many miles distant. I am astonished at the

wonderful retirement through which I move, rarely meeting a man in these excursions, never seeing one similarly engaged, unless it be my companion, when I have one. I cannot help feeling that of all the human inhabitants of nature hereabouts, only we two have leisure to admire and enjoy our inheritance.

“Free in this world as the birds in the air, disengaged from every kind of chains, those who have practiced the *yoga* gather in Brahma the certain fruit of their works.”

Depend upon it that, rude and careless as I am, I would fain practice the *yoga* faithfully.

“The yogi, absorbed in contemplation, contributes in his degree to creation: he breathes a divine perfume, he hears wonderful things. Divine forms traverse him without tearing him, and, united to the nature which is proper to him, he goes, he acts as animating original matter.”

To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a yogi.

I know little about the affairs of Turkey, but I am sure that I know something about barberries and chestnuts, of which I have collected a store this fall. When I go to see my neighbor, he will formally communicate to me the latest news from Turkey, which he read in yesterday's mail, — “Now Turkey by this time looks determined, and Lord Palmerston” — Why, I would rather talk of the bran, which, unfortunately, was sifted out of my bread this morning, and thrown away. It is a fact which lies nearer to me. The newspaper gossip with which our hosts abuse our ears is as far from a

true hospitality as the viands which they set before us. We did not need them to feed our bodies, and the news can be bought for a penny. We want the inevitable news, be it sad or cheering, wherefore and by what means they are extant this *new* day. If they are well, let them whistle and dance; if they are dyspeptic, it is their duty to complain, that so they may in any case be *entertaining*. If words were invented to conceal thought, I think that newspapers are a great improvement on a bad invention. Do not suffer your life to be taken by newspapers.

I thank you for your hearty appreciation of my book. I am glad to have had such a long talk with you, and that you had patience to listen to me to the end. I think that I had the advantage of you, for I chose my own mood, and in one sense your mood too, — that is, a quiet and attentive reading mood. Such advantage has the writer over the talker. I am sorry that you did not come to Concord in your vacation. Is it not time for another vacation? I am here yet, and Concord is here.

You will have found out by this time who it is that writes this, and will be glad to have you write to him, without his subscribing himself

HENRY D. THOREAU.

P. S. — It is so long since I have seen you, that, as you will perceive, I have to speak, as it were, *in vacuo*, as if I were sounding hollowly for an echo, and it did not make much odds what kind of a sound I made. But the gods do not hear any rude or discordant sound,

as we learn from the echo; and I know that the nature toward which I launch these sounds is so rich that it will modulate anew and wonderfully improve my rudest strain.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT MILTON).

CONCORD, April 3, 1850.

MR. BLAKE, — I thank you for your letter, and I will endeavor to record some of the thoughts which it suggests, whether pertinent or not. You speak of poverty and dependence. Who are poor and dependent? Who are rich and independent? When was it that men agreed to respect the appearance and not the reality? Why should the appearance *appear*? Are we well acquainted, then, with the reality? There is none who does not lie hourly in the respect he pays to false appearance. How sweet it would be to treat men and things, for an hour, for just what they are! We wonder that the sinner does not confess his sin. When we are weary with travel, we lay down our load and rest by the wayside. So, when we are weary with the burden of life, why do we not lay down this load of falsehoods which we have volunteered to sustain, and be refreshed as never mortal was? Let the beautiful laws prevail. Let us not weary ourselves by resisting them. When we would rest our bodies we cease to support them; we recline on the lap of earth. So, when we would rest our spirits, we must recline on the Great Spirit. Let things alone; let them weigh what they will; let them soar or fall. To succeed in letting only one thing alone in a winter morning, if it be only one poor frozen-

thawed apple that hangs on a tree, what a glorious achievement! Methinks it lightens through the dusky universe. What an infinite wealth we have discovered! God reigns, *i. e.*, when we take a liberal view, — when a liberal view is presented us.

Let God alone if need be. Methinks, if I loved him more, I should keep him — I should keep myself rather — at a more respectful distance. It is not when I am going to meet him, but when I am just turning away and leaving him alone, that I discover that God is. I say, God. I am not sure that that is the name. You will know whom I mean.

If for a moment we make way with our petty selves, wish no ill to anything, apprehend no ill, cease to be but as the crystal which reflects a ray, — what shall we not reflect! What a universe will appear crystallized and radiant around us!

I should say, let the Muse lead the Muse, — let the understanding lead the understanding, though in any case it is the farthest forward which leads them both. If the Muse accompany, she is no muse, but an amusement. The Muse should lead like a star which is very far off; but that does not imply that we are to follow foolishly, falling into sloughs and over precipices, for it is not foolishness, but understanding, which is to follow, which the Muse is appointed to lead, as a fit guide of a fit follower?

Will you live? or will you be embalmed? Will you live, though it be astride of a sunbeam; or will you repose safely in the catacombs for a thousand years? In the former case, the worst accident that can happen

is that you may break your neck. Will you break your heart, your soul, to save your neck? Necks and pipe-stems are fated to be broken. Men make a great ado about the folly of demanding too much of life (or of eternity?), and of endeavoring to live according to that demand. It is much ado about nothing. No harm ever came from that quarter. I am not afraid that I shall exaggerate the value and significance of life, but that I shall not be up to the occasion which it is. I shall be sorry to remember that I was there, but noticed nothing remarkable, — not so much as a prince in disguise; lived in the golden age a hired man; visited Olympus even, but fell asleep after dinner, and did not hear the conversation of the gods. I lived in Judæa eighteen hundred years ago, but I never knew that there was such a one as Christ among my contemporaries! If there is anything more glorious than a congress of men a-framing or amending of a constitution going on, which I suspect there is, I desire to see the morning papers. I am greedy of the faintest rumor, though it were got by listening at the keyhole. I will dissipate myself in that direction.

I am glad to know that you find what I have said on Friendship worthy of attention. I wish that I could have the benefit of your criticism; it would be a rare help to me. Will you not communicate it?

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT MILTON).

CONCORD, May 28, 1850.

MR. BLAKE, — “I never found any contentment in the life which the newspapers record,” — anything of

more value than the cent which they cost. Contentment in being covered with dust an inch deep! We who walk the streets, and hold time together, are but the refuse of ourselves, and that life is for the shells of us, — of our body and our mind, — for our scurf, — a thoroughly *scurvy* life. It is coffee made of coffee-grounds the twentieth time, which was only coffee the first time, — while the living water leaps and sparkles by our doors. I know some who, in their charity, give their coffee-grounds to the poor! We, demanding news, and putting up with *such* news! Is it a new convenience, or a new accident, or, rather, a new perception of the truth that we want!

You say that “the serene hours in which friendship, books, nature, thought, seem alone primary considerations, visit you but faintly.” Is not the attitude of expectation somewhat divine? — a sort of home-made divineness? Does it not compel a kind of sphere-music to attend on it? And do not its satisfactions merge at length, by insensible degrees, in the enjoyment of the thing expected?

What if I should forget to write about my not writing? It is not worth the while to make that a theme. It is as if I had written every day. It is as if I had never written before. I wonder that you think so much about it, for not writing is the most like writing, in my case, of anything I know.

Why will you not relate to me your dream? That would be to realize it somewhat. You tell me that you dream, but not what you dream. I can *guess* what comes to pass. So do the frogs dream. Would that I

knew what. I have never found out whether they are awake or asleep, — whether it is day or night with them.

I am preaching, mind you, to bare walls, that is, to myself; and if you have chanced to come in and occupy a pew, do not think that my remarks are directed at you particularly, and so slam the seat in disgust. This discourse was written long before these exciting times.

Some absorbing employment on your higher ground, — your upland farm, — whither no cart-path leads, but where you mount alone with your hoe, — where the life everlasting grows; there you raise a crop which needs not to be brought down into the valley to a market; which you barter for heavenly products.

Do you separate distinctly enough the support of your body from that of your essence? By how distinct a course commonly are these two ends attained! Not that they should not be attained by one and the same means, — that, indeed, is the rarest success, — but there is no half and half about it.

I shall be glad to read my lecture to a small audience in Worcester such as you describe, and will only require that my expenses be paid. If only the parlor be large enough for an echo, and the audience will embarrass themselves with hearing as much as the lecturer would otherwise embarrass himself with reading. But I warn you that this is no better calculated for a promiscuous audience than the last two which I read to you. It requires, in every sense, a concordant audience.

I will come on next Saturday and spend Sunday with you if you wish it. Say so if you do.

“Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.”

Be not deterred by melancholy on the path which leads to immortal health and joy. When they tasted of the water of the river over which they were to go, they thought it tasted a little bitterish to the palate, but it proved sweeter when it was down.

H. D. T.

NOTE. — The “companion” of his walks, mentioned by Thoreau in November, 1849, was Ellery Channing; the neighbor who insisted on talking of Turkey was perhaps Emerson, who, after his visit to Europe in 1848, was more interested in its politics than before. Pencil-making was Thoreau’s manual work for many years; and it must have been about this time (1849–53) that he “had occasion to go to New York to peddle some pencils,” as he says in his journal for November 20, 1853. He adds, “I was obliged to manufacture one thousand dollars’ worth of pencils, and slowly dispose of, and finally sacrifice them, in order to pay an assumed debt of one hundred dollars.” This debt was for the printing of the *Week*, published in 1849, and finally paid for in 1855. Thoreau’s pencils have sold (in 1893) for 25 cents each. For other facts concerning his debt to James Munroe, see Sanborn’s *Thoreau*, pp. 230, 235.